

# Opening Bracket . . .

In educational circles all over the country one of the major questions on people's minds is about the National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCFSE) 2023, and about impending changes in school education. Predictably, much of the conversation is about changes coming to the examination system. But the vision described in the 600-page NCFSE document goes much beyond examination-related matters; it is a bold and ambitious attempt to restructure education itself. It is daunting to read the document in its entirety, but it is also an enriching task, because the document has been prepared with great care. Here are some striking quotes from Section 1 of the document.

- I. "Education is, at its core, the achievement of valuable Knowledge, Capacities, Values, and Dispositions. Society decides the Knowledge, Capacities, Values, and Dispositions that are 'valuable' enough to be developed through education, and so they are informed by the vision that the society has for itself. Hence it is through the development of Knowledge, Capacities, Values, and Dispositions in the individual that education contributes to the realisation of the vision of a society."
- II. "The purpose of the education system is to develop good human beings capable of rational thought and action, possessing compassion and empathy, courage and resilience, scientific temper, and creative imagination, with sound ethical moorings and values. It aims at producing engaged, productive, and contributing citizens for building an equitable, inclusive, and plural society as envisaged by our Constitution."
- III. "The aim of education will not only be cognitive development, but also building character and creating holistic and well-rounded individuals equipped with the key 21st century skills."
- IV. "Education must develop ... appropriate values, dispositions, capacities, and knowledge. A curriculum, therefore, must systematically articulate what these desirable values, dispositions, capacities, and knowledge are, and how they are to be achieved through appropriate choice of content and pedagogy and other relevant elements of the education system, and present strategies for assessment to verify that they have been achieved."
- V. "Effective action needs strong motivation in addition to knowledge and capacities. Our values and dispositions are the sources of that motivation. Values refer to beliefs about what is right and what is wrong, while dispositions refer to the attitudes and perceptions that form the basis for behaviour. Thus, in addition to developing knowledge and capacities, the school curriculum should deliberately choose values and dispositions that are derived from the Aims of Education and devise learning opportunities for students to acquire these values and dispositions."

These are serious statements that need to be unpacked with care and deliberation. If as mathematics teachers we are to take forward the vitally important task of Education, we will have to ponder over these matters carefully. One implication of this is that over and above the subject that we teach (in our case, mathematics), we need to address wider and deeper issues. We need to devote time, space, and energy to discuss such matters amongst ourselves. And we need to do the same with our students.

Education is an enormous task. It may demand capacities and dispositions that we do not possess at present. But we may discover those very capacities and dispositions by engaging with these questions passionately and critically.