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Primary education in disarray

# Screening out of teachers suggested

Staff Correspondent

There is a proposal before the Government to screen out the poorly qualified primary school teachers by holding nationwide competitive examinations. Those who will fail to qualify, may be absorbed elsewhere.

This proposal has been placed before the Planning Commission for consideration. An eminent educationist in his paper identified the constraints standing on way to the healthy growth of primary education and suggested strategies to be followed in the Fourth Five-Year Plan (FFYP) to achieve the objective.

The drop-out rate increased to 66 per cent from 63 per cent between 1973-87, while the enrollment rate of primary school students increased to 61 per cent as against 48 per cent in 1973.

There was little expansion of physical facilities between 1985 and 1988. Only five new primary schools were established during the period. The expansion of physical facilities through construction of primary schools took place between 1973 and 1985. A total of 7,399 primary schools were constructed during the period while 264 primary schools were constructed between 1980-85.

Out of the 68,000 villages about 24,000 villages remain uncovered by the existing primary schools, according to the paper. Painting a very gloomy picture the expert has

pleaded for construction of schools on the basis of school mapping in the context of currently unserved areas. There is need for establishment of 24,000 primary schools and their full utilisation.

He has also strongly argued in favour of construction of primary schools through private initiative. In the light of experiences of poor quality of education provided in the nationalised school, there should be no further nationalisation.

School rooms or library of primary schools may be named after those donating land, construction materials or sizeable amount of money, the expert pleaded. He has suggested introduction of pre-school exposure for the children from poor families. Children of such families face uneven competition from the first day of their school and feel discouraged to attend classes, he said. Such uneven competition lead to large scale drop-outs, he said.

### Network of schools needed

Popular participation in management and maintenance of schools should be encouraged and in the absence of private initiative the best strategy should be establishment of three-class room schools, taught by

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### Teachers

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three teachers, operating in double shifts. The entire country should be covered by a network of primary schools, so that every village has at least one school by the year 2000, he said.

Stressing the need for strengthening adult literacy he said an atmosphere of education should be created in the villages, the physical facilities should be expanded to make the atmosphere attractive.

The elected managing committee should be given higher authority in management of the affairs of the schools while the parent-teacher bodies should be activated. The introduction of school feeding programme supported by food aid particularly in poverty-stricken areas has been pleaded as another important strategy to increase enrollment. Such step would also improve the nutritional status.