



Milind Night School students experiment with lab kits



Students on an exposure visit to University Institute of Chemical Technology, Mumbai

textbooks and notebooks. Moreover there are many such students who do not even know the Braille language.

Even after so many problems it is surprising to find a complete absence of organisations that take up advocacy issues for night schools.

What the government can do

The government certainly has to play an active role if night schools have to become a powerful institution. Following are some of the recommendations to the government:

- ❖ Quality education to be provided to night school students. Special educational material to be created for the night school students especially the 10th standard students. The educational material should cover only important topics related to the examination. About four committees set up by the government have recommended the creation of teaching-learning material for night schools who have to complete the entire school syllabus in half the number of hours compared to day schools.
- ❖ The local self government, BMC in Mumbai's case, should be able to make rooms available for setting up science laboratories, computer laboratories and libraries for night schools.
- ❖ Some of the rules applicable to day schools should not be applicable to night schools as they operate under different circumstances. For example, the requirement of daily attendance and total number of students per class should be relaxed.
- ❖ Form 17 presently entitles a 14-year-old student to directly write the board exam. About a couple of years ago the age limit was 17 but the state government changed this to 14 encouraging many students to dropout from formal schooling systems. Thus it is important that this age limit be increased from 14 to 17 again to enable

more students in formal education systems.

- ❖ Since 2004, the non-salary grant given to night schools has been stalled by the state government and due to this the schools find it difficult to take care of their administrative expenses. It is important that the government restarts the non-salary grants to these schools.
- ❖ The state government should provide the night school students with textbooks, notebooks, evening meals etc.

Scenario in other states

Though Mumbai is the main place where night schools have taken a formal shape, in other parts of the country too they have been spreading their wings but more on a non-formal basis. An organisation called Barefoot College has been running 250 night schools in six states of India namely Assam, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Bihar, Orissa and Uttaranchal. In these schools instructions are informal and curriculum is focused on practical knowledge.

Luminaries of night schools

Night schools have been doing commendable work of providing education to the underprivileged sections of society and showing them the way who otherwise would have got lost in the melee. Some of the luminaries of the night school include 84-year-old Dr. Vithal C. Prabhu, Chairperson of the Council of Sex Education and Parenthood International, an alumni of Social Service League Night School in Parel, Mumbai who has written many books on general health and human sexuality, Bhima Shankar Katare, who worked as a waiter in a hotel and studied in a night school before becoming a successful journalist, K. M. Shetty who studied at Bombay Fort Free Night High School and is a successful advocate practising in industrial law and the late founder of