

National Education Policy- 2020 in context of School Education

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ABSTRACT

The New Education Policy is based on the principle that education should not only develop basic abilities like literacy and numeracy but also develop the individual at moral, social and emotional levels. This education policy is an education system developed from Indian values which will directly contribute to transforming India into a vibrant and equitable knowledge society by providing higher quality education to all and making India a global knowledge superpower. Students should have pride in being Indian not only in thought but also in behaviour, intellect and action and also in the knowledge, skills, values and thinking committed to human rights, sustainable development and livelihoods and global well-being so that they become global citizens in the true sense. The aim of this education policy is to develop good human beings who are capable of rational thought and action, who have compassion and empathy, courage and resilience, scientific thinking and creative imagination.

Keywords: Pedagogy, Global citizens, Human rights, Sustainable development, Inclusion

Introduction

Education determines the condition and direction of any nation. It protects social harmony and constitutional values. It keeps economic development, social justice, equality, cultural preservation and national unity and integrity intact. Currently, 34-year-old education policy was running in India which was becoming ineffective with the changing scenario¹. This is the reason why in 2019, the Ministry of Human Resource Development had prepared a draft of the new education policy and sought opinion from the public. The new education policy was approved by the Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on August 29, 2020 the draft of which was prepared by a committee of experts headed by former ISRO Chief K. Kasturirangan.

The main emphasis of previous policies on education was primarily on issues of access to education. An attempt has been made through this policy to complete the incomplete work of the National Education Policy of 1986 which was revised in 1992². Due to rapid changes in employment and global

ecology, it has become necessary that children not only learn what is being taught but also learn the art of continuous learning. Therefore, instead of teaching subject matter in education, the emphasis needs to be on children learning problem-solving and thinking logically and creatively. They should be able to see the connections between different subjects, think new things, and apply new information to new and changing situations or areas. There is a need that the teaching process should be learner-centric, based on curiosity, discovery, experience and dialogue. It must be flexible and enable holistic and integrated viewing and understanding and, of course, must be interesting. Education should provide balanced development of all aspects of life and abilities of the learners. For this, apart from science and mathematics, basic arts, crafts, humanities, sports and fitness, language, literature, culture and values must be included in the curriculum. Education should build character, develop morality, reasoning, compassion and sensitivity in the learners and at the same time education should make it employable.

Vision of National Education Policy

The New Education Policy proposes to reform and restructure all aspects of the education system, including its regulation and governance, in combination with aspirational goals for 21st century education while maintaining the foundation of India's tradition and cultural values. This policy lays special emphasis on the development of creative abilities inherent in every individual. This policy is based on the principle that education should not only develop basic abilities like literacy and numeracy but also develop the individual at moral, social and emotional levels. This National Education Policy is an education system developed from Indian values that will directly contribute to transforming India into a vibrant and equitable knowledge society by providing higher quality education to all and making India a global knowledge superpower. The Policy envisages that the curriculum and pedagogy of our institutions should inculcate in the students an awareness of their fundamental responsibilities and constitutional values, a connection with the country and the role and responsibilities of a citizen in a changing world. Students should have pride in being an Indian not only in thought but also in behaviour, intellect and action and also in the knowledge, skills, values and thinking committed to human rights, sustainable development and livelihoods and global well-being, so that they can become global citizens in the true sense. The objective of this education policy is to develop good human beings who will be able to think and act rationally. They should have compassion and empathy, courage and flexibility, scientific thinking and creative imagination. Its objective is to produce productive people who can better contribute to building the inclusive and pluralistic society envisioned by its Constitution³.

School Curriculum

The new education policy provides that the curriculum and pedagogical framework of school education will be reorganized to take into account the different stages of development of students at different stages of age - 3-8, 8-11, 11-14, and 14-18.

Accordingly, proper attention can be given to their interests and development needs. Therefore, the curriculum framework will be guided by a 5+3+3+4 design comprising the Foundation Stage in two parts (i.e. 3 years of Anganwadi or pre-school followed by 2 years of classes 1-2 in primary school, including children aged 3 to 8 years) respectively. Preparatory Stage (including children in classes 3 to 5 and 8 to 11 years), Middle School Stage (including children in classes 6 to 8 and 11 to 14 years) and Secondary Stage (classes 9 to 12 in two phases i.e. first phase will include 9 and 10 and the other 11 and 12, including children aged 14 to 18)⁴.

The Foundation Stage will consist of five years of flexible multi-level play/activity-based learning and pedagogy. The Preparatory Stage will be three years long and will build on the play-discovery and activity-based pedagogic style of the Foundation Stage and will also include some light textbook-based teaching, thus, teaching and learning through a more formal but interactive classroom style. It will also include reading, writing, speaking, physical education, art, language, science and mathematics. There will be three years of education in the middle school stage also and in this, subject expert teachers will start working on the abstract concepts of the subject for which the students should have been adequately prepared. This work will be in science, mathematics, arts, sports, social sciences, humanities and professional subjects. Despite experience-based teaching and presence of subject experts in every subject, the inter-relationships between subjects will be encouraged. The high school or secondary stage will consist of four years of multi-disciplinary study based on the subject-oriented pedagogic and pedagogic style of this stage, but with greater depth, more critical thinking, more focus on life aspirations and students. There will be more flexibility in the choice of subjects especially if one so desires, the option of opting for vocational after class 10 or other courses in any specialized school in class 11-12 will continue to be available to the students⁵.

All-round Development of Students

The overall focus of curriculum and pedagogy

at all levels is to move the education system away from the age-old practice of rote learning towards genuine understanding and knowledge. The aim of education is not just cognitive understanding but character building and equipping with key skills of the 21st century. Actually, knowledge is a hidden treasure and education helps to acquire it along with the talent of the individual. The curriculum and pedagogy will be redesigned to achieve these goals. Specific skills and values will be identified in different areas for integration at each level from pre-school to higher education. Curricular framework and communication mechanisms will be developed to ensure that these skills and values are internalized in the teaching and learning process. NCERT will identify these required skills and include mechanisms for their practice in the National Curriculum Framework for Early Childhood and School Education.

Experiential learning will be adopted at all stages, *inter alia*, learning by doing and arts and games will be integrated in every subject and story-based pedagogy will be seen as a standard pedagogy in every subject. Also, exploration of relationships between different subjects will be encouraged. To bridge the gap between current learning patterns and desired learning outcomes, there will be changes in classroom processes in some subjects, oriented towards competency-based learning and instruction wherever appropriate⁶.

Flexibility in Course Selection Options

Students will be given more flexibility and choice of subjects to study, especially in secondary school. These will also include physical education, arts and crafts and vocational subjects so that students are free to chart their own paths of study and life plans. Year-on-year holistic development and wide choice of subjects and courses will be the new distinguishing feature of secondary school education. There will be no categories like curriculum, extra-curriculum or co-curricular, arts, humanities and sciences or professional or academic stream. In addition to science, humanities and mathematics, subjects such as physical education, arts and crafts

and vocational skills will be included in the entire school curriculum, considering what is interesting and safe for students at every age and what is not.

Reducing Curriculum Content

The curriculum content will be reduced to the very basics in each subject to focus on critical thinking and holistic, discovery-based, discussion-based and analysis-based learning. This content will now focus on key concepts, ideas, applications and problem solving. Teaching and learning will be conducted in a more interactive manner. Questioning will be encouraged and there will be more interesting, creative, collaborative and exploratory activities on a regular basis in the classrooms to ensure deep and experimental learning.

Reducing the Number of Drop Out Children

One of the primary goals of the school education system is to ensure that children are enrolled in school and sent to school regularly. India has made significant progress in recent years in achieving enrolment of almost all children in primary education through initiatives such as the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and the Right to Education Act. Overall, two initiatives will be taken to enable children to return to school and prevent further dropouts. The first provides effective and adequate infrastructure so that all students can receive safe and attractive school education at all levels from pre-primary school to class 12. Special care should be taken to ensure that there is no shortage of infrastructure in any school. The credibility of government schools will be re-established and this can be done by upgrading and expanding existing schools, creating additional quality schools where there are none and providing safe and practical access to hostels, especially girls hostels so that all children get access to good schools, get an opportunity to go and study up to the appropriate level⁷. Alternative and innovative education centres will be set up in collaboration with civil society to bring children of migrant workers and school dropouts under various circumstances back into mainstream education.

Equitable and Inclusive Education

Education is the most effective means of achieving social justice and equality. Equitable and inclusive education is not only an essential goal in itself but also an essential step towards building an equitable and inclusive society, in which every citizen has the opportunity to dream, develop and contribute to the national interest. This education policy aims to ensure that every child in India has opportunities to learn and progress regardless of his or her birth or background. Related circumstances should not become obstacles. This policy reaffirms that eliminating social class gaps in access, participation and learning outcomes in school education will be the core objective of all education sector development programmes⁸.

Although the Indian education system and successive government policies have made steady progress in reducing gender and social class gaps at all levels of the school education system, inequalities are still visible, especially at the secondary level. We can see deprived groups who have been lagging behind in the field of education since the past. Now, while school enrolment has been continuously declining from Class 1 to Class 12, this decline in enrolment is greater among socio-economically disadvantaged groups and is particularly pronounced for female students. Many different factors including poverty, social customs and practices, and language, have a detrimental effect on enrolment and retention rates among Scheduled Castes. One of the key goals will be to bridge these gaps in access, participation and learning outcomes for Scheduled Caste children. At the same time, other backward classes, which are already identified as being socially and educationally backward, also need special attention. Children from tribal communities and Scheduled Tribes also face adverse conditions at many levels due to various historical and geographical factors. The representation of minorities in school education is also relatively low. The policy recognizes the importance of interventions to promote the education of children of all minority communities and particularly those communities who

are educationally under-represented. The Policy also recognizes the importance of creating enabling mechanisms to provide children with special needs or disabilities equal opportunities to receive quality education like any other child⁹.

Conclusion:

Thus, the new education policy aims to provide quality education to all students. Special attention will need to be paid to disadvantaged and under-represented groups. Education is a major means of ensuring equality and through it, equality, inclusion and socio-economic mobility can be achieved in the society. Every possible initiative should be taken for all children of such groups, despite circumstantial constraints, so that they can both gain entry into the education system and perform excellently. This policy reaffirms that eliminating social class gaps in access, participation and learning outcomes in school education will be a key objective of all education sector development programmes. All these things should be incorporated in the new education policy while respecting India's rich diversity and culture as well as keeping in mind the needs of the country in the local and global context.

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