

A NEW EDUCATION POLICY FOR A NEW INDIA

*-Khyati Tongia**

Abstract:

The one thing that can take the nation to greater heights is education. The education system cannot remain stagnant, it needs to evolve with time. Rather than focusing on learning and skill development, focus is on examinations and marks and benefitting with this, education rather than a service has become a business. There is only theory and no practical implementation. Taking the need to change the education policy, the draft National Education Policy (NEP) was developed in 2019 and shared by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) for public comment and suggestions. The present article showcases various changes to be introduced by the policy focusing on teachers, infrastructure, finances, courses, subjects and research. It also looks into some challenges it can pose like lack of clarity in processes to be undertaken, limit of centralization of activities and technologies and funding. Thus, a call for the ministry before implementing the policy in August 2020 to take in consideration of all the important challenges and suggestions for the same so that the aim for bringing this Education Policy that is ,100% youth and adult literacy by 2030 is accomplished. Lastly, it is not only the government but also the responsibility of every parent, teacher and student to work mutually.

I. INTRODUCTION

The one thing that can take the nation to greater heights is education. Education plays a critical role in the process of Nation Building. Education is the unifying tool which can not only bring our youth together but give the nation an identity which is recognizable globally because youth of today are future of tomorrow and good education is an investment which gives its returns perennially.

From the ancient ages education played a massive role in building a person's character. The Gurukul system was followed where the student was taught from metaphysics to mathematics and a relationship with the nature and self was curated but as the British entered the Indian subcontinent this system was labelled as archaic and was dismantled. The teaching was then only restricted to classrooms rather than the nature, the outer world. From the time a student in India enters primary school she is made to go through unending assignments and examinations, to pass these she must memorize rather rote all which she is taught. From here starts the obsession of us Indians with

marks. The British moved forward adopting the practical methods of teaching, but we are still stuck with classrooms and marks.

II. INDIA AND SYSTEM OF EDUCATION :

Why India being the country with the highest number of youth human resource still lacking. The reason being education. The education system cannot remain stagnant, it needs to evolve with time. In the present scenario it is not compulsory to become an engineer or a doctor, but this is not inculcated in the Indian education system. Science and Commerce fields are not everything, taking arts and sports is nothing less, their scope is too wide but the freedom of choosing them is so restricted and even if chosen the quality of education is not available. Selecting a field of interest after doing 4 years of engineering is what is happening in the country. Everyone goes with the flow every child ends up in engineering college and then is realizing the mistake made and then finding his interest and excelling it. With the stand-up culture evolving there are various artists having an engineering background, but now tickets are sold to watch them in engineering colleges. This brings our nation below than others, because in other countries the child is given the space to explore and find his interests and not memorize dates and solve equations in crucial years. Scoring good marks does not mean that a child is skillful. Asking a class 12th student what she learned in class 10th, there is a very high probability that she won't be able to answer. It is important to study, but the method of studying is not at the right footing. Dishearteningly, marks have indeed become the ground of judgement and admission.

Rather than focusing on learning and skill development, focus is on examinations and marks and benefitting with this, education rather than a service has become a business. There is only theory and no practical implementation. Curriculum should change with the technology. Getting in good institutes should not be the only aim, but learning should be. What is in India is half-baked education, it is not making us better rather restricting the minds from development and from making mistakes. Suicides because of poor performance, one mark less is the worst way to lose a child. One mark cannot change a life, but the level of competition and pressure surrounding makes studying a liability rather than an asset. Reformation of the education system is a cycle which will start moving if only that one step is taken correctly. Reforming the system will change the status of our country from developing into developed. If only one sector of our country is reformed it will result in significant growth of the nation and open more steps for development, as education is the concrete base for any field/sector.

III. NEW EDUCATION POLICY 2019 :

Taking in considerations the conditions of the education system on 31 May, 2019 the draft National Education Policy (NEP) developed by a committee chaired by K. Kasturirangan was shared by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) for public comment.¹ Some important measures under the policy are :-²

1. The New Education Policy is built on foundational pillars of Access, Equity, Quality, Affordability & Accountability. This draft policy aims at developing the Indian education in concurrence with the international standards not forgetting the Indian value systems.
2. Starting from childhood care and education to 3-6 years of children, focusing on changing of curriculum and integrating vocational and other courses without separation of academic and non-academic subjects, ensuring universal access and retention of children. Thus, extension of right to education till class 12th by 2030 and achieving foundational literacy and numeracy for all.
3. It proposed a structure of 5+3+3+4. First being a Foundational Stage for 3-8years for learning by play with focus on nutritional strength. Next being the Preparatory Stage for 8-11years followed by Middle Stage for 11-14years and last being the Secondary stage for 14-18years.
4. Not only basic education, but it also provides for high-quality liberal education for undergraduates that integrates the rigorous study of sciences, arts, humanities, mathematics and vocational and professional fields with choices offered to students.
5. Teachers under this policy were made the center of education system , given rigorous teacher preparation through a four-year integrated stage and subject-specific programs ensuring that teachers are competent and well-qualified with no temporary faculty allowed. As known education is good only if the medium of providing the same is of quality and competence.
6. To spread education, the policy calls for increase in public investment to expand and vitalize public education at all levels. Without architecture education faces another hurdle and to overcome the same, the aim is to develop the current and new 10,000-15,000 institutions of

* Khyati Tongia is a 3rd year student at Government New Law College.

¹ Dr K. Kasturirangan Committee submits the Draft National Education Policy to the Union HRD Minister, Press Information Bureau, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, 31st May, 2019, available at <https://pib.gov.in/Pressreleaseshare.aspx?PRID=1573031>.

² Draft of National Education Policy, 2019, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India available at <https://innovate.mygov.in/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/mygov15596510111.pdf>.

excellence to drive improvement in quality and expansion of capacity. This architecture will have only large multi-disciplinary institutions, with significant investment.

7. Three types of higher education institutions will be there: Type 1 universities focused on research but also teaching all programs, undergrad to doctoral; Type 2 universities focused on teaching all programs while also conducting research and; Type 3 colleges focused on teaching undergraduate programs. All types will grant their own degrees. There will be no system of university affiliations.³
8. National Scholarship Fund to financially support students for higher education. Research and innovation methods are also taken in notice by establishing National Research Foundation (NRF) which will fund research in all disciplines.⁴
9. Not forgetting the diversity, promotion of classical and regional languages has been emphasized.

IV. CHALLENGES :

The policy indeed has been framed keeping the dynamics surrounding the education and not giving up the traditional systems. But it is not as easy as it seems, there are various drawbacks which needs to be addressed to ensure the success of the same. Education is like the blood in the human body, if it doesn't reach to every organ or every part of the body there is illness and irregularities in the body. Same with education, new education policy though drafted must reach at every corner to every child which is a indeed an accosting task not only financially but also in term of other resources. Some of the major challenges faced in the policy are -

- I. A State Regulatory Body has been established for regulating education, but its process has been not. Just creating various bodies is not the solution. The composition, its practice, its powers and process need to be jotted down. These bodies are expected to take decision on infrastructure, number of teachers, in matters of finances, but how?
- II. Expansion of compulsory schooling till 18 years of age is too expensive for country like India and dearth of quality teachers is a big issue, giving training to teachers becomes significant. Most importantly, education is concurrent list subject and consensus between center and state

³ Glimpses of the much-awaited National Education Policy, Anurag Behar, 05 Jun 2019, available at <https://www.livemint.com/>.

⁴ National Education Policy 2019: Salient Features One Should Not Miss, Sashikanth Yechuri, Career India, July 11, 2019, available at <https://www.careerindia.com/features/national-education-policy-2019-highlights-and-features-one-should-not-miss/articlecontent-pf9965-025209.html>.

becomes fundamental, but the policy does not describe the role of states and the importance of state mechanism. It is the co-ordination between the center and the states that will allow education to reach every corner along with some decentralization as it is the state authorities that will do the main fieldwork and extend its reach.

- III. The policy lacks in stating the facts of the mid-day meal schemes and how malnutrition is becoming antithesis to growth. Statistically, India has the highest number of 46.6 million children malnourished according to the Global Nutrition Report, 2018.⁵ It fails to allocate more funds and resources for mid-day meals and other schemes. It is stated in the policy that over 85% of cumulative brain development occurs prior to the age of six. Question remains how, if they continue being malnourished?
- IV. Interestingly, when parents are given the role of evaluating teacher's performance, then this goes wrong. Not only in sense of conflict of interest, but rather it is demeaning and lowering the respect of the teacher. There will be instances where the teacher scolded a child and the child being upset complains to her parents and the parent "while evaluating" makes the tit-for-tat move. This should not be the case. Never where the parents have an upper-hand over the teachers.
- V. Inculcation of technology is a great step, but the thin line where the technology would power up should not be the case. Technology along with classroom teaching should go hand-in-hand.
- VI. Lastly, it is the Rashtriya Shiksha Aayog (RSA), led by the Prime Minister, that will be the apex body deciding on, monitoring and regulating all levels and processes that relate to the generation, dissemination and movement of educational resources and skills. It will make policy decisions, budgetary allocations, review plans and monitor the bodies that will separately fund, set standards, accredit and regulate institutions. It will also retain the authority to shut institutions down if it so deems necessary. While investing such immense centralized power with the RSA, the Draft NEP does not make it accountable to any public review.⁶ This is the extent of centralization that would have been a good step if we were not a federal country and

⁵ UNICEF, Press Release, 2018 Global Nutrition Report reveals malnutrition is unacceptably high and affects every country in the world, but there is also an unprecedented opportunity to end it, 29th November, 2018, available at <https://www.unicef.org/rosa/press-releases/2018-global-nutrition-report-reveals-malnutrition-unacceptably-high-and-affects>

⁶ Observations of CPI(M) on Draft National Education Policy 2019, 20th June, 2019, <https://www.cpim.org/pressbriefs/observations-cpim-draft-national-education-policy-2019>

thus, rather the RSA should be open for public review and questioning or it should establish State Rahtriya Shiksha Aayogs.

What remains credible to be noted is that the forum for providing suggestions and also criticisms was widely made available to the citizens. This is the prime example of democracy functioning which is applaudable. If wanted, the ministry would have just rolled out the policy. It is just that with various suggestions and recommendations that came up from the public of the country are taken in consideration and steps to ensure that appropriate rectifications and revisions are made.

V. CONCLUSION :

What the country calls for is that the quality of education provided shall be such that it should not only deliver basic literacy and numeracy but also creates an analytical environment in the country. For this adopting the NEW EDUCATION POLICY, 2019 is a good step but only after considering the scope of its success. There are about 220 million children in this country who go to school. This is almost half the population of Europe and three fourth the population of the US. It is indeed a Herculean task to have an education system that reaches out to 220 million children. One of the biggest problems this country faces is the fact that our gross enrolment ratio is 12.4 per cent. In other words, for every 100 children who finish high school, only 12 moves to college and in any developed economy, that percentage is way above 50 per cent. There is no way that country can move forward if the ratio remains stagnant at 12.4 per cent because what happens then is that the critical mass of people required to drive creativity, which is the foundation of ideas and intellectual property remains absent.⁷

Thus, any reform in education is called for. To bring the change in the system is a very big step but it needs to be implemented with the same zeal as Swachh Bharat is implemented in the country. The initial 2-5 years, it is not only the government that needs to work but rather every citizen at its own level shall contribute and promote these steps, especially the NGO'S, teachers and parents have to support to achieve the policy's aim of 100% youth and adult literacy by 2030.⁸ The implementation of

⁷ "There is no partnership between the Centre and states. Solutions are needed quickly", Kapil Sibal, India Today, October 19, 2011, available at <https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/india/story/20090928-there-is-no-partnership-between-the-centre-and-states.-solutions-are-needed-quickly-740789-2009-09-17>.

⁸National Education Policy 2019: Salient Features One Should Not Miss, Sashikanth Yechuri, July 11, 2019, Career India, <https://www.careerindia.com/features/national-education-policy-2019-highlights-and-features-one-should-not-miss/articlecontent-pf9965-025209.html>

NEP will be from August 15, 2020 and thus, by the time, it is expected by the citizens that the government would focus on the methods and mediums of providing education keeping in mind the diversity, gender differences and other disparities that exist.

The syllabus of the education is out, but with current times it needs to be revised so that future studies and examinations are passed with flying colors as sky is the limit. As said by Confucius, “Education breeds confidence. Confidence breeds hope. Hope breeds peace.”

This is the power the education holds.