

October 2008

The Hon'ble Minister,  
Ministry of Human Resource Development  
New Delhi

Subject - 'National Policy on Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in School Education' - some grave concerns

**Dear Sri Arjun Singh,**

1. The Ministry of Human Resources Development (MHRD) has initiated a process of formulating a "National Policy on Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in School Education". Whereas framing such a policy is important, we have grave concerns about the procedure being followed by MHRD in this policy making. MHRD has asked GeSCI to lead the policy making process, who in turn have further outsourced this task to CSDMS. Both are private organisations with no experience with Indian public education system and its priorities as anchored in various policies from time to time. They have closely associated technology vendors such as Intel, NIIT, Microsoft, Educomp etc, large private monopolies with vested interests in the policy. These organisations have also excluded from their consultations, the large body of educationists, many who were an important part of the framing of the NCF 2005, a landmark curricular policy in India.
2. Thus the present policy process is being conducted in a very non-transparent manner with significant role given to private agencies with little experience and expertise in the Indian education system, with committed ideologies of greater privatization of education, and close relationships with big corporations who see the ICT policy for schools as a major opportunity for advancing their business interests. This is an unprecedented and blatant privatization of national policy making and making public interest subservient to private gain.
3. The impact of the flawed process is being seen in the outcomes as well. The draft prepared by these two organisations ignores the Indian context and contradicts national education policies, distorts the roles of the teacher, teacher educators and students and compromises Indian education goals and priorities. The draft favours business interests of these vendors and primarily sees Indian school system as the 'largest ICT market' in the world and it was rejected by several people and organisations working in Indian education. The NCF 2005 position paper on Education Technology has highlighted several dangers from imposing specific hardware and software systems in a centralized manner across the country.
4. ICTs have a significant potential to shape India's education system and hence a national policy that on ICTs in education needs to be very carefully thought through by domain experts acting completely in public interest. The current process of private interests dominating and ignoring education perspectives is highly detrimental to public interest as well the Indian education system. Hence, it is critical that public policy making be anchored in public institutions. The National Policy on ICTs in school education is essentially an issue with curricular and systemic implications and not a technology sector policy. Hence its making needs to be located in a national institution such as the NCERT which is the apex body in charge of curriculum policies, and its processes driven by a deep understanding of the institutional and social contexts, and the policies and priorities of education in India. The NGOs associated with the policy process should be such which have sufficient experience and expertise in the area of public education in India.
5. We have made several attempts to communicate and discuss these concerns to MHRD, but

the policy process continues in its referred problematic ways. Though a new policy 'drafting committee' has been setup by MHRD, the leadership to the policy making is still vested in GeSCI and CSDMS. We request that the process of privatization of national education policy be immediately stopped and a new process initiated through national education institutions such as NCERT which are tasked with curricular design; with open and widespread consultations led by people and organizations with experience and expertise in Indian education. A brief record of the events so far and other relevant information is being provided in an annexure to this letter.

Yours truly,

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2. Anita Rampal - Department of Education, Delhi University
3. Anjali Noronha – Eklavya\*
4. Aarti Saihjee, UNICEF
5. Aruna Roy - MKSS (Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan)
6. Arun M - Free Software Foundation
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8. C.P Chandrasekhar, JNU
9. Farida Abdulla Khan - Jamia Millia Islamia
- 10.G. Nagarjuna - Free Software Foundation and Homi Bhabha Centre for Science Education
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- 15.JBG Tilak - NUEPA
- 16.Janaki Nair, Center for Studies in Social Science
- 17.Mary John, Center for Women's Dvelopment Studies
- 18.Nayana Tara, Indian Institute of Management Bangalore
- 19.Nikhil Dey - MKSS (Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan)
- 20.Niranjanaradhya.V.P - Centre for Child and the Law, National Law School of India University
- 21.Padma Sarangpani – Tata Institute of Social Sciences
- 22.Poonam Batra - Professor, Central Institute of Education, University of Delhi
- 23.Prabir Purkayastha - Delhi Science Forum\*
- 24.R. Govinda - NUEPA
- 25.Rama Kant Agnihotri, Dept of Linguistics, University of Delhi
- 26.Ravi Subramaniam - Homi Bhabha Centre for Science Education
- 27.Rahul Dey, Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore

28.Rohit Dhankar – Digantar\*

29.Sadhana Saxena - National Institute of Adult Education

30.Sejal Dand, Area Networking and Development Initiatives

31.Sridhar Rajagopalan - Educational Initiatives

32.Stalin K - Documentary filmmaker and community media activist

33.Sunil Batra – Centre for Education Advocacy and Research\*

34.Suparna D, Centre for Leadership and Management in Public Services

35.Vimala Ramachandran – Educational Resource Unit\*

36.Vinod Raina – Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samiti

37.Upendranadh - Institute for Human Development

and others .. \*

Institutional endorsement