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FROM NCAS DESK

The formulation of a new education policy is still underway even though it's been three years since the NDA government promised one. The recently created Dr. K. Kasturirangan committee is the second committee to be formed under the NDA government to look into the policy after the T.S R Subramanian committee submitted its report in April 2016. The last such policy to be formulated was the National Policy on Education in 1986 under Rajiv Gandhi. This policy was modified in 1992 under Narasimha Rao. Since then there have been several changes in the Indian society and the education sector, which called for an improved policy to tackle the present-day challenges.

Some of the pressing issues present today are that India is one of the youngest nations, with over 54% of its population being under 25 years of age, while also having the largest number of youth and adult illiterates in the world. Its non-literate population is the highest in the world at 282.2 million. There are 10 lakh Indians joining the job market every month while only 2-3 lakh jobs are being generated every year. In addition to that, the gender disparity in education is visible both youth literacy (8.2 percentage points) and adult literacy (19.5 percentage points). The percentage of female dropouts is higher than that of males. With regard to the budgetary concerns, the 1986 resolution had suggested having 6% of the GDP outlay for education, yet the expenditure has generally been only about 3.5%.

We at NCAS, would like to point out that despite the government having claimed to have taken the respectable initiative of holding consultations in every district and taluka, the MHRD website confirms that the claims of the government are false and that barely 50% of the consultations actually took place. Moreover, the reports of these consultations are not available in the public domain. The GOI, till date, has not officially owned the Subramanian Committee Report; let alone putting it in public domain. The government needs to be transparent in its work in order to allow it to be accountable for the greater good of the nation.

Do write to us with your feedback and suggestions at interface@ncasindia.org

In solidarity

Team NCAS

National Education Policy 2016: A story of missed deadlines, failed promises

One of the first announcements of the Modi government after assuming office in May 2014 was making of a new education policy. The intention and some actions for developing a new national education policy must be appreciated. At the same time, one should not forget that there are concerns about the process of the formulation of the policy and also about recommendations in the released draft – concerns about ambiguity about the status of the draft, recommendations contrary to the provisions of the RTE Act, and concerns about financing of education.

A) The flawed process

Farce of Consultations

The Ministry of HRD claimed that this process involved 2.4 lakh Gram Panchayat level consultations, followed by discussions at each block, district, state, zonal and national level meetings to elicit people's suggestions for the New National Policy on Education. Contrary to these claims, the official website of the ministry reveals that barely 50 per cent of the planned consultations were actually held. These consultations are shrouded in mystery. Reports of these consultations are not available in public domain.

Where is the TSR Subramanian Committee Report?

A Committee for Evolution of the New Education Policy was constituted with TSR Subramanian as its Chair. Ironically, none of the members of this committee was an educationist, unlike the earlier committees and commissions. The TSR Subramanian Committee submitted its report to the Ministry of Human Resource Development in April 2016. The GOI, till date, has not officially owned the Subramanian Committee Report; leave aside putting it in public domain.

Draft of Policy, or Some Inputs?

It was expected that the MHRD will prepare a draft policy and share that with state governments for their feedback based on the Subramanian Committee Report; but that never happened. However, what the MHRD has published was a new draft titled "**Some Inputs for Draft National Education Policy – 2016**". It was never made clear if this was the draft of the new policy. It is not clear if this draft has been shared with the state governments for their feedback and suggestions.

Draft not available in Indian Languages

The draft was initially published only in English and later the Hindi version was made available. After the issue was raised in the Rajya Sabha, the draft was made available in 11 scheduled languages of India. It is disappointing to note that the draft has not been released in all the scheduled languages of India. This excludes a huge section of our population from giving their valuable suggestions and comments on the policy which is a national policy.

B) Where are we heading?

Though the draft of the new education policy is not available as of now, the draft of some inputs clearly indicates that the new policy will be an attempt to commercialise and commualise education. Though the draft largely talks of modern education, in the preamble itself, the MHRD has glorified the ancient Indian Gurukul system, and has equated education in ancient India with only one strand of Vedic system.

The whole thrust of the draft is on making education a system to produce skilled and employable human resource. The draft fails to acknowledge the important role of education in the development of society, and individuals as human beings.

The section on higher education talks of internationalization of higher education, but does not consider higher education in the national context of India. Another area of concern is the section on financing of education. The new draft chooses to explore options of private philanthropy and CSR to fund education – similar to the recommendations of the Birla-Ambani report which talked of heavy privatisation of higher education. The PPP model will eventually lead to massive exclusionary higher education system in the country.

Dilution of RTE Act

The draft very clearly attempts to dilute important provisions of the RTE Act. One, it clearly paves way for doing away with No Detention Policy. Secondly, the draft formally recognises non-formal education as a way of education. The RTE Act clearly states that the children have a right to 'school' education. The new draft, by reintroducing the old 1986 policy of non-formal education, dilutes the very foundational principle of the RTE Act.

Education in India is going through major changes, and one needs to constantly remind oneself of the founding principles of education while approaching these changes. What is essential for ensuring right of every child to education, is to re-articulate the ideals of State funded public education system, which is socially inclusive and upholds the constitutional values as envisaged in the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009. The attempt of the government suggests the contrary.

-Amit Narkar (2016)

UPDATES



1) Meeting on Agrarian Crisis- 4th July 2017, NCAS office

The meeting was organised by NCAS to bring together researchers, activists and farmers. Farmers and activists from different parts of Maharashtra participated and shared their insights not only about their current distress but also about the deeper issues like Minimum Support Prices, cropping patters, MGNREGA, situation of marginal and landless farmers, etc. Researchers and scholars from TISS and Joshi Adhikari Institute participated and presented their insights. The meeting was chaired by Mr. S. P Shukla, Former Secretary of Finance, Government of India.

2) PVTGs and their Issues Meeting-7th and 8th July, BAIF office

This meeting was organised with the objective of bringing together various organisations working on issues of PVTGs. Government officials from Tribal Research and Training Institute(TRTI) also participated. There were a total of 25 representatives from 15 organizations who participated in this meeting which discussed ongoing issues of PVTGs and the course of action for the future.



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