

## The National Education Policy, 2019

written by Kulin Dave | July 17, 2019

The Committee under the chairmanship of Dr.. Kasturirangan submitted its Draft National Education Policy on March 31, 2019. This Committee

was constituted by the Ministry of Human Resource Development in June, 2017. Vision:

- The National Education Policy, 2019 envisions an "India centred" education system that contributes directly to transforming our nation sustainably into an equitable and vibrant knowledge society, by providing high quality education to all.
- In a gist, this report proposes a policy which addresses the main challenges of: *access, equity, quality, affordability* and *accountability* which is faced by our current education system.

Key recommendations of the Policy:

- The Ministry of Human Resource Development (HRD) is to be renamed as Ministry of Education. This brings "Education" into focus.
- It increases focus on early childhood care, changing our current examination system, providing training of teachers and restructuring our education framework.
- For comprehensively and holistically implementing the Policy, it seeks to set up a National Education Commission or Rashtriya Shiksha Aayog as an apex body for education, to be headed by the Prime Minister. This would ensure necessary cohesion and synergy between the multiple dimensions of education in our country by evaluating and revising the current education system.
- This draft Policy extends the ambit of the Right to Education Act to include early childhood education and secondary school education. This means the coverage of the Act is extended to all children between ages of three to eighteen years and not merely till the age of fourteen.
- The policy recommends that multiple public schools should be brought together to form a school complex. This strategy would lead to efficient sharing of material and human resources including infrastructure and trained teachers, wider range of classes and opportunities for students and the ability of students for different ages to travel and attend the same school.
- It introduces a new developmentally appropriate curriculum and pedagogical system for school education: 5+3+3+4 design which comprises of:
  - five years of foundational stage, three years of preparatory stage, three years of middle stage and four years of secondary stage. The focus would be on fun and interactive classrooms at all stages, encouraging questions with creative and collaborative activities leading to more experiential learning.
- One of the major focus of the Policy is Early Childhood Care and Education through a two-part curriculum: (i) guidelines for up to three-year-old children (for parents and teachers) (ii) educational framework for three to eight year old children.
- For teaching training, the existing B.Ed programme is to be replaced by a four year integrated B.Ed programme that combines high quality content, practical training and pedagogy.
- The draft also recommends that teachers should be deployed with a particular school for at least a period of five to seven years including

disciplinary programs and professional development programs to improve the quality of teachers.

- To face the challenge of a large number of students falling behind in classes due to not understanding the language, it recommends that the medium of instruction must be either the home language/ mother tongue/ local language till grade five and preferable till grade eight. It strongly emphasizes on promotion of Indian and classical languages by setting up three new National Institutes for Pali, Persian and Prakrit.
- It proposes continuity of the three language formula which provided for the study of "Hindi, English and modern Indian language (preferably one of the southern languages) in Hindi speaking states and Hindi, English, and the Regional language in the non-Hindi speaking states"
- Currently, higher education institutions can be only set up by Parliament of State legislatures. The draft policy proposes setting up the National Higher Education Regulatory Authority (NHERA), which will be the sole regulator for higher education. National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) Medical Council of India (MCI), Bar Council of India (BCI) and All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) are to be Professional Standard Setting Bodies and set standards for practice of the respective professions.
- In its new role as given in the draft policy, National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) shall function as the top level accreditor, issuing licensed to different accreditation institutions. It sets a goal of accrediting all higher educational institutions by 2030.
- Keeping in mind that Research and Innovation are essential for growth and sustaining a large economy, a National Research Foundation (NRF) shall be established. The NRF will grant competitive funding for research proposals, facilitate research at academic institutions, act as a liaison among researchers and recognize outstanding research and progress achieved via NRF funding/mentoring across subjects, through prizes and special seminars recognizing the work of the researchers.
- It recommends several school exam reforms, one of them being State Census examinations in Class three, five and eight. This strategy would facilitate tracking of students' progress throughout their education. Board examinations will be restructured to test core skills, concepts, high order capacities in range of required subjects and elective subjects of the students' choice.
- Another major highlight is the revamp of higher educational institutions which will be restructured into three major heads: (i) research universities focusing equally on research and teaching (ii) teaching universities, with a primary focus on teaching (iii) colleges focusing only on teaching at undergraduate levels. Thus, this policy places highest emphasis on

moving towards a higher educational system consisting of large multidisciplinary universities and colleges.

- Curriculum of the Undergraduate programmes shall be redesigned to include: (i) a common core curriculum and (ii) one/two areas of specialization. Students will be required to choose an area of specialization as a "major" and an optional area as a "minor".
- Vocational courses in addition to traditional academic courses in grades nine to twelve. For this purpose, a National Committee for Vocational Education shall be set up along with a separate fund for integration of vocational education into educational institutions.
- In addition to the above, the Committee observed that technology plays a major role in our current education system and thus, it recommends National Mission on Education through information and communication technology. The National Educational Technology Forum shall be a platform for free exchange of ideas on the use of technology to improve learning, assessment, planning and administration.

Major Drawbacks:

- All though the report emphasizes inclusive education and caters to girls, Muslims, urban, poor, tribal, and transgender children, the challenges of instituting equal and quality education for all i.e. "equality of education opportunity" has not been addressed at all.
- The draft lacks operational details and does not offer insights into how the policy will be funded. It must be ensured that this policy does not face litigation, state resistance, and any operational challenges on the ground.
- Expanding coverage under the RTE Act to include childhood and secondary education is a highlight of the policy, however this should be introduced gradually. One must consider the teacher vacancies as well as the quality of infrastructure, and amend the Act after a while.
- Setting up of the Rashtriya Shiksha Aayog is crucial but fraught with many challenges in relation to administration. Bringing medical, agricultural and legal education under one umbrella is likely to be a big challenge.
- The issue of language must be handled sensitively in view of emotional overtones. Protests are often made without understanding the spirit of the text. Within a day, the draft's proposal of the three language system has made Hindi the centre of controversy. It was seen as move to impose Hindi on non-Hindi states.
- Sexual education is an important issue that was properly dealt with in the draft policy. It talks about including sexual education in secondary education however, neither mechanisms of redressal nor complaint are created for schools. Although this policy has given space for sexual education, it is still inadequate to deal with the issue of child abuse. It does not seem like the policy would allow such a curriculum for the younger grades, to allow

- them to understand the ideas of sexual abuse, physical issues and consent.
- Another prominent issue that has been addressed by the policy is the quality of education in the school but it does not deal with capacity building and training of the older teachers. It only emphasizes on plans of inculcating new teachers.

Conclusion:

The draft National Education Policy has drawbacks yet, The Kasturirangan Committee does deserve credit for proposing and delivering a nationally relevant and globally sensitive New Education Policy. It covers important areas like School Education, Higher Education, Transforming Education (by establishment of the Rashtriya Shiksha Aayog) and additional Focus Areas (including vocational education, languages and use of technology in education). It is a bold step for the progress of the Indian education system. Such a policy is the need of the hour to make India a knowledge superpower by equipping all the students in the country with necessary skills and knowledge and to ensure quality education, research and innovation.

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