



Centre for Educational and Social Studies

Bengaluru, India, www.cessedu.org

A Pragmatic Education Policy for Aspirational India

In the midst of deep global health crisis, people in India have a reason to feel good and hopeful of the future. On July 29, 2020, the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), GoI announced adoption of National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) to be the guiding principle to transform Indian Education and Learning. Considered as, the most pragmatic education policy, is drafted by a Committee headed by world renowned space scientist Dr. K. Kasturirangan. The NEP 2020 is an outcome of the vibrant democratic process in the history of Indian public policy. The draft policy had received over 2 lakh suggestions from across the country before going to the Parliament. It is considered as most publicly debated public policy post India's Independent. In all its aspects, this is an aspirational policy for the aspiring Indians.

Some of the laudable fundamental principles of the policy are recognizing, identifying, and fostering the unique capabilities of each student; flexibility to students to choose what they want to learn; no hard separations between arts and sciences, between curricular and extra-curricular activities, between vocational and academic streams; multidisciplinary and a holistic education across the disciplines; instilling creativity and critical thinking; imparting ethics and human & Constitutional values; promoting multilingualism and the power of language; equipping with life skills; focus on regular formative assessment for assessing learning outcomes; full equity and inclusion in all educational decisions to ensure that all students thrive in the education system; synergy in curriculum across all levels of education from early childhood care and education to school education to higher education to life-long learning; re-positioning teachers and faculty as the heart of the learning process; setting up a 'light but tight' regulatory framework to ensure integrity, transparency, and resource efficiency of the educational system through autonomy, good governance, and empowerment; promote outstanding research; making substantial investment for a strong and vibrant public education system.

The Policy envisions an education system rooted in Indian ethos that contributes directly to transforming India, that is Bharat, sustainably into an equitable and vibrant knowledge society, by providing high-quality education to all, and thereby making India a global

knowledge superpower. The curriculum and pedagogy of educational institutions will develop a deep sense of respect towards the fundamental duties and Constitutional values, bonding with one's country, and a conscious awareness of one's roles and responsibilities in a changing world. Education further envisions to instill a deep-rooted pride in being Indian, not only in thought, but also in spirit, intellect, and deeds, as well as to develop knowledge, skills, values, and dispositions that support responsible commitment to human rights, sustainable development and living, and global well-being, thereby reflecting a truly global citizen.

The Policy has set out to transform India's education sector through systemic and systematic policy interventions at all levels of education. The Policy has laid down the foundation for integration of whole education system beginning from early childhood learning to life-long learning. The Policy calls for broadening the scope of school education by facilitating multiple pathways to learning involving both formal and non-formal education modes. Students will be given increased flexibility and choice of subjects to study, particularly in secondary school - including subjects in physical education, the arts and crafts, and vocational skills. More importantly, there will be no hard separation among 'curricular', 'extracurricular', or 'co-curricular', among 'arts', 'humanities', and 'sciences', or between 'vocational' or 'academic' streams. By 2025, at least 50% of learners through the school and higher education system shall have exposure to vocational education. The Policy aims at building an education eco-system that is conducive for every learner, every teacher, every parent and every other stakeholder involved in the education system. School Education will be more engaging and learning will be fun for the young kids as the Policy advocates integrating the early childhood learning, which currently functions as a separate system, with the school education system. A new curriculum framework with student centric pedagogy and competency based assessment will set the tone for the school education.

Higher Education will undergo a deep structural change. The existing watertight compartment will give way to multi-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary learning. A student will be given complete liberty to choose what he/she likes to learn. There will be no walls between Physics, Philosophy, or Political Science. Students can pick the subjects according to once interest and passion and ability. The emphasis is not just acquiring subject knowledge but at empowering each student to excel in the chosen field of study, profession and life. The underlining aims of the Higher Education is to develop good, thoughtful, well-rounded, and creative individuals. The HEIs will offer holistic and multidisciplinary quality education that will enable students to study one or more specialized areas of interest at a deep level, and

also develop character, ethical and Constitutional values, intellectual curiosity, scientific temper, creativity, spirit of service, and 21st century capabilities across a range of disciplines including sciences, social sciences, arts, humanities, languages, as well as professional, technical, and vocational subjects. Indian standards of Vocational Education will be aligned with the International Standard Classification of Occupations maintained by the International Labour Organization to ensure global acceptance. Curricula of all HEIs shall include credit-based courses and projects in the areas of community engagement and service, environmental education, and value-based education.

To take advantage of India's potential growth in the technology domain, the Policy proposes for setting up of an autonomous body, the National Educational Technology Forum (NETF), to provide a platform for the free exchange of ideas on the use of technology to enhance learning, assessment, planning, administration, and so on, both for school and higher education.

Policy unequivocally endorses and envisions a substantial increase in public investment in education by both the Central government and all State Governments. The target set is 6% of GDP at the earliest. Besides one-time expenditures on infrastructure, the Policy has identified 8 key long-term thrust areas for funding which are (1) universal quality early childhood care education; (2) foundational literacy and numeracy; (3) resourcing of school complexes/clusters; (4) food and nutrition (breakfast and midday meals); (5) investing in teacher education and continuing professional development of teachers; (6) revamping colleges and universities to foster excellence; (7) cultivating research; and (8) extensive use of technology and online education.

The Ministry has taken note that the implementation of the spirit and intent of the Policy are the most critical to accomplish the stated vision. Accordingly, a roadmap to implement the Policy in phased manner has been proposed. A process will be set with the States for careful planning, joint monitoring and collaborative implementation of the Policy in a prioritized and holistic manner. As per the projected roadmap the Policy would be in full operational mode in the decade 2030-40. As the NEP starts rolling out, education in India will experience a paradigm shift.

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