

Reforms in School Education and its Impacts as mentioned in the New Education Policy-2020

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Abstract

The important issues spelled out and new policy decisions proposed in the New Education Policy -2020 were presented before the selected sample of heterogeneous group Higher Education faculties, School Teachers and Research Scholars and M.Ed., Students. The important issues were discussed and their feedback are reported here.

Introduction

The Education policy draft was prepared and placed for feedback from the public. It is assured that the draft will be prepared in line with people's suggestions. To know about various stake holders' opinion on the draft New Education policy, an interaction with selected sample of faculties, Students and Research scholars from Salem District

The Policy- The key pin the Early Childhood Care and Education:

The Foundation of Learning

- Objective: Every child in the age range of 3-6 years has access to free, safe, high quality, developmentally appropriate care and education by 2025.
- In addition to problems of access, the Committee observed several quality related deficiencies in the existing early childhood learning programmes.

These include:

- (i) curriculum that doesn't meet the developmental needs of children,
- (ii) lack of qualified and trained teachers, and

(iii) substandard pedagogy.

(iv) Currently, most early childhood education is delivered through anganwadis and private-preschools. However, there has been less focus on the educational aspects of early childhood.

- The draft Policy recommends developing a two-part curriculum for early childhood care and education.
- This will consist of:
 - (i) Guidelines for up to three-year-old children (for parents and teachers), and
 - (ii) Educational framework for three to eight-year-old children.
- This would be implemented by improving and expanding the anganwadi system and co-locating anganwadis with primary schools.

The Right to Education Act, 2009 (RTE Act)

- Currently, the RTE Act provides for free and compulsory education to all children from the age of six to 14 years.
- The draft Policy recommends extending the ambit of the RTE Act to include early childhood education and secondary school education.
- This would extend the coverage of the Act to all children between the ages of three to 18 years.
- The draft Policy recommends that the recent amendments to the RTE Act on continuous and comprehensive evaluation and the no detention policy must be reviewed.
- It states that there should be no detention of children till class eight.
- Instead, schools must ensure that children are achieving age-appropriate learning levels.

Curriculum framework:

- The current structure of school education must be restructured on the basis of the development needs of students.

- This would consist of a 5-3-3-4 design comprising: (i) five years of foundational stage (three years of pre-primary school and classes one and two),
 - (ii) three years of preparatory stage (classes three to five),
 - (iii) three years of middle stage (classes six to eight), and
 - (iv) four years of secondary stage (classes Nine to 12).
- The notions of “higher secondary” or “junior college” will be eliminated; Grades 11 and 12 will be considered an integral part of the secondary stage.
- The Committee noted that the current education system solely focuses on rote learning of facts and procedures.
 - Hence, it recommends that the curriculum load in each subject should be reduced to its essential core content.
 - This would make space for holistic, discussion and analysis-based learning.
 - Home language/mother tongue as medium of instruction: When possible, the medium of instruction - at least until Grade 5 but preferably till at least Grade 8 - will be the home language/mother tongue/local language.
 - Thereafter, the home/local language shall continue to be taught as a language wherever possible.
 - Three languages from Standard 6 onwards.
 - Reducing the importance to English, concentrating on Indian Languages.
 - One among the scheduled languages will be the choice.

School exam reforms:

- The Committee noted that the current board examinations:
 - (i) Force students to concentrate only on a few subjects,
 - (ii) Do not test learning in a formative manner, and
 - (iii) Cause stress among students.
- To track students’ progress throughout their school experience, the draft Policy proposes State level Examinations in classes Three, Five and Eight.

- Sanskrit will be offered at all levels of school and higher education as one of the optional languages on par with all Schedule 8 languages
- Further, it recommends restructuring the board examinations to test only core concepts, skills and higher order capacities.
- These board examinations will be on a range of subjects.
- The students can choose their subjects, and the semester when they want to take these board exams.
- The in-school final examinations may be replaced by these board examinations.

School infrastructure:

- The Committee noted that establishing primary schools in every habitation across the country has helped increase access to education.
- However, it has led to the development of very small schools (having low number of students).
- The small size of schools makes it operationally complex to deploy teachers and critical physical resources.
- Therefore, the draft Policy recommends that multiple public schools should be brought together to form a school complex.
- A complex will consist of one secondary school (classes nine to twelve) and all the public schools in its neighbourhood that offer education from pre-primary till class eight.
- The school complexes will also include anganwadis, vocational education facilities, and an adult education centre.
- Each school complex will be a semi-autonomous unit providing integrated education across all stages from early childhood to secondary education.
- This will ensure that resources such as infrastructure and trained teachers can be efficiently shared across a school complex.

Teacher management:

- The Committee noted that there has been a steep rise in teacher shortage, lack of professionally qualified teachers, and deployment of teachers for non-educational purposes.
- The draft Policy recommends that teachers should be deployed with a particular school complex for at least five to seven years.
- Further, teachers will not be allowed to participate in any non-teaching activities (such as cooking mid-day meals or participating in vaccination campaigns) during school hours that could affect their teaching capacities.
- For teacher training, the existing B.Ed. programme will be replaced by a four-year integrated B.Ed. programme that combines high-quality content, pedagogy, and practical training.
- An integrated continuous professional development will also be developed for all subjects.
- Teachers will be required to complete a minimum of 50 hours of continuous professional development training every year.
- A large number of merit-based scholarships will be instituted across the country for studies at outstanding four-year integrated Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) programmes.
- In order to fully restore the integrity of the teacher education system, the thousands of substandard standalone Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs) across the country will be shut down as soon as possible.
- A short 5-7 minute teaching demonstration Along with TET mandatory for all teacher recruitments.
- The two-year B.Ed. programme could be replaced by a suitably structured special B.Ed. programme of slightly shorter duration (One Year), as determined by the same multidisciplinary institutions offering the four-year integrated and two-year B.Ed. programmes.

Regulation of schools:

- The draft Policy recommends separating the regulation of schools from aspects such as policymaking, school operations, and academic development.
- It suggests creating an independent State School Regulatory Authority for each state that will prescribe basic uniform standards for public and private schools.
- The Department of Education of the State will formulate policy and conduct monitoring and supervision.
- Private schools will not use the word 'public' in their names.
- 'Public' schools will only be those that are funded publicly, i.e., Government schools and Government-aided schools.
- Private schools may be free to set their fees, but they shall not increase school fees arbitrarily. Reasonable increases that can stand public scrutiny can be made.

The excerpts of the discussions

One of the participant expressed her curiosity and concern towards the possibility of existence of the present set up and the expected modifications in the curriculum of the Four year integrated BEd., (Primary) and Four year integrated B.Ed., (Secondary) courses. From their expressions , it is understood that, almost, all the BEd., college faculties are in a fear about the New policy with regard to their Employment.

Regarding the semester pattern at secondary level from 9th std to 12th std, discussion arouse about the possibility of flexibility in choosing the papers for various semesters.

They raise doubts about, whether the major subject allotment will be placed by 9th std itself, instead of the present slot at 11th standard.

There were concerns about central examinations for 3rd, 5th and 8th standards expressed by the participants.

Further, they express their dissatisfaction towards the policy makers, for not spelling anything about Private school Teachers' salary monitoring system and equality in salary in line with the government teachers as both of them are doing the same work.

They told that, the policy will become useless, if it is not addressing issues of the private schools and their teachers. They asked, whether the policy is only for the government schools?

Regarding merging primary schools and Anganvadi which are having low enrollment and creating school complexes..., the participants told that, already, this process is underway, because of the private schools, the government primary schools are getting closed one by one, the primary schools became victim to private schools. Now this policy is going to close almost all the Government primary schools.

Regarding reversion of no detention policy, teachers told that, it is not possible, in the present scenario. Like the earlier system, Teachers cannot fail the students for their poor performance. Pass/ fail decision can be declared only externally through central examinations. But, such central examinations in frequent intervals will kill the freedom of the young children too.

They, appraise the inclusion of pre KG to UKG, since already people have adopted it. But, While popularity of Government schools are getting fading due to avoidance by the educated families, the participants expressed concern towards future of the Government schools.

Regarding the conversion of colleges to Autonomous institutions, participants whispered about possibility of "irregular" type degrees and expressed their fear of future of higher education.

A senior faculty told that, this policy is not going to do anything with the core of the schools education system, just it's going to restructure the class intervals of existing stratification.

Regarding three language policy, Participants told that too much emphasis over second language itself is the problem for the poor quality of education in India. Language is needed just for communication. But, on giving importance to English, schools and colleges spoils the learning of other skill oriented subjects.

One of the participant expressed her idea, To assist the community with regard to translation of various subject contents... preparation of document in English/in any other language, Language assistants may be trained and that this may give opportunities to those who got expertise with Languages and will reduce the burden of learning additional languages. For those, who are having interest in learning number of languages may be allowed to learn on their own.

While speaking of the policy statement regarding the ' words " public schools " should be only for government/Aided institutions, many such examples were recalled by the participants, those private institutions, they have prefixed "special" in their name, and discussion arouse regarding the ignorance or mischievous behavior of managements in fixing such words to cheat the public.

School Teachers, expressed doubts about the future of "samcheerkalvi" of Tamilnadu, and the efforts so far taken for its establishment. Further recorded their concern towards, policy documents', proposal towards creation of Teaching Assistant Posts for the B.Ed., Graduated Teacher Aspirants, as a temporary job to assist in the required areas. They felt that, this will create scope to appoint temporary teachers in plenty and will spoil the future of the aspirants.

Conclusion

This study gave an opportunity for the participants affiliated with Education at School and Higher Level to have a scholarly and grass root level debate. Overall, it is clear that, for the most part, school education and higher education teachers are afraid of the new strategy, that it will decrease job prospects and that their current private opportunities will also become unclear. And the senior teachers expressed their view that, whatever the policy decision might be, they should allow ample time to set up, the government should think twice before and after implementation, they should not intervene with the policy and change the framework again and again, as in the case of B.Ed.

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