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# **Analysis of National Education Policy: A Perspective**

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Abstract: Education is the backbone of the society. The social progress depends on the quality education. But present situation in India does not permit to secure quality education in all across the country. Presently, the economic condition of our nation is very bad, gradually living standard of the people is decreasing, and people struggle for collecting their basic livelihood. Price-hiking has become a major problem. In such a situation our policy makers have drafted a New Education Policy on 2019. This drafted policy emphasized many important aspects of education which is very much essential in this present juncture of time. But this policy has many drawbacks in many aspects. Had our policy makers given more attention in making this policy, then this policy would have been a more fruitful one to all kind of students. Through this paper the researcher analyses the draft reports and explores the inappropriateness of the said policy.

Index Terms - Education, New Education Policy, Draft Education Policy, National Education Policy, Critical Analysis

# INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM

The report of the new National Education Policy (NEP) 2019 spanning over 54 pages includes some seeds of germinal thoughts for long-awaited shifts in the education sector in certain respects no doubt. Yet we have to ponder over certain crucial aspects which either have not been adequately addressed or not dealt with due importance so as to enable us to respond effectively to the rapidly changing landscape led by globalization, digitalization, introduction of Artificial Intelligence and the advent of the Fourth Industrial Revolution in which we find ourselves overwhelmed and somewhat caught unprepared.

It seems the Report is lacking in terms of integral vision, requirement of affirmative action and lop-sided in favour of centralization and privatization. The question of the day is whether we are ready to face the challenges because education as the backbone of the nation needs to reconstruct society and aid human capital formation to usher in a 'knowledge economy' as per the emerging needs and by imparting new skills to cope with upcoming issues while keeping values and normative aspect intact.

With these introductory remarks let us articulate our specific observation precisely addressed to each item of the subject matter:

## **New Architecture & Consolidation of Educational Institutions:**

It has been stated that more and more educational centers need to be established in coming days. Not only it is to be achieved in quantitative terms in years to come but also in a systematic and well-thought-out manner with the assistance of local community elders those who possess deep knowledge regarding local history, indigenous practices and similar intangible wealth and technology that could be optimally utilized in the process. The reason that this policy has been harshly criticized is that this policy completely ignores the indigenous communities of India. It also ignores the vast reservoir of technology with which they lead a healthy and sustainable life-style for generations.

We believe that our National Education Policy should be flexible enough to allot enough room for the preservation and transmission of this culturally tuned pathway to development.

Secondly, it is conspicuous from the draft NEP that there runs an undercurrent towards uniformity in the name of systematization and standardization. It tends to subdue individual uniqueness and regional diversity, hence to be resisted lock, stock and barrel.

# **Focus on High Quality Liberal Education:**

Before we go for asking why this particular emphasis let us put forward that at the present juncture our most educationists focus on liberal education due to its flexibility and skill-enhancing capacity among the learners. Liberal education also focuses on the three domains expounded by Benjamin Bloom viz. Cognitive, Affective and Psycho-motor.

However, neither the definition of liberal arts education as given in the NEP under consideration is acceptable nor the methodology of achieving this goal as envisaged in the NEP is justifiable. It seems so because it looks at liberal education from the standpoint of creative thinking of a person. But this operational definition is mistaken and misguided because individual creativity cannot be synonymous with much broader conceptual understanding of liberal education.

Besides, it speaks of multiple entry points and multiple exit points. In a country like India the mindset of people is very rigid and people usually doesn't accept the reforms immediately however well-intentioned it might be. This apart, it is apprehended that multiple entry points and multiple exit points might evoke sort of chaotic response in the education sector.

There are many other lacunas, for example the draft NEP 2019 has ignored the tenor of Indianness and there is a tacit assumption that the students should be trained and equipped so as to render them fit for the work-force and the demands of competitive economy. Obviously the main conditions which are likely to predominate are ruthless and rugged professionalism, unhealthy competitive minds and sort of inevitable compulsion to join the global race. In this pursuit the draft policy has tried to impose the National Higher Education Qualification Framework, CBCS, internationalization of education through institutional collaboration etc. However, these standardized norms are not equally fruitful for all countries due to highly mechanistic inclination inherent in this policy orientation.

So, in our paper we shall highlight those areas of concern while our perception derives from our conviction that higher education in India should not be converted into a system of mechanical doling out of degrees and certificates without taking care of vital human values and sensibilities without of course compromising the three "E"s of Education: that is Expansion, Equity and Excellence.

## OBSERVATIONS ON NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY

The report of the new National Education Policy (NEP) 2019 spanning over 54 pages includes some seeds of thoughts for longawaited shifts in the education sector in certain respects no doubt. Yet, we have to ponder over certain crucial aspects which either have not been adequately addressed or not dealt with due importance so as to enable us to respond effectively to the rapidly changing landscape led by globalisation, digitalisation, introduction of Artificial Intelligence and the advent of the Fourth Industrial Revolution in which we find ourselves overwhelmed. Its repetitive tone apart, what seems in which it is lacking is the integral vision, requirement of affirmative action and lop-sided in favour of centralization and privatization. The question is whether we are ready to face the challenges because education as the backbone of the nation needs to reconstruct society and aid human capital formation to usher in a 'knowledge economy' as per the emerging needs and by imparting new skills to cope with upcoming issues while keeping values and normative aspect intact.

Besides, one needs to take into account that India despite commendable economic expansion and moderate growth, the roots of backwardness cannot be glossed over which remain diehard till date within the structural framework of asymmetric federalism making central assistance imperative for the socio-economic development of the states and their competence and sufficient empowerment. Alas, we surmise whether this can be achieved in the present lop-sided political structure unless amended or unless new initiatives like the Right to Education, 2009 could be better implemented or translated into practice (Refer to Das, 2014 for analysis of constraints in realizing universalization of elementary education). Again, this is not an apologia to return to the much discredited Benthamite crass utilitarianism. But the underlying target of public policy of education should always be in terms of its unfailing commitment to inclusiveness to gain access to knowledge, in short, which is often conceptualised in terms of accessibility, affordability and availability.

We believe it is possible only when we go for the subalternization of education by deliberately switching over to a distinct mode required for or necessary to reach out to those teeming millions who lie outside the education sector due to the inherent failure in planning and continuous exclusions or gaps in much vaunted macro-development processes. If it can be remedied only then education in the real sense of the term could be a veritable force to draw upon for effecting positive social engineering in the interest of the dispossessed and vulnerable section of the population and objectively it would be transformed into a weapon of liberation in the sense of deeper understanding and for attaining the goals of harmony and sustainability. It is very much important given the composition of our society and inequities therein including our composite cultural heritage, demographic pressure, economic disparities, growing competitiveness, and dwindling natural resources. Therefore, our public policies on education should at the same time strive towards capacity building and empowerment of the weaker sections particularly while at the same time it should not ignore the urgency of necessary institutional support not only in terms to provide funds but also to fulfil what is required for monitoring and accountability.

Here we find a gross mismatch between what is being projected ambitiously and the noticeable lag in the budgetary allocation for education made by the central government. For example, "in view of the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in Higher Education being only 25 per cent of the youth in the 18-23 age groups, government spends only about Rs 2500 per eligible youth. Now, When the government is chasing a GER target of 50 per cent by 2023, the increase in spend over the 2017-18 fiscal years but nominal, at 0.42 percent" (James Abdey& G.L. Tayal's views accessed from http://www-moneycontrol-com.cdn.ampproject.org). It clearly shows that Government is suddenly in a hurry to prop up its profile to compensate its past sluggish ways of doing things. In this context it is worth noting what K. Venkatasubramanian, honourable member of the Planning Commission of India had observed. He said, "We are far behind the target of spending 6 per cent of the GNP on education as recommended by the Education Commission (1964-66) and in recent years the relative share of higher education in the allocation of funds has also declined, primarily due to resource constraints. Although, the overall government contribution has been increasing throughout the plan periods, it has not kept pace with rapid rise in enrolment and escalation of prices. Often inadequacy of financial resources leads to poor infrastructure and physical facilities, low investment in research and development, having adverse impact on the quality of higher education system" (Venkatasubramanian, 2002). Also a thorough scrutiny of the NEP is bound to reveal the underlying bias that perhaps it pays much attention to the quantitative aspect like the GER at the cost of quality and tends to confuse quality with talks of multidisciplinary approach.

That the old trend has not much changed could be testified from the inadequate share of education both in the GNP as well as in terms of overall government budget. As Das (2014) notes that "The public expenditure -centre and states—on education is now only 3.6 percent of the GDP. The goal of allocating 6 per cent has not been achieved". In this year's budget speech, the Union Finance Minister made a number of grandiose announcements like the formation of a National Research Foundation, more money for top centres, 'Study in India' scheme etc. Needless to say, this will require huge public investment which is doubtful to take place in the present era of Liberalisation, Privatization and Globalization which essentially prioritises 'minimum government, maximum governance'. The overall direction or trend is that government, of course with varying degree, will encourage less spending on purely welfare or social sectors and it is supposed to be attached only to 'the steering functions. So, how it is possible to treat public and private institutions equally is a matter of vague conjecture as it is clear from the recommendation of the K. Kasturirangan Committee which has advocated for equal encouragement and empowerment of private H.E. Organizations. Also, it is not clear what the new policy means by empowerment of the private H.E. organizations because in the LPG framework the balance is already tilted in favour of these organizations. So, the role of the regulatory system would be very crucial in the coming

days. But if there is only one agency like the National Higher Education Regulatory Authority (NHERA), proposed to be introduced as a sole regulator for higher education, including professional education it would certainly be problematic.

Besides it is not clear how the state level plans in spite of obvious limitations of plan outlays and given fragile economic conditions, creating a dependency syndrome on the part of the states could give birth to a new institutional architecture. (Albeit from a pie chart taken from the Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability, 2007, S. K. Das shows that state governments contribute the lion's share of public financing so far as elementary education is concerned. But the point to be noted is that the cost of the burden for implementation of the 2009 RTE Act is becoming heavier for the already burdened states like ours). So, the indication of hindrance is that it is built into the system itself, and therefore quite uphill to overcome.

With these introductory remarks let us articulate our specific observation precisely addressed to each item of the subject matter:

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The primary objective of this study is to analyze the National Education Policy's final report. The researcher also reveals that major recommendations and interrelates with existing higher education system in India.

#### **METHODOLOGY**

Research methodology is the very much crucial for any study. Therefore, in this study also research methodology is very important. For the fulfilments of the objectives researcher collected data from both type of sources i.e. Primary source and Secondary source. Draft report of the policy and final report of the policy considered as a primary source and other relevant documents considered as secondary sources such as online paper, books on contemporary education. Researcher mainly collected data through the help of Documents Analysis techniques and by nature this study is Historical. In historical research both type of data is essential first hand and Second-hand data is important.

## ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

New Architecture & Consolidation of Educational Institutions: It has been stated that more and more educational centres need to be established in coming days. Not only it is to be achieved in quantitative terms in years to come but also in a systematic and well-thought-out manner with the assistance of local community elders those who possess deep knowledge regarding local history, indigenous practices and similar intangible wealth and technology that could be optimally utilised in the process. The basic weakness of this National Education Policy 2020 is its gross neglect of indigenous community and the vast reservoir of technology with which they lead a healthy and sustainable life-style for generations. It is important to recognise that the roots of SDGs (encompassing 17global goals like poverty elimination, gender empowerment, fighting climate change etc. to be achieved by all stakeholders jointly by 2030) could be traced to the ethno-pedagogical qua indigenous forms of knowledge which exists among the tribal groups. So, our present education system needs a new direction based on the masses and their needs. Only then, our education would be diversified and assume a meaningful form in catering to the context driven conditions and by supplying new nodes of knowledge which otherwise remain marginalised in the national or hegemonic paradigm of 'the mainstream'. In this context, it is very much appropriate to build a need-based curriculum in conformity with the ethno-cultural perspective so that it reflects and corresponds to aboriginal community's expectations and aspirations. Inhabited in the Jangal-mohal area of rich and dense forests in which a number of indigenous peoples like Santhals (the great tribal warriors namely Sidho, and Kanho and Birsa belonging to the Mundas after whom our University has been christened), Sabar (Kheriya), Oran, Bhumij, Birhar, to name a few, dwell together since time immemorial, our University aptly puts emphasis on cultivating and propagating their culture which contributes substantially to the wellbeing of society and its unique heritage. We believe that our National Education Policy should be flexible enough to allot enough room for the preservation and transmission of this culturally tuned pathway to development. It is not only our perception and vision but our international organization like UNESCO also endorses this premise and talks of commitment to strengthen heterogeneous cultural traditions. Even the present regime of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) stands on pedestal of epistemological merit of these resourceful and innovative mechanisms.

Secondly, it is conspicuous from the draft NEP that there runs an undercurrent towards uniformity in the name of systematization and standardization. It tends to subdue individual uniqueness and regional diversity, hence to be resisted lock, stock and barrel. This also goes against the scientific temperament and planning which is a prerequisite of diversified education. It is in the spirit of this understanding that we may arrive at the conclusion that the newly proposed projects viz. Project Nalanda and Project Takshashila won't be establishing any centre of excellence but it would invariably turn into veritable controlling or interfering agencies bent on robbing the autonomy of the HEIs. It is important that we should celebrate the diversity of learning as the HEIs are functioning differently according to their surrounding catchment area and its distinct nature and peculiarity. Only there is a need of meaningful coordination and collaboration among them through a mechanism like Higher Education consortium.

But again, it does not mean a merger plan as indicated in the Economic Survey 2019 and corroborated in the NEP because in case of merger the character of the University might suffer the most. Hence, it can be doubtlessly mentioned that such merger plan would be far from viable and credible alternative. Besides, it remains vague how the proposed policy seeks to divide the HEIs into three categories like 'Research University', 'Teaching University' and 'Teaching Colleges'.

# Focus on High Quality Liberal Education:

Before we go for asking why this particular emphasis let us put forward that at the present juncture our most educationists focus on liberal education due to its flexibility and skill-enhancing capacity among the learners. Liberal education also focuses on the three domains expounded by Benjamin Bloom viz. Cognitive, Affective and Psycho-motor. Equal development of these three aspects of a human child is always desirable for personality development and holistic approach. So, this vision and mission is acceptable in the context of higher education.

However, neither the definition of liberal arts education as given in the NEP under consideration is acceptable nor the methodology of achieving this goal as envisaged in the NEP is justifiable. It seems so because it looks at liberal education from the standpoint of creative thinking of a person. But this operational definition is mistaken and misguided because individual creativity cannot be synonymous with much broader conceptual understanding of liberal education. One is further reminded of the earlier commissions and committees on education which rightly laid stress on Information and Communication Technology etc. But the K. Kasturirangan Committee that has submitted the draft NEP to the MHRD has not considered this aspect within the parameter of 'liberal education'. No doubt, it is a critical lacuna of the proposed policy that it fails to conceptualise 'liberal education' in its fullness.

Besides, it speaks of multiple entry points and multiple exit points. In a country like India the mindset of people is very rigid and people usually doesn't accept the reforms immediately however well-intentioned it might be. This apart, it is apprehended that multiple entry points and multiple exit points might evoke sort of chaotic response in the education sector by affecting the soul of education which relies on the sanctity of the programme. Needless to say, this is inextricably bound up with the notion of definite time scale of a course. Were it to break to create apparent flexibility it would definitely stultify the importance of the course. Nevertheless the idea of such experimental approach could be acceded only after there is sufficient consensus in favour of such reform prior to its introduction. Otherwise any such proposal of multiple entry and exit points would be an elitist, tantamount to a top-down approach instead of a bottom-up one based on democratic urge.

Also what is important to note in the NEP is its categorical disapproval of M.Phil. We think it is not only harsh but quite insensitive also given the fact that even new and young universities offer this course and many students are getting themselves admitted in this programme zealously for obtaining academic grade points. Hence, MPhil course cannot be drastically discontinued; it won't be a pragmatic decision to welcome, else it will have disastrous impact on the current candidates' future prospects that are pursuing M.Phil already. Also it sounds discriminatory because the proposed NEP seeks to exclude the M. Phil students which obviously mean according exclusive weight-age to the PhD research scholars.

## **Creating a Conducive-learning-environment:**

Learning is a modification or purification of behaviour through experience or training. While the foreign concept emphasises on modification of behaviour, the Indian context lays stress on purification of behaviour of the child which is more comprehensive and holistic process. In the word of Sri Ramakrishna, 'jabot banchi, tabotsikhi' meaning learning is a continuous process. It becomes fruitful and meaningful only when it is joyful and can avoid the mechanistic approach of rote learning in the field of education. So, basically what this goal seeks to promote among the youth is creativity, values and joy the sum total of which is inner satisfaction, not to burden the young minds with volleys of information and technical skills merely for the narrow ends of career facility. From this perspective learning should be spontaneous where freedom of mind is the key determinant of the learner. But the draft NEP 2019 has very much ignored this tenor of Indianness and there is a tacit assumption that the students should be trained and equipped so as to render them fit for the work-force and the demands of competitive economy. Obviously the main conditions which are likely to predominate are more professionalism, unhealthy competitive minds and sort of inevitable compulsion to join the global race. In this pursuit the draft policy has tried to impose the National Higher Education Qualification Framework, C.B.C.S, internationalisation of education through institutional collaboration etc. However, these standardised norms are not equally fruitful for all countries due to highly mechanistic inclination inherent in this policy orientation. As such it seems to take away the inner humanistic creativity and spontaneity associated with sports, yoga and participation in cultural and community activities while trying to stereotype higher education into a system of mechanical doling out of degrees and certificates without taking care of vital human sensibilities. This attitude becomes amply clear when we notice how the draft policy instead of regular courses puts special emphasis on ODE mode for achieving the GER of 50 per cent. At present what we encounter is a system of discrimination between the regular course and distance learning. Within this draft there is no such message and insight for planning whereby this discrimination could be removed.

# **Energized, Engaged and Capable Faculty:**

'A lamp is unable to give light to another lamp unless it is not burnt'. Likewise a teacher is unable to teach unless s/he is not learning. It means learning is a continuous and comprehensive process that builds up competence and promotes the strong reciprocal bond between the two sides-teacher and the students. The draft policy seeks to lay down certain rules as standardized formula for faculty development and professional development of the teachers. No doubt this is an important aspect because a good curriculum is not a sufficient condition for quality education; rather what is more important is performance aspect of the teacher or instructor. For this purpose, it is important to regulate appointment of teachers and conditions of their service including the avenues whereby they could further advance through faculty development and faculty exchange. In West Bengal although we find the vibrant functioning of the CSC and that the state government is giving more importance to full-time college appointments. In this draft policy, however, there is not a single place which talks of or emphasises the security of service and dignity of teachers. From our university perspective it's very much clear that there is not a single appointment on the basis of adhoc or contractual faculty appointment while the University keeps on inviting some renowned personalities for occasional extension lectures from India and abroad. Thus, we tend to empower and enrich our learner community in the modern ways of knowing and looking at the world to develop both scientific approach as well as culturally conditioned sensitivity to the mother earth.

# **Empowered Governance and Autonomy:**

Empowerment and good governance are watchwords of quality education, its efficiency, economy and effectiveness. However, it is possible only when there is enlightened guidance to ensure public interest and an established framework /network among different stakeholders. But in the LPG era when the shift has been decisively in favour market, it is not clear how there will be a functional cooperation between the private and the public.

The NEP talks of autonomy of HEIs like Universities. However, autonomy is only possible when a level of maturity has already been attained. In the conditions as obtaining in India we are still reconciling in our attempt to come out of the legacy of state-led development. As such, there is a dilemma that when the universities are functioning autonomously to set their academic agenda, the financial control lies with the government. So, the talk of autonomy is but a window-dressing, often providing the means to control the HEIs. In the circumstances, our goal should be to encourage the Universities so that they diversify their activities and put much focus on research led innovations as a necessary base for raising their revenue as a long road map for self-reliance. In our SKBU we have already introduced life-skill courses like South Asia Studies, women studies, Jhumur and Chhau that attracts lots of young enthusiasts and which are also economically viable and value-inculcating at the same time.

# **Transformation of the Regulatory System:**

The NEP speaks of transformation in the present regulatory system. The necessity of regulation in Higher Education in a vast country like India is very much crucial because without effective regulation there will be haphazard planning. Similarly, regulation ranges from assessment procedures, regulation of fees to restrict commercial motive because the state cannot afford to let market competition determine quality of education. It also applies to the medium of instruction. Besides, India as a post-colonial country still bears strong western hangover which often is pitted against our own indigenous culture and heritage. Therefore, some control is always important but what is crucial is to strike a balance to sustain institutional autonomy. It is the state that has overall responsibility to regulate but it is also the onus of the state to ensure that the Universities function with freedom and autonomy without political interference. It is important to take note of the fact that the NEP has suggested changes to make NHERA as a sole regulator for higher education and for the transformation of the UGC to Higher Education Grant Council (HEGC) which shall be responsible for disbursing development grants and fellowships and transformation of current agencies like NCTE, AICTE to professional standard setting bodies (PSSBs). Obviously it would usher in a sea change in the landscape of Higher Education. We think the result might be partly beneficial because in the transformed system HEGC would be functioning in a focussed manner. But the problem is probable lack of coordination and proper inter-agency relationship without which our spurt in expectations might remain unfulfilled.

# **Rigorous Teacher Preparation:**

It is part and parcel of quality education and a matter of perennial concern of many intervening agencies like UGC, NAAC etc. who always press for quality improvement. Not only but quality is increasingly regarded as a valuable resource demand in the open market economy. But the issue is how a teacher should improve his or her level of competence because quality is not an abstract thing, rather a social product. It develops through a process of nurturing from cognition to creativity, thereby opening the vista of intelligence, creativity, interest for exploration of knowledge. So, from one aspect, it is human endeavour but broadly as the NEP 1986 aptly mentioned that the role of the teacher depends on the social conditions of motivation and inspirational backup. Therefore, it would be a vague assumption if we just expect that a teacher will always be a skilful performer. So what is important is to see whether any positive change takes place in social environment or whether enhanced remuneration and availability of ICT would be sufficient conditions to create higher intellectual capacity.

In the circumstances, the limitations of the NEP 2019 seems to emanate from the fact that it seeks to bring about some surface changes like creation of intermediary job profiles, introduction of 4 years Integrated Bachelor of Education Programme etc. But it is unfortunate that it neglects the crucial social aspect and particularly if we think in terms of the implications of new B. Ed course we would see how it would add to the burden of the financially weaker sections of our society who are unable to run the cost of the investment in exchange of the proposed benefit. It is also pathetic to note that while the NEP, 2019 enthusiastically propagates the spirit of professionalism and the need of professional competence; it awfully neglects the other important aspect that is the requirement of subsidy by the state because the Multidisciplinary institutions which would be endowed with the responsibility to run these new courses might be commercially motivated.

# CONCLUSION

The researcher can conclude from the above analysis that this Draft report of National Policy has many applications in many dimensions in the educational field. And no doubt, this policy has been built to rebuild a backbone in the educational field. But, all our other policies on Education neglected all these aspects. This is very much pathetic. There was no policy in the history of Indian Education that focused on the multidisciplinary aspect of Education. Our policy-makers are frustrated about the effects of its implementation. So, this critic on National Education Policy helps us to understand the Indian education and its possibilities for implementation for the said policy.

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