Inside:
Perspectives
From the Field
Reviews

EDUCATION POLICIES AND THEIR PRACTICE

"Learning Curve is a publication on education from Azim Premji University. It aims to reach out to teachers, teacher educators, school heads, education functionaries, parents and NGOs, on contextual and thematic issues that have an enduring relevance and value to help practitioners. It provides a platform for the expression of varied opinions, perspectives, encourages new and informed positions, thought-provoking points of view and stories of innovation. The approach is a balance between being an 'academic' and 'practitioner' oriented magazine."

FROM THE EDITOR

Every country has its own set of goals and aspirations for the welfare of its citizens, most importantly expressed in its education and health policies. Education policies, particularly, take into account and are based on the culture of each individual country and the aspirations of its people. At Independence, India inherited a British system of education with some caveats. The British framed its educational policies for its colonies, particularly India, to create a nation of clerks to further their own political agenda.

After 1947, one of the first tasks that policy makers were faced with was the huge discrepancies and divides in Indian society- created by caste, class and gender. Clearly new education policies had to be brought into being if the country was to shake off these shackles and march into the future. This self-evident realisation took the country into its next phase with the logical step of a comprehensive framework, based on the core ideas espoused in our Constitution, which would form the foundation of the educational system that was essentially created for a new India. This policy would make education for all an enforceable right. To do this, several and complex issues had to be faced. What exactly were the most relevant changes? Would there have to be a time frame to achieve this? Envisaging a future which was certainly going to be completely different in every way and guiding a large country of diverse people towards this future would require changes at the grassroots level. Because of the dynamic nature of society in general, and the speed with which the world changes, bringing with it changes vis-a-vis every aspect of socio-economic-political change, national education policies from 1968 have seen changes in 1986, 1992 and now a draft policy in 2016.

Education moved to the concurrent list and while policies provided what the states are supposed to follow, this was not mandatory. The policies have resulted in several enduring legacies in keeping with this ever-changing society, as well as its political manifestos. For example, completing school in the 11th class and going to college for a year-long pre-university course followed by three years of undergraduate study was replaced by +2 followed by three years of undergraduate education. A three-language policy was proposed and followed by some states, though not in all. Emphasis was placed on science and mathematics as a precursor to technological advancement.

As the world entered the new millennium, it saw even more changes. The thrust on universalisation of education was made stronger. In order to get the farthest reach, several new schemes were introduced, among them Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan (SSA), the Midday Meal Scheme, a no-detention policy, Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) and the Right to Education (RtE), which sought to bridge the gaps.

It is expected that each policy, when introduced, will take into account the demands of the day while preserving the central core of its goals. It is taken for granted that every one of these policies is the result of deep and serious cogitation, reflection and understanding of the issues involved and all possible outcomes of its recommendations. Here we should mention that since this Issue has been compiled, a new committee has been installed. We are hoping that the articles in this Issue could be of help in the deliberations of the new committee by setting out the backdrop of earlier recommendations.

In brief, national educational policies are, or at least should be, the consequence of a clear understanding of the socio-cultural beliefs of India, and at the same time having clarity in introducing a system that is aligned to the goals enshrined in our Constitution and has the avowed purpose of creating a democratic society of enlightened citizens. Along with gaining skills that would enhance economic prosperity, we can then aspire to a good human life, with justice and enabling of basic capabilities for everyone.

In this Issue, we have articles which examine education policies from 1968, which was the starting point chosen for this issue. The draft policy of 2016 has been closely examined, as have the ways in which language and literacy have been addressed. Two focus articles have examined aspects of the recommendations of educational policies. Another article is an examination of the history of educational policy documents. Other articles have been written about specific aspects such as CCE and the Midday Meal Scheme. This is only a sampling and we hope that readers will find this issue interesting. We look forward to your feedback.

Prema Raghunath
Editor, Learning Curve
prema.raghunath@azimpremjifoundation.org

C O N T E N T S

SECTION A
PERSPECTIVES

C O N T E N T S

SECTION B
FIELD EXPERIENCES

SECTION A

Perspectives

Policy Initiatives in the New Millennium

B S Rishikesh

A lot that did not happen for half a century, turned around at the turn of the new millennium for India on the education scene. There was a series of policy initiatives in education that the country witnessed; but it must be recognised that they all had decades of background work and people's movements and judicial activism.

The policy initiatives of the new millennium, such as the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), the Mid-day Meal (MDM) Program, the National Curriculum Frameworks (NCF 2000 & 2005) as well as the Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (NCFTE 2009) along with the new Teacher Education guidelines based on the Justice Verma Commission recommendations and the Right to Education (RtE) reinvigorated school education in India. The turn of the millennium was indeed a turn for action on various fronts in the education space in India: it not only witnessed programmes and schemes getting launched, but also their implementation with the required legislations, unlike earlier decades when many things only remained on paper as a policy document or fell through the cracks in the attempt to implement.

The policy initiatives discussed above, unlike the previous decades, had action plans embedded with financial resources allocated and in many cases the apex Court directing the Government. Each of them were very different from the way policies usually get implemented, as neither were they diluted too heavily from the original idea nor were they delayed in their execution to the extent that they lost all meaning. This article may not be sufficient to tell the whole story and analyse why things happened the way they did post -2000. Instead, this piece will present a brief history and attempt to provide a background along with the key highlights of these initiatives which turned around our education landscape for the better; and in this, a reader may be able to identify factors that made things happen on the ground, whereas until then it was a hard struggle to get policy ideas off the table!

Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (SSA)

The most popular among the initiatives, along with the RTE, is the SSA. The popularity is for a variety of reasons, including its novelty given the large mandate of the initiative and the massive funding it came with that even enabled a parallel administrative structure, and thereby the overall impact it has had as well. Tens of thousands of crores of rupees has been allocated to SSA in every annual budget announced by the Central Government since the programme was launched in 2001. As the name suggests it was billed as a movement focusing on education for all. A glance at the data on some of the key education indicators of the time tell us that some of our key basic indicators were poor - the number of children in school, number of schools with a pucca building and toilets, number of teachers staffing these schools, etc., were all way off the mark.
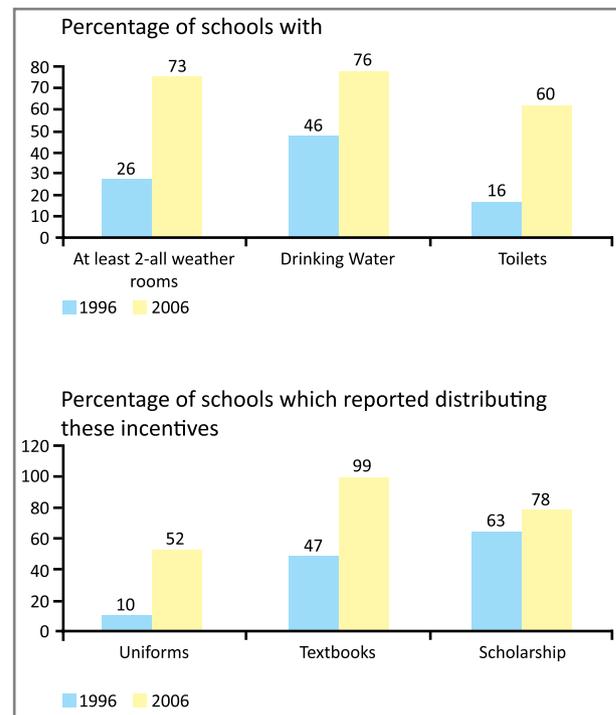
Source: School Surveys: PROBE, 1996 and PROBE revisited, 2006 (graph extracted from 'SSA, budgeting for change series 2011, CBGA New Delhi, UNICEF India), December 2011.

Though enrolment was the focus in SSA, as the primary goal was towards universalisation of elementary education (UEE), it did work towards improving the root cause of poor enrolments such as lack of infrastructure, teachers and other resources such as uniforms, text books and scholarships. In

fact, the focus on building classrooms and toilets, particularly for girls, had a remarkable impact on the enrolment, especially of the girl child. The enrolment progress one sees is clearly indicative of the immediate impact the programme had on this factor, till it starts tapering off at the end of the decade – which in fact was the end-date for SSA, before it was decided that the scheme will be extended. From the start of SSA till 2014 the girls' gross enrolment saw a growth of more than 25%!! Infrastructure did go a long way in bringing these improvements - there were 1,73,757 habitations un-served by primary schools in 2001-02 when SSA was launched. Over the years, 2, 04, 686 primary schools were sanctioned. However, the fact that 347 were sanctioned in the 2014-15 also indicates that gaps continue to exist even after one and a half decades, but the staggering numbers also helps appreciate the deficit the country was in at the turn of the new millennium At the upper primary stage there were 2,30,941 habitations not served by upper primary schools in 2002. Over the years 1,59,427 upper primary schools have been sanctioned in a radius of three kilometres.

SSA had for its original goals the bridging of gender and social gaps in education along with universal access, retention and improving the quality of learning for which a multitude of interventions were planned and executed. This policy initiative was supported by World Bank, DFID & UNICEF and coupled with the Government machinery, it helped unleash a mammoth effort to address some of the basic issues that was plaguing our system. In fact, even on the toilet front, though at present nearly two lakh schools function without a toilet, nearly a million toilets were sanctioned under SSA (as we see in the graph, at the half way mark in 2006 though only about 60% of the schools got a toilet, the corresponding numbers at the start was less than 20%) which has contributed to retention of girl students in a big way as indicated by many research studies. An impact assessment of SSA will indicate that it has provided a tremendous boost for our school infrastructure and thereby increased the gross enrolment to over hundred per cent across both genders. The learning indicators are still much to be desired, but that needs other more fundamental policy level actions such as reform in teacher education, which though has begun, still has a lot to be done. The focus by the end of the decade has shifted to Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Andolan (RMSA), which aims to do for secondary education what SSA did for elementary education. Though the focus has shifted to RMSA, the SSA continues to be operational as the policy principles behind the programme are towards long term quality enhancement.

Plan / Scheme		Union Budget Allocation (in Rs. Crore)			Union Budget Allocation corresponding to 12th Plan period (in Rs. Crore)	
	12th Five Year Plan Outlay	2012-13 (actual)	2013-14 (RE)	2014-15 (BE)		% of outlay
SSA	192726	23873	26608	28258	78739	40.9
MDM	90155	10849	12189	13215	36253	40.2
RMSA	27466	3172	3123	5000	11295	41.1

Source: Has the Tide Turned; Response to Union Budget 2014-15, CBGA New Delhi, July 2014

The Mid-Day Meal (MDM)

The next big policy initiative witnessed in the new millennium is the MDM programme. As we can notice in the budgetary allocations, it is a program that is well funded. And in most States, MDM has the second highest budgetary allocation after teacher salaries. Though the very first meal program was introduced as early as the 1920s, first in Madras (now Chennai) Corporation and then in Kolkata and in many states by the mid-1950s,

the programme saw a large scale launch in select blocks across the country only by the mid-90s as a nutrition programme The National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education (NP-NSPE) soon extended to all blocks. However, it was only an interim Supreme Court order in November 2001 which finally led to the establishment of the 'cooked meal programme' – the present avatar of MDM. The Supreme Court's interim order provided for the conversion of eight food security schemes into entitlements (i.e. rights) of the poor: these included the Antyodaya Anna Yojna, the National Old-Age Pension Scheme, the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Programme, the Annapurna scheme and several employment schemes providing food for work and the National Mid-day Meals Programme (NMMP). Though the Court even appointed two Commissions in May 2002 to see to its implementation, the programme did not get implemented in many states due to paucity of funds. This is when, in 2003, The Planning Commission suggested an amelioration of the situation by allocating a minimum of 15% from another scheme. Finally, in 2004, the Centre promised adequate funding to all States. This led to the world's largest feeding programme running in nearly a million schools and feeding more than 100 million children which has continued for over a decade now!

This programme had multiple objectives – again focusing on enrolment and retention of children in school as well as improving the nutrition of the children. Once again deeply connected to policy goals of universalisation of elementary education. Research studies have clearly shown the tremendous impact it has had wherein the stated objectives have been met. Not only did it increase enrolments, it also improved attendance and studies have even indicated a positive correlation of MDM to better learning outcomes: this is over and above the obvious positive correlations on nutritional health. In fact, on a somewhat poignant note, the MDM has been observed to have given many children in our country their only meal of the day!

Entitlement norm per child per day under MDM		
Item	Primary (class one to five)	Upper primary (class six to eight)
Calories	450	700
Protein (in grams)	12	20
Rice/wheat (in grams)	100	150
Dal (in grams)	20	30
Vegetables (in grams)	50	75
Oil and fat (in grams)	5	7.5

Source: MHRD: Mid-Day Meal Scheme; http://mdm.nic.in/

National Curriculum Frameworks (NCF)

In 2005, the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) was released. It revised and improved upon the 2000 NCF. This was another important step towards improving education quality. This was only a framework, but on all aspects connected to education, from the curricular to the co-curricular. There were twenty one position papers from the twenty one focus groups that provide the inputs for the NCF 2005. Each paper is a brief on what should be done in the name of education – be it math or art. These emerged from the policy postulations over the years, leading to a document that took things one step closer to the ground as it enabled the formation of appropriate syllabus. In fact NCF acted as a bridge between what policy said and what was expected in the classroom transacted through a syllabus. Till NCF 2005 came about, there was a mis-match between what got espoused in policy documents and the kind of syllabus that was formed; the framework however helped the central syllabus to be formed in a manner that the core education ideas such as child friendly and holistic approaches to education were taken into account.

The key ideas of NCF 2005 are based on those critical educational ideas presented in our earlier policy documents. The document has five parts, each as important as the other, beginning from 'perspectives of the curricular framework', it goes on to cover ideas behind 'learning and knowledge acquisition' among humans and delves into 'stages of school, curricular areas and assessments' in the third before focusing on 'school and classroom

environment' and closing with the section on 'systemic reforms'.

- To shift learning from rote method.
- To ensure overall development of children.
- To integrate examination into classroom learning and make it more flexible.
- To identify and nurture caring concerns within the democratic policy of India.
- Nurturing an over-riding identity informed by caring concerns within the democratic polity of the country.

Though, the NCF is applicable to all schools, given that most schools are State Board based there were very few states who used the NCF as a mode; in fact very few states developed their own state curriculum which then could be used to develop an appropriate syllabus. However, this has changed with the RTE mandating that States develop their own frameworks based on the NCF. This brings out beautifully the inter -connectedness of the various Government policies and policy initiatives connecting to the same policy ideal.

The Right to Education Act (RTE)

Of the initiatives in education that have taken place in the country, there has been none as path breaking as the RTE and the fact that it came at the end of the first decade into the new millennium made it the 'icing on the cake' filled with policy level initiatives.

In April 2000 at an education forum at Dakar, The Dakar Framework for Action emerged on the collective commitment of the countries present to provide education for all. A little over two years later, in December 2002, the Indian Parliament passed the Constitution 86th Amendment Act which mandated the provision of free and compulsory education, by inserting Article 21A in the list of Fundamental Rights: 'the State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of 6–14 years in such a manner as the State may, by law, determine'.

Thus, the Constitution of India made education a fundamental right, but qualified it by adding that the manner of this right would be as determined by a follow up consequential legislation. It stipulated that, ''It shall come into force from such date

as the central government may by notification in the Official Gazette, appoint''. This follow -up legislation referred to in the 2002 Amendment of the Constitution of India (the Constitution 86th Amendment) is the 'The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009', passed by Parliament in August 2009, and notified into force in April 2010. Based on this Act, a subordinate legislation, the Model Rules, was framed by the centre to provide guidelines to states for implementing the Act.
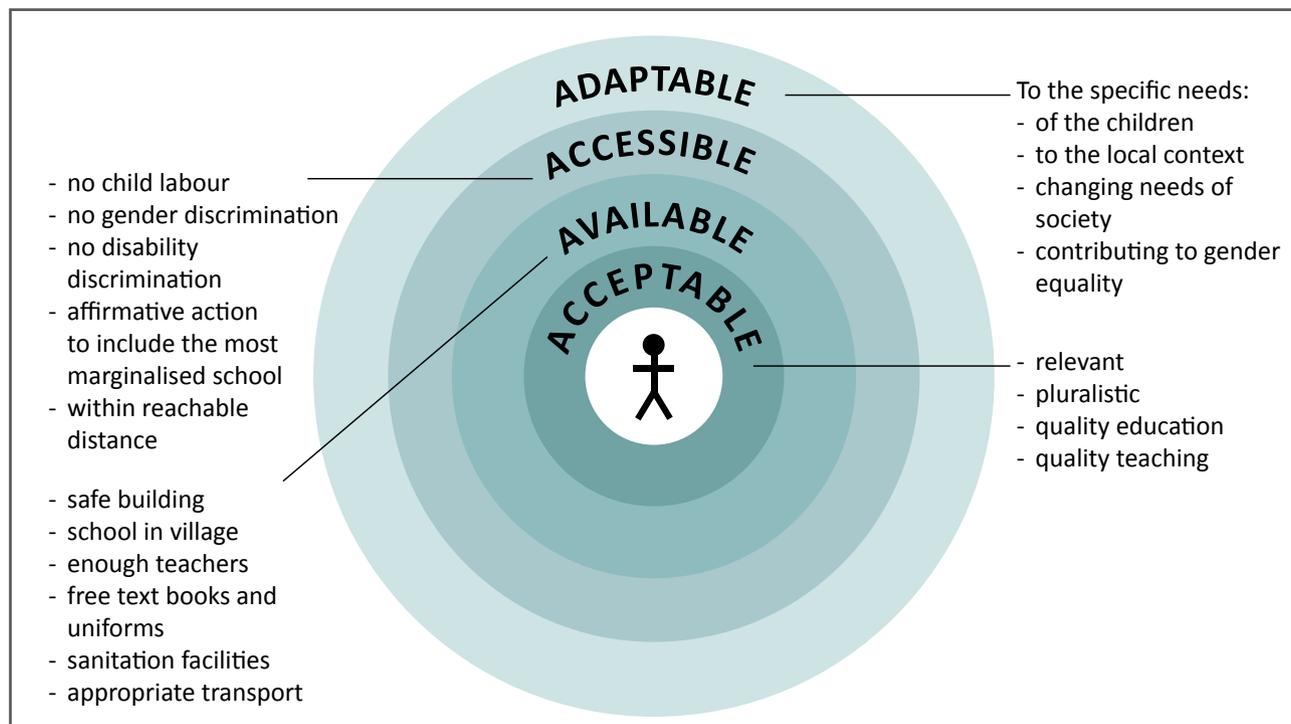
This progressive law was soon into litigation as its constitutionality was challenged by some schools. The Supreme Court faced two of them and by 2014 the Apex court had cleared the ground for the implementation of RTE by giving judgments in favour of the Act and reinforcing its legitimacy. It was clarified that every single child in this country has a right, a fundamental and justiciable one at that, to have an elementary level education and the onus on guaranteeing this was on the State.

Unfortunately, in popular imagination, RTE is seen through the narrow prism of one of its provisions which is reservation of seats in private schools for disadvantaged children. That this is only one sub-clause within the Act which has VII Chapters with a total of 38 Sections and a number of sub-sections is lost on most people. The law is a progressive one which moves our education space into a newer and better operating paradigm through a list of learner-centric and child -friendly provisions such as prohibiting detention of children due to poor learning outcomes and thereby placing the onus of this on the adults who are tasked with this, by prohibiting corporal punishment and thereby aiding the creation of a child friendly environment, mandating minimum levels of teacher qualifications at the entry level and thereby enhancing the learning potential in the teaching -learning space, establishing parental communities involvement in the schools and along with a Schedule -setting the norms and standards to be in place in schools,- the list is a long one!

The best way to understand the RTE is by using the framework of 4As developed by Ms.Katarina Tomasevski, a former UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education. This concept explains the Act using an Action Aid template which states

for education to be a meaningful right it must be **available, accessible, acceptable and adaptable.**

The 4As are not definitive, but help in explaining the right in terms of tangible factors.

- no child labour
- no gender discrimination
- no disability discrimination
- affirmative action to include the most marginalised school
- within reachable distance

- safe building
- school in village
- enough teachers
- free text books and uniforms
- sanitation facilities
- appropriate transport

ADAPTABLE
ACCESSIBLE
AVAILABLE
ACCEPTABLE

To the specific needs:
- of the children
- to the local context
- changing needs of society
- contributing to gender equality

- relevant
- pluralistic
- quality education
- quality teaching

Source: Right to Education Project; http://r2e.gn.apc.org/

4 As diagram © Action Aid

Availability – that education is free and government-funded and that there is adequate infrastructure and trained teachers able to support education delivery.

Accessibility – that the system is non- discriminatory and accessible to all, and that positive steps are taken to include the most marginalised.

Acceptability – that the content of education is relevant, non-discriminatory and culturally appropriate and of quality; that the school itself is safe and teachers are professional.

Adaptability – that education can evolve with the changing needs of society and contribute to challenging inequalities, such as gender discrimination, and that it can be adapted locally to suit specific contexts.

This explanation of the RTE, elucidates how path-breaking this has been for the country as it moves the education space into an entirely new paradigm and introduces a rights based approach to education. This, however did not happen overnight and the history is interesting.

In post-Independent India, Article 45 of the newly framed Constitution stated that "the State shall endeavour to provide within a period of ten years from the commencement of the Constitution, free and compulsory education to all children until they complete the age of 14 years". However, The National Policy on Education, 1968 was the first official document which attested to the Indian Government's commitment towards elementary education, a commitment further emphasised in the National Policy on Education 1986. But it was only in the review of the policy in 1990, that it was recommended to include Right to Education as a fundamental right in the Constitution, on the basis of which National policy on Education 1992 was formulated. Meanwhile the Jomtiem Declaration had taken place and in 1992 India signed the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and initiated the process of adopting legislation to make education a fundamental right of the child and inroads in this direction were already made in 1976 through an Amendment to the Constitution to enable the Government at the centre to also

make legislation for school education the power for which, until then, had been solely in the hands of the state governments. Along with all these developments, in the early 1990's Supreme Court gave two judgments where the Court held that 'right to education is concomitant to fundamental rights enshrined under Part III of the Constitution and that every citizen has a right to education under the constitution' and that, 'though right to education is not stated expressively as a fundamental right, it is implicit in and flows from the right to life guaranteed under Article 21 and must be construed in the light of the Directive Principles of the Constitution'.

Thus, understood in the context of Article 45 and 41 the right to education means that every child of this country has a right to free education until s/he completes the age of fourteen years. The RTE needs to be viewed from the perspective of the entitlements of the child and the institutional arrangements made to ensure that these entitlements are met.

Interestingly, by the time RTE was given the green signal by Supreme Court, the National Policy for Children (NPC) was adopted in 2013. The policy presented to the Nation by the Women and Child Welfare Ministry brought further clarity to interpreting RTE. The Preamble of the policy recognises that by definition a child is any person below the age of eighteen years and that childhood is an integral part of life with a value of its own. It also mentions that since children are not a homogenous group and their different needs need different responses, a long term, sustainable, multi-sectoral, integrated and inclusive approach is necessary for the overall and harmonious development and protection of children. The policy goes on to identify survival, health, nutrition, development, education, protection and participation as the undeniable rights of every child and it expects to guide and inform all laws, policies, plans and programmes affecting children. It further states that all actions and initiatives of the national, state and local government in all sectors must respect and uphold the principles of this policy.

The NPC is another progressive policy, which not only sets the path for State's role but also provides role for non-state stakeholders by encouraging the active involvement, participation and collective action of stakeholders (thereby identifying a role for NGOs), in securing the rights of the child. Importantly it emphasises co-ordination at all levels stating that a rights based approach calls for conscious, convergent and collateral linkages among different sectors and settings. If there is one highlight of the series of policy initiatives since the turn of the century, it is this convergence across sectors and across different policy initiatives. Never had one seen initiatives in different sectors connecting deeply with one another and using our constitutional principles as the foundation.

Conclusion: Optimistic future

This article has touched upon only a few of the series of policy initiatives in the new millennium. However, it gives an indication as to how we have got to where we have after years of struggle. Most of what we see on the ground today was envisioned in our Constitution seven decades ago – showcasing our constitution framers as progressive and visionary – and due to a variety of developments, including the international developments on human rights and our own political and judicial ones we reached a time period, which was further energised by the big calendar event of a 'new millennium', wherein things began to happen. All that was envisaged began to fall into place. Policy ideas got the projects and schemes it required, the political backing for it and the judicial activism that supported it.

A robust foundation based on constitutional principles has been laid down through these initiatives for building our future, particularly that of our children. It is with a lot of hope that we can look into the future and expect that all stakeholders, the State as well as the citizenry, will work hard towards building a better society by using the strong foundation of these policy initiatives. Hence, it is worrisome when one sees a demand to roll back the no detention policy or scrap the progressive assessment reform in the form of CCE (Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation) – if some of these progressive initiatives are faltering on the ground, one needs to work towards better implementation than discarding them – which is akin to throwing the baby out with the bath water. We must watch out, as it happens often, we do not dismantle progressive initiatives due to influence

of narrow ideologies or even at times popular demand and land into the 'one step forward - two back' syndrome that invariably afflicts our progress.

We in India today are witnessing a time when not only are there the right policies in place, but also initiatives that have been in place for over one and a half decades which have withstood changes in Government a couple of times, initiatives that are bringing about monumental changes to the way we act on education. Let us progress faster by building on them and not think of re-building.

Rishikesh is an Assistant Professor at the School of Policy & Governance, Azim Premji University; he also leads the Hub for Education, Law & Policy located at the University. His research interests are in the domains of educational assessments and teacher education and he is deeply engaged with current matters related to educational policy. He may be contacted at rishikesh@apu.edu.in

Checking Areas of Concern: What the Inputs Document has to say about Saffronisation Inequality and Privatisation

Amman Madan

Perhaps it is good to begin a discussion of the Inputs document by noting some methodological problems in the reading and interpretation of any policy document. We should accept that there may not be clear and unambiguous messages in them. These, like many other kinds of texts, can be read in several different ways. There are usually many and often contradictory voices entangled within them. Sometimes there may even be attempts to deliberately leave certain matters opaque and vulnerable to multiple interpretations. To an extent, this is inevitable when a document is produced through a consultative and collaborative process, within which there must have been many struggles and compromises. When we try to interpret policy documents, perhaps we can only try to look out for certain themes and try to see the various rather than single ways in which they have been addressed and, along with what has been said and the presence of various voices, we can also try to look for the silences and wonder whether they are significant or accidental. When reviewing such documents it is important to keep in mind the ways in which they can be used. People will later use a policy document to support their own respective agendas and will try to pull out precisely what supports those agendas, ignoring the rest. One may expect that Hindutvavadis and secularists, proponents of privatisation and those who wish to rejuvenate state support for education and so on will all draw different recommendations from the same document. When we try to interpret policy documents it is good to avoid seeking only one essential message from them. Instead it may be better to see them in their complexity, with their multiple voices and all. This will help to visualise the ways in which such a document can eventually be made use of.

Out of the many ideas and issues taken up by the Inputs document, I shall focus on just three: first, the saffronisation of education, second, the promotion of greater social equality and third, the privatisation of education. These are areas about which many people have expressed their interest and concern regarding which direction national policy may be moving in. They are also areas which I have been long interested in.

Saffronisation

The first question which was in many of our minds when the Inputs document was released was whether this set of recommendations would carry a strong Hindutvavadi assertion. We were especially apprehensive because there was only one educationist and academic in the entire committee. It has therefore been reassuring to observe that no sharp assertion of Hindu superiority or demonisation of minorities has been done. Most of the document speaks a language reminiscent of the way Congress-sponsored documents across the years portrayed the role of culture in Indian education. There are repeated references to the importance of learning to respect diversity and promote tolerance (eg pp14, 30). There is also a refrain of how students should learn to be proud of their country and its heritage (p14). But then what is surprising about wanting young people to be proud of their nation? It has always been a thread in various education reports and policy statements after we got Independence.

There are a couple of small hiccups, but because they are also common in the Congress era, one is not sure what to make of them. For instance, the brief narrative of the history of education in India seems to follow the basic order of early twentieth century nationalist historiography. In this cognitive ordering of the past, the only great historical achievements took place in the Vedic and Brahminical traditions. The story starts with the Vedas, moves on to Sanskritic achievements and then makes a huge leap over intervening centuries and begins talking about Indians reflecting on education in the colonial era. The absence of non-Sanskritic cultures, the Tamil Sangam tradition, Persian and vernacular traditions, the problems of Brahminical domination over education and so on: none of these omissions is surprising since silencing them is an old pattern of Congress discourses on education. This is common in the portrayal of Indian cultural history. We now realise that this picture of the Indian past is incomplete and one-dimensional. There were many other cultural threads in the past. Sometimes their mutual interaction led to great new fusions and flowerings. Sometimes they led to terrible oppressions, too.

The absence of this more complete picture of India's past in the vision of education leaves me a little uncertain regarding the intended purpose. The story of a Brahminical golden age which fell apart with the arrival of Muslims is false, but has become the mainstay of Hindu militant groups. This story ignores all the achievements of the medieval era and also complexities of different classes, regions, communities and cultures struggling with each other. However this narrower narrative is also common to the Congress era. Professor Krishna Kumar has been repeatedly pointing out that Congress-led discourses of Indian culture legitimised the communalisation of education much before contemporary times. In that sense Hindutvavadis have been carrying forward certain discourses which emerged in nineteenth century India and were shared by many political groups. Through this continuity they gain reassurance and legitimacy. In contrast, more rigorous studies of history show that our past has been much more complicated than the story of the 'Golden Age of Hinduism and its Destruction by Islam' presents.

Several questions come to my mind. Is it too much to expect from a document seeking to guide the National Education Policy to be aware of this debate over how to see India's past? Is the consistency of the present document with Congress ways of presenting Indian culture a repudiation and rejection of the violence and aggressiveness of contemporary Hindutva? Or is it a way of presenting a gloss over the same, of making it appear more respectable and conventional? I can only hope that the document is doing the former and not the latter. But one does expect that the historical vision of India's cultural past should be more accurate and informed.

What would have been much better would have been a clear breaking of the stereotypes which Hindutvavadi education has made its centrepieces. For instance, it would have been good to hear the questioning of Brahminical models of the superiority of textual knowledge, of the fusion of cultures which emerges in the medieval era and also the accumulation of legal, astronomical and medical knowledges in medieval Indian universities. Many more examples could be multiplied which provide a more realistic picture of Indian culture and its education systems. The silence in this regard lends itself to an easy co-option by those who have not kept up with the expanding research in the relation between knowledge generation and the social configurations of states and power in the south Asian region. An assertion of a more complex reality would have made it easier to block a potential co-option. It would also have enjoyed the virtue of being truer.

Social Inequality

One of the greatest challenges facing India's education system is the vast social inequality within it. While a small number of children go to excellent schools, the overwhelming majority are condemned to non-functional schools, poorly staffed and badly run. An important international trend has been to insist upon improving schools for the poor and socially marginalised. This has been at the heart of all major improvements in education systems across the world.

Given the compelling nature of this challenge, there was a great deal of curiosity about what new initiatives and strategies the new education policy could put forth. On reading the Inputs document it appears to have a somewhat mixed up vision of how to decrease social inequality within education and education's consequences. It is staunchly egalitarian at certain places while at others it can easily lend itself to forces which are increasing social inequality. On the positive side, at several points one reads a powerfully expressed concern with increasing enrolments, especially of the historically marginalised groups like ST, SC, OBC, Muslims and of people from regions that have lagged behind others (eg pp 10, 15).

There is also in the section on 'Inclusive Education and Student Support' (pp 23-25)- a welcome acknowledgement that student support has to become one of the pillars of our education system and not be treated as an afterthought. A large number of students from historically and physically disadvantaged backgrounds join up and then find themselves struggling to stay abreast of those with more advantaged histories. Educational institutions from primary schools to universities need to build into their regular routines a process of supporting students so that they can catch up and realise their potential.

In spite of these and several other pro-equality measures, one also gets the impression that more thought needed to be put in by the Inputs document on how to actually promote equality. There is no mention of why it has happened that education-related inequality in India is still so sharp, with such huge disparities between the top, middle and the bottom. Successive education commissions and education policies, for instance, have not been able to make any headway in their demand that 6% of the GDP be put into education. If there is no reflection upon why that demand has not been met, then one wonders if this set of policy proposals will also meet the same fate as those of the 1968 and 1992 NPEs. What, after all, is particularly different in the strategy being proposed here which is likely to give it greater likelihood of success? Does it acknowledge that there are vested interests standing against the expansion of (good) education for all? What can those interests be? Are there some other kinds of obstacles? How will they be overcome? No light is shed on these quite basic questions.

Another basic problem which goes without any response is that of the social biases of school curricula. All the way from Phule's times we have been hearing this criticism that educational curricula and school cultures tend to be inclined towards the needs of the urban, organised sector of the economy, particularly towards industry and services. The present policy document does not consider this a problem area and there is no emphasis on expanding the benefits of education to include agriculture, handicrafts and the unorganised sector. If we wish to decrease the educational and social inequalities in India, then we cannot continue to marginalise these curricular elements. For that matter, across various parts of the Inputs document we see an innocent acceptance of commonly held beliefs regarding what should be in school curricula. It does not seem to acknowledge that that there is a cultural politics of the curriculum through which the domination of certain classes, occupations, castes, the male gender, certain languages and certain regions may get strengthened. Thus there is no recommendation to give greater visibility and an active role to women or to people from the North-east and so on. Only some weak and

sporadic gestures are made towards problematising knowledge and its creation and reproduction. What is very common is the refrain of needing to teach skills and using ICT. But that suggests that it is only in technical knowledge and that too of the industrial kind (not agricultural or any other kind) that there are problems in Indian education. This is too simple a way of looking at the problem of knowledge in our education system. If we want to accelerate social equality then we have to also promote knowledges which can empower the poor and marginalised and give them a greater voice in society along with giving them greater mobility. This means looking afresh at what kind of culture we teach and promoting cultures that empower and liberate.

There are simple repetitions of clichés across the document, which seem ignorant of the vast amount of work done in debating the needs of Indian society over generations. One example is the mention (eg p 21) of the importance of teaching rights and duties from the Constitution of India. As umpteen scholars of the teaching of social sciences in schools have pointed out, we need a fresh approach towards the teaching of Constitutional values. Rights and duties have been taught for several decades in India in a way which usually degenerates into a mechanical parroting of phrases. Actually this teaching about the Constitution as a mindless exercise for getting marks may even sometimes contribute to the sense that the Constitution is a dead, irrelevant document and it is instead vigilantism which must be resorted to. One searches in vain within the policy recommendations for an alternative, which is the making of political and sociological knowledge into a living part of our education system. It is when young people begin to understand why ideas of rights emerged and their benefits and are able to pulsate withthe struggles and debates around them that they will begin to internalise progressive principles. It is through such pedagogies and curricula that democratic and reflective social behaviour that respects others in one's neighbourhood may begin to emerge.

However, as a whole, the document does not seem to consider it important that young people learn about society, politics and the economy. So how can there be a reflection upon how best to teach

young people to take an active and justice-oriented interest in matters around them? The social sciences and humanities are completely missing from the conceptual framework of the document. Instead, something called 'ethics education' is considered to be sufficient to promote social justice, equality, respect for women and so on (p 31). The general lack of attention given to the significance of cultivating the humanities and the social sciences in this set of proposals is an important shift from the 1986/92 document which paid at least lip service to them. It is also reminiscent of the naive way several political and social groups talk about teaching value education by itself, as if it could be taught without reference to the dynamics of political, social, cultural and economic relationships.

A sad feature of contemporary Indian education is that the disciplines and knowledges which give us the ability to understand and engage with social inequality have lost ground. We need to see the systemic causes of social inequality. Only then can we begin to pull out its roots. Unfortunately the Inputs document only manifests this growing ignorance in Indian culture. Expecting it to respond to a lacuna which it itself expresses, may be asking for the impossible.

Privatisation

The privatisation of education has become the camel which crept into the tent of Indian education, without being invited in by any major national policy document, but is now beginning to claim ownership of the tent itself. In tertiary education already the majority of students are in private institutions and their numbers in school education continue to grow year after year. However, a shift so drastic and with so many consequences on the politics of curricula and on social inequality, was never sanctioned by the previous National Education Policy of 1986/1992. The present Inputs document, too, does not directly examine privatisation of education as a policy position or strategy. Privatisation now seems to be just something which is an ordinary fact of life and apparently accepted as a necessary evil. This lack of a basic consideration of the benefits and cost of privatisation is puzzling. It is in policy documents that one expects a straightforward stand on a controversial issue, spelling out whether they are in favour or against it, or even whether

and what kind of compromise, half-way solution is being sought. But one searches only in vain for a serious, head-on discussion of privatisation.

There are several statements which reassure us that the government will not abdicate its responsibility towards ensuring good education to all. These include the reiteration (with the 1968 and 1986/92 policies) that 6% of the GDP should necessarily be put into education (p 13). There is the emphatic statement that education in India 'should be considered a public good' (p 40). Period. It should be noted that it is not just primary education or school education, but education in general, which is is being asserted to be a public good; which, like water and air, should be accessible to everyone. There are also sceptical remarks about the private sector's claims to excellence (p 8) and alleged superiority over government schools.

At the same time, privatisation and the increasing costs of education and the consequent sharpening of social inequalities does not appear as a major theme in the chapter entitled Key Challenges in the Education Sector'. This is puzzling, since privatisation is indeed one of the greatest causes of the growth of inequality in Indian education. While inequalities in access are discussed along with several other problems, the role of privatisation in accentuating them seems not to merit discussion here. There is a sentence about commercialisation of education in a section on 'Governance and Management' (p 12), but that seems about it.

The section on financing education welcomes the role philanthropic and CSR bodies can play in promoting education. However there is no statement anywhere saying that education is not to be considered a for-profit activity. This is an important nuance since it is this specific point on which some PPP proposals have met strong opposition. Many have expressed a well-founded fear that, in the name of CSR, public resources may be handed over to private parties so that they can make a killing. It would have been good to clarify that adequate safeguards would be put into place so that public resources do not get covertly made into private capital for the already rich. But the absence of such sensitivities from the document makes one worry.

The growing privatisation of education in India is manifesting itself in the popularity of student loans. This has obvious problems, since loans pull into the market process something which perhaps should not be seen as a market activity. At the heart of this is whether we wish education to be driven by moral choices or by what gives the highest salary. If we start charging high fees for all kinds of education, then only those occupations and disciplines will thrive which give high monetary returns, since people will want to naturally recover at least what they had paid. But there are many occupations which give high returns to society, not necessarily high salaries. For instance if we`ask a person to become a medical doctor by paying one crore rupees, then that person will seek to recover that money through his occupation. Most people will accept that this is not what we want doctors to do. We want them to think about serving patients at the least cost to the latter, not to think about how they can recover the costs of their education by prescribing more expensive treatments.

It may be fine for a student who wants training for making software for American companies to be asked to pay a high training fees. That is up to the student and whether the American companies find such a worker still cheaper to employ. But where education is supposed to give a return to our own society, we have to become very cautious about the effects of a high fees upon the social benefits which education gives. If we insist upon running a B.Ed. College, for instance, in a market model with high fees, then we can expect that its graduates will only want to work for high salaries at the most expensive private schools. They have to recover their investment, after all. But this will raise the problem of who will then be willing to go and teach in rural areas.

It is problems like the ones above which have led many people to argue that education should be a public good, it should not be made a private good or a commodity. There are also arguments made about how to keep it part of the market process, but regulating that so as to achieve greatest social justice and welfare. The Inputs document, sadly, does not seem to directly examine this issue or respond to it. A reference to student loans is made (p 41) without discussing whether we want to promote the further commodification of Indian education. All that is said is that loans will be made cheaper and easier to obtain. Whether student loans are a good thing in the first place is not a subject of discussion at all.

There is another quite elementary problem which most introductory economics textbooks acknowledge which this inputs document does not refer to. Markets are inherently prone to increasing social inequality. If education too becomes part of the market process then how will we ensure it does not become a commodity that the rich can buy more easily than the poor? The Inputs document does not seem to either understand or have a position on this. Or is the absence of comment actually a position? We can only speculate.

So there are contradictory voices here. On the one hand there is the statement that education should be available to all, irrespective of family or social background. On the other hand, there is a de facto acceptance of privatisation without reflecting upon the dangers of increasing social inequality. Nor is there a discussion of the cultural distortions which arise when education becomes part of a commodity relation, where education is sought by keeping in mind its financial returns rather than cultural, political and social returns.

It would have been preferable if the policy inputs had confronted the question directly. It could have spelt out that philanthropic and private players were welcome to contribute so long as their activities did not lead to increasing social inequality or try to create profit at the cost of the poor. It could have said that this country will not accept the denial of opportunities and positive support simply because one was born into a poor and socially marginalised family. It could have said that education in areas which needed to be guided by cultural and moral values would not be allowed to be driven by the logic of profit-making. As of now, the inputs document does not seem to take adequate care of the dangers of leaving these matters ambiguous.

Conclusion

How then does one look at such a document? The dangers of identifying just one 'essential' character have been mentioned earlier. The present Inputs document as it currently exists does make several

sound and praiseworthy recommendations. However. it seems to also contradict itself in certain ways. At several places it also lends itself to being interpreted differently by different interests. The authors of the document do not seem to be aware of debates and international experiences around many of the concerns which they take up. When compared with the 1986/1992 NPE or the older, venerable Kothari Commission Report and its recommendations, with their much richer vision and treatment of various issues, which was better informed by the research and international developments of their times, the document comes out rather poorly. This warns us of what will happen when the rulers of a country no longer trust academics and scholarship and want to manage education through administrators instead.

Amman is currently a member of the faculty at Azim Premji University. He works on questions of social inequality and on identity politics. He has been associated with several NGOs including Eklavya, Digantar, ACCORD, etc. He may be contacted at amman.madan@apu.edu.in

Education Commission for a National Policy of Education

Sharad Behar

The Government of India initiated the process of formulating a new national policy of education, on 26th January 2015 with the stated intention of meeting 'the changing dynamics of the population's requirement with regard to quality education, innovation and research aiming to make India a knowledge superpower by equipping its students with the necessary skills and knowledge, and to eliminate shortage of manpower in science, technology, academics and industry.' It further proclaimed polemically, as politicians are fond of doing , that 'For the first time, the government of India is embarking on a time bound grass-root consultation process which will enable the Ministry of HRD to reach out to individuals across the country through over 2.5 lakh direct consultations while also taking input from citizens online'. (MHRD, 2015).

The polemics is continued by critiquing the process followed in formulating the earlier education policies by criticising their 'top-down approach, depending on limited feedback from field workers and the stakeholders on the ground', the consultations being 'thematic-based, with discussions being held in silos' and 'time taken' from '6 months to 3 years'. As against this the claim was that, on this occasion, it was to be policy-making from 'bottom-up', 'time bound' with an "inclusive, participatory and holistic approach". (ibid.)

In a matter like formulating a new education policy, the polemical approach is fundamentally problematic. It expresses an attitude of one-upmanship indicative of a bias against the earlier policies and raises a reasonable apprehension that the purpose behind initiation of the exercise is not a genuine desire to seriously evolve an education policy, taking into account all that ought to be taken into account for a long-term policy, but rather a political motive. This seems to be further reinforced when we examine each of the three polemical claims made above. However, since the polemics is directed against the earlier policies, let us have a brief look at the history of policy-making in independent India, with a special emphasis on the two earlier National Education Policies.

Brief history of policy formulation in India

After Independence and even while the Constituent Assembly was seriously engaged in framing the Constitution, education had drawn the attention of the Government. At that time there was a strong reaction against the recently altered colonial status of the country. It was felt that the economic exploitation of India as only a producer of raw material by the British was possible because of their industrial economy. Therefore, the major emphasis was on self-reliance, for which science and technology and higher education were considered important. Accordingly, the Commission on University Education was constituted in 1948 under the chairmanship of Dr S. Radhakrishnan. It submitted its report in August 1949. While its recommendations were acted upon, no formal education policy on higher education was formulated or issued by the government.

In 1952, another commission under the chairmanship of Dr Lakshmanaswami Mudaliar was set up and submitted its report for the Reorganisation and Improvement of Secondary Education in 1953. Once again, while recommendations were implemented, no formal policy was formulated.

The first comprehensive policy in independent India was formulated in 1968 based on the recommendations of the Education Commission, usually called the Kothari commission. The Commission, constituted in 1964, comprised fifteen members, including experts from abroad, in addition to the chairman Professor D S Kothari, the member secretary JP Naik and an assistant secretary drawn from UNESCO. Twelve task forces were set up, which further working groups and subgroups, including twenty consultants from abroad, to present reports on specific issues. The groups had useful discussions and meetings with a number of educationists, scientists, members of Parliament and State legislatures, industrialists and journalists and, in addition to the President, Vice President and Prime Minister of India, Chief Ministers of States and Secretaries of various Ministries both in the Government of India and the State Governments.

After the Committee submitted its report in 1966, the Government of India published the summary of the report and once again held wide-ranging consultations with stakeholders and Members of Parliament. Following prolonged discussions, the draft was approved by the Cabinet and released in 1968 (Naik, 1997).

An abortive attempt to frame the second policy of education was undertaken during the first non-Congress government formed in 1977. The report, entitled 'Education of Our People', was based on the premise of 'education of the people for the people by the people' and had radical departures from the earlier 1968 policy. A Draft Policy 1979 was prepared but the Janata government had an internal fall out and this initiative did not proceed further.

A different process was followed for preparing the national policy on education 1986. In August 1985, a document entitled 'Challenges of Education' was released in several languages for deliberations and responses. It is noteworthy that the document was very frank about the failures of the government and the huge challenges ahead. But it did not lay the boundaries for deliberations and recommendations. The outcomes of country-wide debates, discussions, deliberations, conferences, seminars and consultations formed the input for the Draft Policy which was presented to the Parliament. The policy was then finalised in 1986, within a year of beginning the process.

This is not the final policy we have before us. Soon after the policy was released, the Congress party was defeated in the general elections and a coalition government under the leadership of VP Singh was formed. The new government appointed a committee under the chairmanship of Acharya Ramamurti to revisit the policy. The recommendations of this committee, if taken seriously, would have called for almost a fresh education policy or at the least implied extensive revision. However, the coalition government fell and a fresh election brought the Congress back as the head of yet another coalition. A committee was appointed under the chairmanship of Mr Veerappa Moily to examine the Acharya Ramamurti Committee report. Since the 1986 policy was

framed by the Congress government, which was back in power, this exercise became a formal ritual, with recommendations of minor changes. These amendments were finally approved by the Parliament in 1992. That is why technically the existing policy is called National Policy on Education 1986 (as amended in 1992).

It is noteworthy that, although both the 1968 and 1986 education policies were approved either by a Parliamentary committee or the Parliament itself, they faced the risk of being replaced by another policy, but narrowly escaped. This highlights the politically volatile nature of education policies.

An examination of the current process of policy formulation

Let us now proceed to examine the claims that the current process is better on three counts: namely being holistic rather than theme-based and in silos, bottom-up and time bound.

The first two claims are contradicted by the approach of outlining 33 themes (thirteen themes on school education and twenty on higher education) for consultations – this implies a thematic consultation as opposed to a holistic approach to consultation. When narrow themes are centrally given to people from the grassroots, thus binding them to responses related to specific aspects, the approach cannot be called bottom-up. Given the extensive consultations preceding earlier policies, as discussed in the earlier section, the claim therefore appears to be more of rhetoric.

Let us now look at the claim of a time bound process. The timeline fixed for the completion of the evolution of the new education policy was the end of 2015. There is no final policy in sight until now, mid-April 2017. Obviously, this claim of the policy formation process being time bound also does not hold good. It is clear that none of the three claims made in respect of the current process being unique or better than the earlier processes of consultation are valid. In addition, there is evidence to demonstrate that the design itself, let alone implementation, of the process of consultation did not stick to the three claims. Let us take a glimpse of the process.

Gram Panchayat level consultations were

regimented and tightly controlled as a result of the formality and ritual of consultation and the importance of time limits. Those who are familiar and have some experience of listening to rural folk, grass-root workers and people's representatives at the levels of village, block and to some extent also the district are aware of the style of their expression, which often start with their own experiences and seemingly irrelevant matters, but gradually and slowly lead to the main substantive issue they want to state and emphasise. This is so because their learnings are usually experiential and therefore they always start from the experience and then follow through with the insight they have derived. Binding them within limited themes and limiting them to a specific number of words for the needs of the technology are not consistent with the claim of consultation without silos and from the bottom.

Regarding the online consultations from 20 January 2015 to 30 April 2015 (the date was later extended), this process of online consultation is, by its very nature, restrictive, since technical know-how and facility are necessary.

A drafting committee for the new education policy was constituted in October 2015, but the nomenclature was changed to 'a committee for evolution of the new education policy'. The Ministry, it is clear, wanted to have its freedom to prepare a draft different from what the committee would recommend. It submitted its report in May 2016 but the government refused to make it public, with strong differences and avoidable controversy between the Chairman and the MHRD Minister coming out in the open. The report has not been officially brought to the public domain although the Chairman has shared it liberally, and it is available on the NUEPA website.

Subsequently, in June 2016, a document was released by the MHRD, still hesitating to call it draft, saying instead 'some inputs for the draft education policy'. Responses and suggestions on this document were invited by the end of September 2016, which deadline was extended by another month. The politics of bureaucrats versus educationists surfaced when the new Minister HRD announced that a committee of educationists will

be constituted to prepare a draft. The committee is yet to be constituted.

The entire course of events during this process provides enough ground to accept the view of Shapiro et al who describe such consultation processes as being 'little more than an exercise in the legitimation of dominant power'. (McConnell, 2010) Even if a new committee of educationists is constituted, it is unlikely to inspire the confidence of the nation because it would look like another step in the same direction.

It is difficult in this scenario to imagine repudiation of the inescapable conclusion that indeed both these documents, shared by the Committee and the Ministry are situated in 'assumptive worlds' as conceptualised by Marshall, Mitchell & Wirt (1991). The authors explain the concept: 'There are distinctive cultures in each state policy-making setting. Policymakers are socialised in these cultures and share understandings about what is right and proper. The idiosyncratic cultures of state policy environments affect the perceptions of the key actors in each state. These perceptions relate to the expected behaviours, rituals, and judgements about feasible policy options. This perceptual screen we term 'the assumptive worlds of policymakers' Young is cited by the authors as describing as the assumptive worlds of policymakers as being 'policy makers' subjective understandings of the environment in which they operate' incorporating 'several intermingled elements of belief, perception, evaluation, and intention as responses to the reality 'out there'''. Any committee appointed by the government – the dominant power – is likely to frame a policy on the basis of their beliefs, perceptions and ideologies, hardly reflecting the national consensus.

This narrative is important because it provides the background for the rumours that a policy is being formulated behind the scenes. The problem does not lie in the government evolving educational policy of its choice. After all, a democratically elected government has not only the right, but also the responsibility, to run the government in accordance with the ideology it had been proclaiming and professing publicly. Adopting this general principle, the current government has

every right to frame education policy consistent with its own ideology, which necessarily includes a futuristic dream Society, so long as they are willing to accept that it will be abandoned in favour of another policy for a different kind of society, as soon as other parties come to power. If they were to do it openly, there could be no criticism of trying to do something surreptitiously. They are, instead, proclaiming to follow an inclusive, participatory, holistic and bottom-up approach because they are aware, and it is universally recognised that education, in multiple ways, is different from any other sector of society and governance. Therefore, education policy formulation needs a different approach.

From the discussion so far, a few conclusions can be safely drawn:

1. Education policy-making is highly politicised. This is problematic since the average politician does not have adequate 'literacy in education' because there is so 'little of a dialogue between politicians and educationists.' (Naik, 1997) This high level of politicisation of education is not confined to India alone; Olssen et al (2004) observe, 'there was a time when educational policy as policy was taken for granted – – –. Clearly that is no longer the case. Today, educational policies are the focus of considerable controversy and public contestation – – . Education policy making has become highly politicised'. (quoted in Bell and Stevenson, 2006)

2. Formulating national policy of education on the basis of a specific ideology is not in the national interest. It must be based on national consensus. The Constitution of India reflects contemporary national consensus. It has therefore to be the guiding principle and compass for a new education policy.

The simple lesson is that formulating a new education policy, by its very nature, is an extremely complex, time-consuming, multidimensional, multilayered, reflective, highly intellectual process with such deep, wide-ranging, social, economic and political implications that they cannot be anticipated. In order to do justice to this gigantic task, there is no option but to constitute an Education Commission comprising persons from all hues of ideology to credibly reflect the national consensus.

Formulating an education policy for the 21st century

Except during the closing decades of the 20th century, the dominant and competing philosophies which provided the framework for the social, political and economic order, and infused the ideals and aspirations of the world at large can be broadly termed as democratic liberalism, along with its accompanying framework of a welfare state and socialism of different hues. Very broadly and roughly, the Indian Constitution can be located in the tradition of democratic liberalism and a welfare state, along with an attempt to synthesise socialism; a more accurate description would probably be Fabian socialism. It might not be far off the mark to state that the report of the Kothari Commission was largely within this philosophical framework and therefore the 1968 policy flowing from it was embedded therein.

A close study of the 1986 policy and its relationship with the 1968 policy leads to the conclusion that its philosophical and ideological underpinnings are the same, a synthesis of democratic liberalism, the concept of welfare state, and a fair sprinkle of socialism. In many ways, the 1986 policy, at the broader philosophical and theoretical level, can be seen only as revisiting the 1968 policy more for affirmation than any modification.

Towards the close of 20th century, concrete examples of a thriving socialist social, economic and political order had a setback, raising questions and debate about that genre of philosophy – these persist till today. At about the same time, liberalism underwent a transformation to what is now generally called neo-liberalism, accompanied by neo-capitalism and neo-colonialism. The scenario is often described as globalisation accompanied by privatisation and liberalisation.

Most thinkers and perceptive observers agree that the ruling elite in India, irrespective of the political party in power, seems to have embraced wholeheartedly the strategy of embedding the Indian economy in the new world order. There is a sizeable section of intellectuals, aware citizens, social workers and activists as also political leaders

who strongly oppose this trend, but so far their number has not been sizeable enough to influence policy.

Educational policies are not framed in vacuum but are firmly embedded in the national goals, aspirations, needs and dreams. In the current situation where there is such a yawning gap between the proclaimed (through the Constitution) goals and those being pursued in practice through policies and programs, where does education policy emerge from?

Long-range educational policies must be and have always been made in independent India on the basis of recommendations of a Commission. The first policy on higher education, although not formally declared as a national policy, was based on the recommendations of the Dr Radhakrishnan Commission. Its impact can still be felt. Similarly, the long-range policy on, and major restructuring of, secondary education was based on the recommendations of Dr Mudaliar Commission. One reason no formal policies were formulated could be, as observed by Psacharopoulos in 1989, 'education policy is perhaps the contemporary equivalent of what twenty years ago was known as educational planning,' (quoted in Zajda, 2002)

Given the foregoing discussion, the reasons for recommending the constitution of an Education Commission are compelling. Care should be taken that the Commission is deliberately so constituted as to represent diverse points of view in the contemporary highly politicised world, so that its report can claim to be a fair reflection of the national consensus. It should be given adequate time to deliberate, undertake studies, engage in extensive and prolonged consultations and present a report to the nation for further consideration.

The first step for this Commission must be preparation and presentation of a well-reasoned document depicting the present scenario of education, including an objective and comprehensive critique of the 1986 policy, as amended in 1992, the challenges the country and the humanity are facing, the ideal world community and the Indian society that should be our goal, the envisaged role of education and the policy landscape required for the purpose. As Dobinson

suggests, 'education should endeavour to play its proper part in solving the greatest problems that face humanity (quoted in Zajda, 2002). Policy should be aligned to this endeavour.

The most critical and major issues concerning education and society should be thrown open for discussion, debate and inputs. These have been identified in various ways - education and human capital, global citizenship and national identity, autonomy, accountability and choice, or the themes of equality and equity as overriding policy issues. Social inequality has been suggested as another critical issue because of the 'manipulative role of the state in the maintenance of social stratification'. (Bell & Stevenson, 2006) New strategies that take into account changing and expanding learner needs, socio-economic educational disparities and inequalities, educational quality, harmonising education and culture, international cooperation, new approaches to adult education, and so on are some other themes that emerge from a review of literature. (Zajda, 2002) They are certainly very wide-ranging and very crucial in policy formulation.

The reasons to dwell on these become more critical when we consider that the last policy was formulated more than thirty years ago - the first policy on education in the 21st century must be an epoch-making, game-changing policy. Any new education policy has to deal with this scenario full of contradictions contestations and controversies. Without clearly taking a position on these extremely complex and multilayered fundamental issues, no meaningful educational policy can be framed.

Evolving consensus to take a position

Brodbelt suggests that only when 'myth and fact' in a nation's policy goals agree, does it reach 'its ideal system of education.' (quoted in Zajda, 2002) Mitter makes an insightful observation on the impact of globalisation on the culture of various countries, cautioning that 'current trends of economic, technological and scientific globalisation and the counter current revival of the awareness of cultural diversity' have created new imperatives and consequences for education. In terms of present and future 'universalism and cultural pluralism', a fruitful balance must be found 'between the messages of world system theory, and the theories

which regard cultural diversity to be a permanent formation of human history'. (quoted in Zajda, 2002) Both of these Himalayan tasks, of making the myth of the goals and social order mandated by the Constitution and the fact of inconsistent policies being followed by the governments converge, and finding a balance between universalism and cultural diversity, can be achieved by nothing less than a properly empowered Education Commission that comprises eminent persons representing the wide gamut of political ideologies to truly reflect the national consensus.

McConnell (2010) suggests that 'policy outcomes are often somewhere in between' the extremes of success and failure, 'and along a spectrum of success, resilient success, conflicted success, the precarious success and failure'. It is also suggested that evaluation should be 'in order to identify what can be built on and gaps that need to be filled'. With a very interesting and insightful observation that 'Failure is the mirror image of success' the main criterion for judgement is presented, 'A policy fails if it does not achieve the goals' set. Because of political positioning, governments cannot be expected to be objective in such evaluation and analysis. Moreover, there has to be a national consensus also on the critique for which due process of consultation with all the stakeholders is imperative. The situation is made more complex by the fact that the gestational period of education policy is long; to assess the impact of education policy for a cohort of children, a minimum of fourteen years, if we only include pre-primary to secondary education and exclude higher education, are required. If we wish to see the impact on a larger populace, it will mean much longer. Such a task can be achieved only by a broad-based Commission.

McConnell (2010) shares criteria for policy evaluation and cites contemporary writings on the role of and processes for evaluation. Only a full-fledged commission can be expected to take into account all the theoretical and empirical work on policy, for objectively evaluating the earlier policy and framing a more credible one.

Such a critique has to be located in a comprehensive and clear analysis of the current global and national situation and trends on the basis of which different probable future scenarios that the new education policy will have to face have to be built and, more importantly, outlining a scenario which the proposed policy will contribute to.

Another critical aspect is that scientific evidence, research-based knowledge, empirical studies and lessons from successful experiments, programmes, pilot projects and trials rigorously undertaken must be objectively evaluated and considered for framing a national policy of education in the 21st-century. This can be achieved only if there is a broad-based Commission for collecting, collating, assimilating and drawing policies therefrom.

There is a huge body of knowledge in many disciplines, having far-reaching implications on various aspect of education. Biber (2012) very rightly points out that due to the greater visibility of some disciplines over others, there are blind spots relating to many disciplines that can contribute significantly to policy formulation. Neurosciences, psychology, sociology, socio-biology, and many other disciplines have advanced substantially and offer new insights for the new education paradigm the policy ought to present. Only a properly equipped Education Commission can draw both from these as well as philosophy, ethics, epistemology and the like to scientifically formulate a research and evidence based education policy.

In the contemporary highly competitive world, study of national policies of different countries can offer useful insights. Halpin & Troyna (1995) warn against blind imitation, but also suggest that 'policy borrowing involving the appropriation of identifiable aspects of another country's policy solutions, including ways of implementing and administering them is more likely when there is some synchronic between the characteristics of different education systems involved and the dominant political ideologies promoting reform within them'. Careful evaluation and adaptation with fine tuning and proper calibration require the time and the agency of an empowered Commission.

Now that the ongoing process is at a standstill, it would be highly advisable that the Government of India seriously considers constituting the first Education Commission in and for the 21st-century comprising all shades of opinions along with some

renowned foreign experts. Education is too vital and overarching a subject to be left only to hard-core educationists or bureaucrats, however eminent.

Conclusion

A broad-based Education Commission is essential to provide the basis for an education policy in the 21st-century to conform with or contest the globalising new economic world order and resultant national order, and in the process, either creatively produce a synthesis of values inherent in the neoliberal philosophy and its concrete manifestation in globalisation and the Constitutional values and goals or reject one of them.

It is my belief that wiser counsel will prevail and there will be no sudden emergence of ideologically biased education policy. In the highly unlikely scenario of this happening, the right to information should be used liberally to ascertain the relationship between the policy and the views expressed by all the stakeholders that the government claims to have obtained. It is almost certain that there would be no or highly tenuous relationship between the two which will enable the people at large to question its divergence from the national consensus and argue for a broad-based Commission for which a powerful case has been attempted above.

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S C Behar is a member of the Board of Directors of Azim Premji Foundation. He is the former Chief Secretary to the Government of Madhya Pradesh. Closely associated with the field of education, he has published over 150 papers on Education Public Administration and other issues of social concern. He is the Founder Director of Eklavya, a voluntary organisation for educational research and innovative actions and also the Founding Vice Chancellor of Gurughasidas University, Bilaspur. Post retirement, he served as the Vice Chancellor of Makhanlal Chaturvedi National University of Journalism. He may be contacted at behar@azimpremjifoundation.org or sharadbehar@gmail.com

Whither Indian Education Policy

Hridaykant Dewan

Introduction

The suspended 2016 Draft Education Policy of India reinforces status quo through its tacit acceptance of stratified education, the intense focus on regimented outcomes and competition, and its inability to decentralise and empower teachers.

Background

There is widespread realisation that government schools, particularly in rural India, are not performing and their learning outcomes are poor. Although there are anecdotal stories about extremely well - run schools and devoted teachers, they are sadly in a minority. At the same time, we know of the mushrooming of low, medium and high fee private schools. These are touted as English medium and many aspirational rural parents are paying fees to send their children to these schools. Many think these private schools are more disciplined, more regular, that teachers pay more attention, give homework and assess more. They neglect to point out that these are not accessible to those who cannot pay the fees. It is important to think about this as there is also an apparently plausible argument made that private schools are low cost but still manage to ensure children learn. But given the scenario that even those who are in supposedly good schools and showing good results in exams seem to be ill-equipped to handle conceptual tasks or questions, the realities in village schools and in the schools for the poor, has to be recognised while evaluating the new Education Policy, 2016 and the still up in the air 2017 policy.

The Policy discourse

In order to assess the policy and the way it is formulated, it would be useful to build an idea of why we need policies on education. After all, schools have been functioning since many centuries and the question why we needed a policy is important so that we can consider the current attempt against that yardstick. Instead of going back to the pre-independence period where there may have not been a coherent pan-Indian understanding about education and struggling with a comparative framework including the situation today, we can start by looking at the first comprehensive policy document for Indian education and the way it was formulated.

The policy document considered the state of affairs in the nation, the imperatives before the country and the role education could play in it. It then went on to describe the existing situation, the prevalent challenges and then after that it laid out the broad goals. The document then addressed possible challenges and suggested possible ways to reach these goals. The 1986 policy document followed the same structure and reviewed major goals, concerns and hopes articulated by the 1968 policy. with sections on the mechanisms to reach some of the goals and initiated thinking about curricular processes and led to many subsequent curricular formulations at the national level.

The relationship of education to the goals of nation building and their role in the polity of the democratic state was much more visible in the 1968 policy document. Even though the document was embedded in the framework of enlightenment of the Indian non-elite, it did have concern for equality by considering all people as constituent parts of the nation. The 1986 policy for the first time brought in, among many other changes from the 1968 policy, the ideas of the minimum levels of learning and of people as being resources in nation-building, rather than just citizens.

The policy shift from the Constitution assembly debates and the preamble to these policy had gradually got narrowed in its scope, meaning and purpose. The pre-independence debate initiated by the proponents of Gandhiji's Nai Talim had put forward some concerns. While the underlying purposes and implications of these may perhaps be disputed, what was important is that they argued for an education policy as universal, and was more complete than the one eventually adopted and practised on the ground. The 1968 policy did emphasise the some aspects of Nai Talim, as did some of the subsequent documents, but the major thrust was towards recognising and sustaining the changed position of the citizen from a constituent to a resource.

The policy also spells out the resources to be

made available and the expected and desirable governance and executive attitude to the key stake-holders. It also hints at the structure and has embedded guidelines about the functioning mechanisms of the whole structure. These have been part of the review, but unlike in the NCF 2005 in which the expectations from the policy and the commitments needed from the Government were clearly spelt out, the policies remained non-committal on the precise steps that would be taken and the resources that would be committed. It is interesting to remember that the Nai Talim movement, while recognising the need for Government participation in education, focussed on the need for community as an important stake-holder in contributing to the functioning as well as financing of the schools in their neighbourhood. They were also arguing for disclosure of the source of the money disbursed on education to ensure that the funds came from legitimate sources and not from sale of liquor and other such products that were not examples of proper ethical and moral behaviour. The statements of Elphinstone in third decade of the nineteenth century, though strikingly different from the ideology of Nai Talim, also suggested the need for community ownership,

The expectation from the 2016 policy was therefore substantial. It came on the heels of the NCF 2005, the position papers linked to it and in particular the position paper on systemic reforms and it was hoped that the gaps in the policy discourse and its implementation would be addressed. Then again, the NCF 2005 had been appended as a base document to the RCFTE 2009 with the expectation that the two would bridge the glaring gaps The run up to the policy did none of that. There was no review of the previous policy and no status report prepared on the current status and challenges. There was not even an adequate collation of the aspirational perspectives of the people and the nation. Instead, it was a collation of an arbitrary set of questions around which discussions were held without valid mechanisms in place to make them meaningful and participative. The exercise thus remained around appeasing the hue and cry around some of the measures in the RtE. It is against this background that we shall analyse the main points of the RtE 2009

The Right to Education Act 2009

The RtE was only a show of good intentions though in one sense it can be said certainly tried to make education the right of all children. The equity principle and the idea of common school was, however, diluted considerably. A provision for reserving 25 per cent seats in private schools for economically disadvantaged children meant that the stratified system of schooling was accepted in principle.

Apart from this tacit acceptance and legitimisation, there were two important lacunas that were stark. One the fact that the reimbursement to the schools was not according to the fees that the school charged but an arbitrary amount fixed by the government. The second that there was no additional support available to these children to succeed in the highly competitive private school environment. In addition, the backlash of better-off parents and the kids from elite backgrounds acting disdainfully towards these children was also not considered and taken into account and still is not foregrounded as most elite private schools treat these quota children differentially.

Financial gap

The other major gap in RTE was the absence of any financial commitment to make its goals possible. There were no punitive or corrective steps for the bureaucrats who run the education system. The only persons held accountable for learning were parents, children and teachers. The others had to only provide the infrastructure and teachers of whatever quality and generate data that met the requirements. Teachers could be directed, given non-teaching tasks during school hours without accountability. Ironically, the judgments of culpability and fixation of guilt were also left to the local or state government departments, as being appropriate authority.

Overbearing monitoring

In the years subsequent to the RtE, while the bureaucratic machinery functions to do patchwork on the supply conditions at the schools and generates figures that include half-truths, it allows no space on autonomy to the school and the teachers, who have no agency left. Years of overbearing monitoring and tyrannical guidance

have left them unconfident and de-motivated. The nature of teacher education has also been bureaucratised and, hence, soaked in so much corruption that they do not even feel competent to teach with confidence. The entire teacher education system is geared towards certification. What was said in the RtE and by these monitoring mechanism was contrary to the spirit of no detention, which aimed at giving children more time and support. The interpretation of this was that by some miracle children should be learning content and abilities of any given class, regardless of their backgrounds. The result was that schools and children were flooded with a lot of testing pressure and external evaluations by unsympathetic experts, who themselves had never taught in such classrooms and had no background understanding of the children in these schools.

Given this situation, the major challenges before the new education 2016 policy were twofold: first, clarifying the purpose of education and, second, the governance and implementation of education. There was an intense need both to make community central to this process and simultaneously transform the attitude of the education system. This included having the voice of the rural disadvantaged heard in schools and the school system as a whole to respect persons of disadvantaged backgrounds.

Policy disappointment

The policy formulation in the 2016 exercise was seriously disappointing in all these aspects. To begin with, the process itself was flawed. The new policy is still being developed and it is unclear how much of the current policy direction and suggestions might remain. Then again, the framework is still speculative, with little clarity regarding the process, the terms and the team. The Subramanian Committee report was preceded by a policy statement articulated by the MHRD. Despite being purportedly based on the extensive consultations held across the country there are three This process had three major deficiencies, each of great significance. The first is that the process did not begin with a comprehensive assessment of the previous policy document, its implementation status and the challenges. This was particularly needed due to the intervening National Curriculum

Framework documents and the position papers linked to NCF 2005. These had made observations on the functioning of the system that had policy implications. In the absence of such an analysis, the consultation was based on an assorted set of leading questions that overlooked the fundamental commitments as well as a meaningful sense and purpose of education.

The second deficiency was the manner the consultations were held and the inadequate recording and documentation of the proceedings.

The third was that even what was collected and collated was perhaps only skimmed through. No effort appears to have been made to go beyond the narrow perspective. The issues that policy must address are: the relationship of education to the life of the people, to the state and the government, the role and purpose of education, its ownership and financing. It needed to spell out if the basic tenets of NCF 2005 would be renewed and indicate the nature of shift. Instead, the policy had made some covert assumptions. It was not clear which steps emanating from the policy consultations would be taken up.

The result is that the inequities of stratification have been accepted, rather than challenged. The underlying belief is that education is fuel to the economy and that there are some children who are more meritorious than others who need to be identified and nurtured right from the beginning. There seems to be the view that most children will not end up in academic or administrative jobs and therefore have no significant need for education. They would only require basic mechanical skills to be able to perform cheap labour intelligently and be consumers of the advertised market. There is no need for a common enriched classroom or expectations for them. The focus should be on training them for some low status role in the economy.

Thus, instead of questioning the failure of the system to arrive at the goal of equitable quality education for all the policy the policy accepted this as its role. That the human being was considered a capital to be harnessed for the benefit of the nation rather than as a citizen with rights and duties stood out clearly.

Purpose of education

It was also evident that education was being interpreted as a skill development and training programme. This directly accepts that the major purpose of education is to find a job. The idea of universal education as essential to enrich the experience and joy of life was and is ignored. The way it was defined and has moved forward, it does not make any case for the rural poor to invest in the education of their children.

One of the main challenges for education today is the cost to run schools. The expectation was that the policy would be forthright in acknowledging the need for a greater investment on education and correct the steps that had been left hanging so far. The tilt of the policy, however, is in the other direction. There is a cut back in spirit and in reality on the resources available and utilised. It does not articulate the need to make for the school and the teacher the most critical answerability to the children, their parents and the community. It does not state the need to rediscover the purpose of education with the community as a participant and bring them in to the dialogue and in implementation. Instead, the clear takeaways from the draft are that children could be differentially treated and most children should be given skills training.

Question of governance

The policy fails to address the question of governance and administration, which has been recognised as one of the major bottlenecks in the ability of the system to make quality education possible to all. The need for a fair and supportive system that respects, supports and encourages teachers, children and the community and moves towards reduced centralisation, gives up on over-governance as well as oppressive and vacuous monitoring, has been forgotten.

This requirement has been underlined in the position paper on systemic reform as far back as in 2005. This theme has recurred in many places where programs and structures have been reviewed. The policy framework did not have that in its design. The recommendations therefore are towards more monitoring, more testing and more pressure on the schools and the teachers. It strengthens the tacit recognition that some children are only meant to receive limited education and that government structures and systems would not function and, hence, privatise at all levels.

Focus on shackling teachers

The new policy does not examine the ideas of making teachers central and empowered to make choices or whether they are allowed to develop and explore their ideas along with the children. It does not look at the sources of their demotivation and alienation. The policy and the discourse around it has given up the effort to construct pragmatic mechanisms for decentralisation, autonomy and shared responsibility.

It has not questioned the myths of standards and outcomes and the excessive competition and anxiety that is linked to it and is set to have elements that would exacerbate it. There is no recognition of the diversity of the background and the patience towards building equitable opportunities with celebration of the learning. Rather it is homogenisation and imposing the hegemony of elite learning purposes and expectations with no empathy for the need of patience for children from different backgrounds.

Exacerbating stratification and widening social divides

The building of consensus around equity raises questions about the inequity between the rural and the urban and even more in the context of the stratification in village society. Economic growth has created an aspirational space in rural India, where the consumption of urban goods and investment in urban infrastructure and education system seems to be the appropriate thing. This will worsen as the pressure on land and the economy increases.

The educational policy has ignored this and has strengthened the interests of the dominant and powerful. There were some hopes but more fears from the new policy, given the nature of the discourse. The conversations are around greater pressures and early specialisation, discarding the ideas of holistic, plural and inclusive education. There seems to be a pushback to providing support and promised resources for the public system of education.

The steps for systemic reforms seem to make the

teacher and the school furthermore at the beck and command of administration. The limited purpose of education as a filter and as an instrument to produce citizens who are useful for ably using the market seems to draw the maximum attention.

While the policy has been shelved for the time being, the increasing interference of the government, directed assessment and monitoring effort seems to indicate the direction the operative policy is taking. There seems to be an overarching consensus to make education focused on narrow measurable outcomes. With uniform milestones for all kinds of institutions and the entire diversity of school going children, not only are the educational objectives but the entire education of the children from disadvantaged backgrounds maybe at risk. The mushrooming private schools and perhaps well intentional educational organisations outside the government framework are all focused on developing programmes and materials that reduce the school curricular expectation to what is to be tested. In this process and otherwise also change the teacher to a store keeper whose task is to distribute and collect back materials. The ideas that education is a continuing dialogue between both among the children and with the teacher, keeping in mind the context and ambience of children and the school, is being replaced by what may euphemistically be called an input–output process. Given the reduction in the meaning of the school there is no hesitation in the educational system to segregate children in the categories of 'weak students' and 'good students'. The tacit agreement to shelve some of the most crucial constitutive principles of the National Curriculum

Framework 2005 that tried to come close to the constitutional commitment of the preamble is reflected in the areas, questions and the sorting categories identified for the education policy. What is also worrying is the apparent opaqueness about the policy development. There is no sharing about the steps that are being thought of and if the policy development process has been shelved or is continuing.

(Adapted from Dewan H.K., http://www.villagesquare.in/2016/12/05/new-education-policy-fails-address-issues-equity/)

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Hridaykant is currently a Professor with Azim Premji University. He has been member of the Founding Group of Eklavya and Educational Advisor of Vidya Bhawan Society, Udaipur. He has been working in the field of education for the last 40 years in different ways and aspects. In particular he has been associated with efforts on educational innovation and modification of State educational structures. He may be contacted at hardy.dewan@gmail.com

Seeking Common Ground – Some Debates Related to Education Policy in India

Nimrat Khandpur

Certain areas in education policy are subject to debate more than others. This article attempts to present a broad overview of the debates around investment in education, use of technology in teaching-learning, vocational education, teacher accountability and the no detention policy. It is proposed that these and other areas be examined in light of Constitutional values and concerns of equity, access and quality. Finally, policy formulation must be informed by both research based evidence and fundamental principles of education.

Context

All citizens have a stake in the education system and it would not be an exaggeration to say that all citizens have strong views related to education. The recent efforts at evolving a national education policy from the grassroots upwards reflected this belief, whatever be the views on the value of the exercise.

Some of the discussions reported are interesting. For instance, during the panchayat level discussions in some States, parents recommended that all government schools be English medium, something that is not aligned with current policy. Research evidence also indicates clearly that the medium of instruction during the early years must be the home language/mother tongue. However, English is viewed as a means of social mobility; one of the reasons for the movement away from government schools is that private schools, of whatever quality, offer an English medium of instruction.

This does not in any manner imply that disagreement around policy is between policy makers and lay persons. Often, policy appears to ignore evidence both from the ground as well as that of rigorous research studies – for example, there is over a century's evidence that merely holding back a child in a lower class will not ensure that he/she attains the expectations related to that class – other measures, both systemic and classroom-based are needed. Assigning teacher accountability through learning outcomes in isolation of enablers for the teacher to function effectively is another case in point.

And, of course, the frequently asked question – when our educational policies have similar refrains, why is implementation so hard? And when they are translated into programmes and schemes, why are these generally interpreted as transient and have so little impact on ground?

The reasons for these differences could be many – ranging from pragmatic considerations like economics and existing priorities, the search for short term solutions to long standing deep rooted problems, the fact that often the evidence from research does not reach practitioners and laypersons, to deep seated beliefs and vested interests driving the discourse. What is indisputable is that multiple views exist around certain areas in education more than others, and are often bitterly contested.

These debates raise certain basic questions, for example: how democratic is policy making in our country, can consensus be achieved from all quarters related to policy, should policy making be driven by academic concerns or cater to populism, how informed is policy by practice, how can we get practitioners to participate in policy formulation, how do we advocate the relevance of policy to stakeholders – the list is long and the questions complex. But before answers to these questions can be attempted, it may be useful to examine certain areas in education around which policy has been controversial.

Some of the areas in the space of educational policy subject to debate are investment in education, medium of instruction in schools, use of technology in teaching-learning, early childhood education, vocationali /skill development in education, teacher accountability, the use of standardised assessments to assess quality of learning, no detention policy, research and evidence based policy development, privatisation, education of children with special needs, and so on. In the sections below, an attempt is made to briefly present the debates around some of these.

Investment in education

The demand for 6% of the GDP as investment in education dates back almost half a century to the

National Policy on Education, 1968, which stated that 'The aim should be to gradually increase the investment in education so as to reach a level of expenditure of 6% of the national income as early as possible'. Referring to this recommendation, the National Policy on Education 1992 stated that 'Since the actual investment in education has remained far short of that target, it is important that greater determination is shown now to find the funds for the programmes laid down in this Policy'. The policy recommended that outlay on education be stepped up to ensure that it will uniformly exceed 6% of national income by the 8th 5-year Plan onwards.

However, investment in education has averaged less than 3.5% of GDP over the past three decades. If we look at the patterns in countries that have been able to achieve universalisation of education, the minimum investment they have made has been 6% of GDP. Interestingly, in today's India, even an investment of 6% of GDP is inadequate. The Committee on National Common Minimum Programme's Commitment of 6% of GDP to education (popularly known as the Majumdar Committee), which submitted its report in 2005 cited reports and analyses to recommend that 8-10% of GDP was needed to meet the requirements (exclusive of contribution by private sector, community, parents and students).

Thus, while policy recommendations have evolved to enhanced expectations from teachers, leaders and institutions, investment in developing structures and processes – infrastructure, resources, recruitment, support personnel and institutions – to enable fulfilment of these expectations remain sub-optimal.

Use of technology in teaching-learning

Programmes and schemes to integrate technology in school education date back to the mid-1970s. With increasing ease of use and access, Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) are seen more and more as contributors to improving access and quality. The National Curriculum Framework, 2005 views ICT as 'an important tool for bridging social divides' and recommends its use 'in such a way that it becomes an opportunity equaliser by providing information, communication and computing resources in remote areas'. The National Policy on

Information and Communication Technology in School Education, 2012 looks at ICT as a means for achieving the goals of quality improvement under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan and the Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyaan.

Using technology requires first access and back up support (electricity, repair and maintenance) – without these, technology integration is meaningless. For example, let us consider the state of rural electrification. Rural electricity supply suffers both in terms of availability for measured number of hours and penetration level. Under such circumstances, technology use would be meaningless without electricity connections and connectivity, even if infrastructure exists.

At the same time, research evidence shows that to integrate technology in education, mere infrastructure is not enough. Technology in the school classroom works only when core issues of the teachers - subject and pedagogical competence along with personal theories they have developed about ICT through observation, interaction, instruction or inferences, along with confidence and motivation - are addressed. In addition, student competence in ICT use and continuing support for the teacher – both technical and pedagogical – also influence the relevance of ICT use. While technology is useful to connect teachers and provide access to new research and knowledge, even this works only when the aforementioned core issues have been addressed.

Vocational education

In India, the discourse around vocationalisation dates back to the colonial period – ostensibly to curb 'educational over-production' which was caused by the 'tendency of individuals from rural areas to continue in school past the capacity of labour markets to absorb them'. (Tilak, 1998) Post-independence, the Mudaliar Commission recommended diversification of courses at the secondary stage while the Kothari Commission suggested vocationalisation of two years of higher secondary education, after ten years of general education.

Vocational education was proposed as the solution to many educational problems: the unbridled demand for higher education could be controlled,

the financial crisis in education would be eased by reducing higher education budgets, and unemployment among college and secondary school graduates would be reduced. The National Policy on Education 1968 recommended that facilities for vocational education be increased and diversified to 'conform broadly to requirements of the developing economy and real employment opportunities'. The National Policy on Education 1986 (modified in 1992) devoted an entire section to vocationalisation and recommended vocational education be offered as a distinct stream after class VIII.

However, vocational education has always being accorded a low status, with liberal education being perceived as the route to higher education and desirable professions. Vocational education is considered the option of last choice, one which a person opts for if he or she performs poorly in the general education stream and exhausts other options. It is also linked to economic compulsions to enter the work place at an early age, overwhelmingly leading to children from disadvantaged backgrounds to take up this option. This results in vocational education and training leading to low end jobs mostly and a low esteem among vocational education pass outs. On the other hand, education cannot be purely theoretical - the instrumental reason of earning a livelihood is important and developing the capability to earn a living must start early. All children must have an understanding of the workplace while developing certain fundamental capacities such as the capacity to critique and question, to solve problems and take informed decisions, etc.

Currently, the broad policy recommendation is that vocational education be aspirational and develop employability skills as well as entrepreneurship, with 25% of all schools in the country offering the option of vocational education from class IX onwards. However, the situation on ground does not give credence to the fulfilment of this recommendation

Teacher accountability

Teachers are viewed as being primarily responsible for children's learning. They are also viewed as being critical in bringing about any kind of improvement in learning through the implementation of programmes and interventions aimed at improving the quality of teaching-learning. The National Curriculum Framework 2005 states that 'No system of education can rise above the quality of its teachers, and the quality of teachers greatly depends on the means deployed for selection, procedures used for training, and the strategies adopted for ensuring accountability'. However, at the same time the autonomy of teachers has been systematically denuded through a top - down approach, teacher preparation programmes which virtually enforce ritualistic processes as opposed to developing reflective practitioners and a teacher support system which has mutated into data gathering and information dissemination.

In some countries, teachers are evaluated, rewarded or even removed on the basis of students' scores on standardised tests. However, there is no strong evidence to indicate whether teachers whose students perform poorly are indeed the 'weakest', or that they can be replaced by more 'effective' teachers. While some anecdotal evidence and small studies exist, their findings cannot be extrapolated into generalisations. There is also no substantive evidence that teacher motivation will improve if they are incentivised for improving student scores. On the other hand, evidence is emerging that 'test-based accountability' actually increases teacher attrition, denudes morale and reduces the curriculum to what will be tested. What gets assessed is delimited by the nature of the test – this is largely driven by the need for reliability and validity, and ease and consistency of scoring. As a result, the majority of large scale assessments constitute multiple choice items. Enquiry, reflection, questioning, problem solving and how students organise knowledge, contribute to group work, etc remain unassessed

There is also substantial evidence that policies pertaining to teacher education, licensing, hiring, and professional development are related to improvements in student performance. Supportive environments within schools with time for collaboration and reflection are also factors which improve teacher effectiveness. Instances where teachers have been clearly informed of expectations from them and the rationale for

these expectations, making them partners and not receivers in educational processes, have resulted in higher accountability.

However, the most critical questions to be asked remains whether it is appropriate to take the simplistic view, firstly, of holding teachers accountable for learning without examining the conditions and environment within which teachers work and secondly without giving teachers access to processes for their in-service development and support.

No detention policy

The concept of no detention is not new in India. Twenty-eight States and Union Territories have had a no detention policy in place before the enactment of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 (RtE). Prior to RtE, NDP was in place till class V in 36% of states and till classes II, III, IV, V, V and VII, respectively, in comparable proportion; two States had NDP for over four decades.

RtE made the no detention policy compulsory till class VIII across all States, with a provision for comprehensive and continuous evaluation (CCE), from 01 April 2010. The underlying belief is that every child can learn, that acquiring mastery is within the reach of the child, only individual pace may vary. Hence, defining comprehensive indicators of learning, encompassing both cognitive and the other areas referred to as co-scholastic/co-curricular areas, helps track each child's learning and development. Continuously assessing the child's progress against these indicators helps scaffold potential areas in which the child may be 'left behind', so to speak. Thus, if a child does not learn, it is a failure of either structures which bind learning into water-tight compartments or stages or of school and classroom processes.

However, the no detention policy (NDP) has come under a striking amount of criticism, the most predominant arguments against it being that it causes teachers and learners to lose seriousness about learning, that it has reduced teacher accountability, holding the child back will act as remediation and eventually benefit the child, children are not able to cope once they emerge from the elementary stage, and so on. While there is no

evidence from over a century of studies across the world to support any of the foregoing arguments, there is substantial evidence that detention is a robust indicator of drop out, associated with a lower rate of enrolment in higher education, poor earning capacity and maladjustment in adult life. Children who repeat a class have poorer learning outcomes than comparable peers who are promoted; they have poor self-esteem and remain on the periphery of class activities. Being older than their classmates is especially challenging for children entering puberty. Children at risk of detention are overwhelmingly from disadvantaged groups and homes which cannot support their learning.

While there may some immediate gains, they fade away within a few years, and are associated with interventions which provide individualized support and involve parents. These interventions are: high quality curriculum and instruction; professional development of teachers; reducing class size in primary classes; keeping students and teachers together for more than one year; using effective student grouping practices; early intervention as opposed to letting learning difficulties accumulate; direct instruction; individualized programmes; formative assessments; summer schools; parents' attitude towards their child's education and involvement with schools; and early childhood programmes. Thus, detention by itself cannot be an intervention – it has to be supported with practices which are aligned with effective pedagogy and assessment.

Is a resolution possible?

While it is obvious that complete consensus on any of these and other debates is not possible, the question still arises on how the multiple arguments for or against any single position can be examined and a resolution sought which satisfies certain basic principles. The values which can guide any discussion are Constitutional values. Therefore, the broad concerns which inform any examination of these debates must be equity, access and quality: equity in terms of reducing differences and not adding to any form of stratification or differentiation, access in terms of both physical environment and learning experiences and quality in all aspects which leads to improved educational processes and therefore improved learning outcomes.

The question then arises – how can we determine that a policy is equitable and ensures both access and quality? One approach could be to examine the situation on the ground in the context of a well thought out framework, while another could be to look at evidence from studies across the world. This raises another question – what evidence is reliable and relevant in our context? Once this question has been satisfactorily answered, research findings should be considered in consonance with the fundamental principles of education and the priorities to inform policy formulation.

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Nimrat has been with the Azim Premji Foundation for the past six years, and is currently a part of the School of Continuing Education and University Resource Center, Azim Premji University where she contributes to professional development programmes. Nimrat has been working in the space of education policy, teacher education and assessment. She has been a Research Fellow at the National Physical Laboratory, Delhi and an Associate at the Saha Institute of Nuclear Physics, Kolkata. She has also worked as an editor of higher academic texts and professional journals, and a teacher educator at the Amity University Uttar Pradesh. She can be contacted at nimrat.kaur@azimpremjifoundation.org

After the feverish pace of wide scale consultations in 2015-16, late last year the process of finalising the new National Policy on Education slowed down. The Ministry for Human Resources Development announced that it would set up a Committee for drafting the policy and the report of the TSR Subramanian Committee would be treated only as an input. The official website of the Ministry neither lists the names of the new Committee members nor showcases any draft of the policy which is in the making. In this article, we shall be discussing some of the key points made in the MHRD note called *Some Inputs for Draft National Education Policy 2016* and point out certain considerations that have a bearing on the proposed provisions.

1. 'Nationally the percentage of out-of-school children aged 6-13 years has declined significantly since 2000. However, the absolute number of out-of-school children remains high. The relatively lower enrolment rates in upper primary and secondary education, as compared to primary education, are also a matter of concern. Ensuring upward transition/mobility of students from elementary to secondary to achieve universal secondary education and from secondary to higher secondary and tertiary education continues to be a challenge' (p. 7).

Discussion

The articulation of the challenge as 'upward transition/mobility of students' seems to ignore the differences in the nature of exclusion for different groups of children and at different levels of education (Govinda and Bandyopadhyay, 2011: Zones of Exclusion). Both systemic exclusion (in terms of push factors) and different forms of disadvantages (geographic and ascriptive and non-ascriptive social categorisation) get bypassed in such a formulation. Recent studies show that while the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 (RTE Act) has provided a binding legislative framework, education inclusion for disadvantaged children is offered on highly unequal terms (Dyer, 2013). The Equity provision in the RTE Act (clause 4), on Special provisions for children not admitted to, or who have not completed elementary education

and age appropriate enrolment through special training, needs to be specifically emphasised.

2. 'The biggest challenge facing school education relates to the unsatisfactory level of student learning. The findings of the National Achievement Surveys (NAS) covering Grades III, V, VIII and X suggest that learning levels of a significant proportion of students do not measure up to the expected learning levels. Poor quality of learning at the primary and upper primary stages affects student learning at the secondary stage. Poor quality of learning at the secondary stage spills over to the college/university years, leading to poor learning outcomes in the higher education sector.

Several factors have contributed to unsatisfactory quality of school education. Some of these include: existence of a large proportion of schools that are not compliant with the norms and standards prescribed for a school, student and teacher absenteeism, serious gaps in teacher motivation and training resulting in deficiencies relating to teacher quality and performance, slow progress in regard to use of information and communication technologies in education, sub-optimal personnel management, inadequate attention to monitoring and supervision of performance, etc. The perceived failure of the schools in the government system to provide education of good quality has triggered entry of a large number of private schools, many of also which lack required infrastructure, learning environment and competent teachers' (p. 8)

Discussion

The understanding of quality of education seems to be very limiting and focuses primarily on learning outcomes. Scholars have emphasised how 'quality' is inadequately addressed even in the RTE Act, with an understanding of quality based only on school-input norms, inadequate inter-parameter linkages in current provision of quality, inadequacy of provisions to represent desired parameters. However, this is not necessarily addressed through a focus only on learning outcomes. What is required is a multidimensional framework for 'quality of

education' drawing on an analysis of i) multiple but comparable interpretations of quality across different providers (related to the issue of quality differences between government and private providers) and access groups (related to the issue of different aspirations and pedagogic contexts for disadvantaged groups); and ii) interconnectedness between levels and institutions of the system as required to improve the education quality (including enhanced learning outcomes) (c.f. Mehendale, 2014).

The overwhelming focus on learning outcomes is visible even in curriculum and assessment related commendations which suggests that 'The curricula should provide opportunities for students to achieve excellence in learning outcomes that are comparable to student learning outcomes in high-performing international education systems' (p. 21).

The proposal to amend the RTE Act in terms of allowing dilution of infrastructure norms and instead incorporating learning outcomes is problematic. First, the conceptualisation of learning outcome as academic competency goes against the larger aims of curriculum provided under Section 29 of the RTE Act, which state that education is for all- round development of children and meant for helping them realise their full potential. Second, incorporating learning outcomes into the

legislation is risky because failure to comply would have legal consequences. The policy proposals talk about linking the failure to achieve learning outcomes with teacher's performance and holding the teachers accountable. Students' inability to produce learning outcomes is a result of complex factors and it would be inappropriate to place the entire onus on the teachers.

3. Equity concerns (p. 10-11) and 'The issue of extension of Clause 12 (1) (c) of the RTE Act to government-aided minority institutions (religious and linguistic) will be examined in view of larger national commitments towards the economically weaker sections' (p. 20).

'Within the parameters prescribed by the RTE Act, States will have the flexibility to design and plan for the infrastructure keeping in view the local conditions. Local norms, appropriate for local conditions, will be evolved, if necessary through amendment in RTE Act, for 'alternate schools' which offer educational interventions for specific categories of very deprived and migrating children, and those living in difficult circumstances' (p. 19).

'Open schooling facilities will be expanded to enable dropouts and working children to pursue education without attending full time formal schools' (p. 20).

Provisions of the Act	Nature of the Mandate	Main concept	Subsidiary concept
4	Special provisions for children not admitted to, or who have not completed elementary education Age appropriate enrolment through special training	Equity (in terms of focus on out of school children (mainly from marginalized groups)	Quality (in terms of the nature-content and mode-of special training)
8 (c) 9 (c) 9 (k)	Prevention of discrimination against children from weaker sections and disadvantaged groups Ensure admission of children of migrant families	Equity	Accountability
12 (1) (c)	25 % provision for children from weaker sections and disadvantaged groups in private schools	Equity	Regulation
12 (2)	Government reimbursement of expenditure to schools for 25 % provision	Equity	Regulation

Discussion

There are a number of provisions of the RTE Act that address equity concerns. The table below summarises this:

While the idea of extension of Clause 12 (1) (c) of RTE Act to government-aided minority institutions (religious and linguistic) is a welcome move, the NEP should also emphasise the existing provisions of equity in the RTE in terms of appropriate measures for:

a. integration of marginalised groups (especially disadvantaged groups) into mainstream schooling

b. addressing in-school discrimination in all types of schools;

c. reinforcing its own commitment by ensuring adequate and timely funding for 12 (1) c (in terms of reimbursements to private schools for 25% provision);

d. accountability and regulation for adherence to the specific provisions in both government and private schools.

The case for 'alternate schools' for very deprived and migrant children needs to be reviewed in terms of the RTE provisions on standards for physical inputs and norms and standards on school infrastructure. 'Alternate schools' should not become a mechanism for providing differentiated (low-quality) education for deprived and migrant children.

The same is applicable for the point on 'open schooling facilities for dropouts and working children'.

4. Governance and management (p. 12) - 'The governance and management of education system and institutions, especially at the tertiary education stage, has assumed complexity with the advent of a multiplicity of providers, programmes and modes of financing…

Commercialisation is rampant both in school and higher education sub-sectors as reflected in the charges levied for admissions in private educational institutions. The proliferation of sub-standard educational institutions has contributed to the diminished credibility of the education system.'

Discussion

The first observation is true even for school education. Private unaided schools now 'span a vast array of operations with varying fee structures, from low-fee to elite, high-fee schools' and 'may be run by voluntary organisations, missionaries, philanthropic bodies, or individual owners as business enterprises' (Srivastava, Noronha and Fennell, 2013: 4).

In addition, there are alternative schools, progressive schools and schools run by charitable trusts, new-age 'edupreneurs', and various forms of corporate bodies which run school-chains or school franchisees. There has also been a significant expansion in education service providers. As one study notes, such service providers 'have become an increasingly important part of the Indian education ecosystem in the recent years' offering 'a range of services including teacher and management trainings/workshops, curriculum management, and, teaching activities and methodologies' (Garg, 2011: 35). Finally, both funding for and delivery of different curricular and school-related products and services now occur through complex institutional systems that include social-impact investment via venture capital firms focused on education markets, public-private partnerships of multiple types, and informal/shadow institutional frameworks that co-exist with the formal institutional structures of schools.

There is, therefore, a need for emphasising an adequate and effective regulatory environment for the above. This is a sorely neglected area. The Governance and Management section also does not emphasise the harmonisation of all programmes and schemes (including the SSA) with the RTE Act; such a mandate has been specified in the revised framework for implementation of the SSA (SSA, 2011; see, especially Chapter 7: Management and Monitoring).

5. 'Expanding early childhood education services to ensure that all pre-school age children aged 4-5 years attain the learning and developmental readiness required for smooth transition to primary education, with particular attention to children belonging to disadvantaged population groups' (p. 15).

Discussion

It is good to see the policy proposals laying a lot of emphasis on education of young children, a provision which was not included under Article 21A. While the policy gives a lot of emphasis on early childhood education, there are a few problems with the proposal. Firstly, it covers ages four to five years which is not aligned with the age of children joining Grade 1(six years). It has dropped the care dimension of early childhood care and education. Instead of allocating resources to fund a dedicated teacher, it has only put the burden of providing ECE on the anganwadi worker. While on the one hand the provision on ECE is committed to accessibility, inclusiveness, responsiveness to diverse needs, it is negated on the other hand by a commitment to provide for ECE on a targeted basis.

6. 'The National Education Policy (NEP), 2016 envisions a credible and high-performing education system capable of ensuring inclusive quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all and producing students/ graduates equipped with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that are required to lead a productive life, participate in the country's development process, respond to the requirements of the fast-changing, ever-globalising, knowledge-based economy and society' (p. 14).

Discussion

The vision is worded as an all-encompassing one, containing all the right sounding key words. It echoes the international commitments we have made under the Agenda 2030 and Sustainable Development Goals. However, there are some inherent tensions within these and it is unclear how these will be resolved. For instance, the idea of inclusive quality education could get affected if the vision of getting integrated into the global economy is extended to the idea of merit which conflicts with the idea of social justice and equity. This vision needs to be specifically operationalised through the policy provisions that follow so as to facilitate their realisation.

7. 'Each State will undertake a detailed exercise of school mapping to identify schools with low enrolment and inadequate infrastructure. Wherever possible, efforts will be made to convert existing non-viable schools into composite schools for optimum utilization of human, physical and infrastructural resources, better academic performance and cost effective management. When schools are merged they could be located in a single campus. In consultation with the states, common guidelines for merger and consolidation would be evolved, without diluting the provisions of the RTE Act. The consolidation will enable the country to achieve one class – one teacher norm in a foreseeable future' (p. 20).

Discussion

The point to be noted here is 'without diluting the provisions of the RTE Act'. In terms of current efforts visible to rationalise school and teacher resources, this is hampering RTE norms. For example, smaller rural/tribal habitations with few school-going children are suffering because local schools have been merged with schools serving larger communities at a distance. Similarly, the RTE norm is only a suggested minimum. State efforts seem to be geared towards meeting RTE norms as the 'prescribed maximum', especially in terms of teacher recruitment and deployment (with aggregated average PTRs becoming the benchmark of having complied with RTE norms).

8. 'The State will endeavour to extend RTE up to an appropriate age so as to cover secondary level education' (p. 20).

Discussion

While this is a welcome move, the proposed extension should be to cover both pre-school education and secondary level education and should be mandated in the form of a revision of the RTE to make this legally binding (and not only an endeavour).

9. Teacher Development and Management (p. 28-30).

Discussion

Overall, the suggestions seem to be positive. However, the policy should explicitly make note of current contradictions and seek to address it. For example, there is the case of regulation on teacher qualifications. With the intention of preserving quality of education and protecting interests of students, the Government has empowered the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) to prescribe minimum qualification norms for persons to be eligible for appointment as teachers from grades 1-8. The notification of these norms is done in order to ensure that a minimum quality of teachers and teaching standards are mandatorily adhered to. The NCTE regulates teacher qualification norms for both private as well as government schools. However, when examining 'regulation inside government' of teacher qualification norms, a different picture emerges. The RTE Act permits state governments to seek exemption from the provision of hiring qualified teachers because of absence of facilities for teacher training in their states. This one-time exemption allows the states to relax teacher qualifications prescribed by the NCTE norms for not more than five years. Although this extension period has ended for most states that enjoyed this relaxation, the teacher qualification norms are not being adhered to. For example, concerns of the state governments having poor teacher educational facilities is accommodated without any sanctions and so are their decisions to appoint unqualified teachers. Thus, 'regulation inside government' remains a challenge for the NCTE which is unable to regulate the state government, thereby diluting the larger public aims of education that it intends to uphold.

10. 'Contractual teachers will be phased out gradually by absorbing the eligible teachers against sanctioned positions' (p. 29).

Discussion

In several states appointment of contractual teachers has been challenged by teachers' unions on the principle of equal pay for equal work. Govinda and Josephine (2004) discuss how holding contractual positions increases dissatisfaction among teachers, which could have adverse implications on their work. By committing to phase out the contractual appointments, the central

government has made a positive prescription in a matter which has been typically determined by the state governments.

11. School Assessment and Governance (p. 32-33)

Discussion

The emphasis on bottom-up accountability mechanisms through community participation and parental involvement is laudable. However, current research shows that this should go hand-in-hand with strengthening the capacity of the existing institutional system for better top-down accountability. This is aligned with findings of studies that show Social Audits (and other bottom-up accountability mechanisms) not being effective to the extent desired when not matched with a responsive bureaucracy that is willing to hold its institutional system accountable. Similarly, there is need to emphasise internal mechanisms of timely flow of funds to local bodies (see, policy briefs of Accountability Initiative on this).

In terms of the intent that the 'States will endeavour to increase allocations for SMC training and ensure that schools receive their grants in time, to effectively implement School Development Plans (SDPs). SDPs will be integrated into the budgeting and planning process at the district level' (p. 33): This requires a fundamental re-orientation of how the Annual Work Plan and Budget (AWP&B) exercise for SSA is carried out, which is more a top-down template-driven process with centralised norms that in reality do not provide space for local-specific bottom-up planning.

12. 'The government will take steps for reaching the long pending goal of raising the investment in education sector to at least 6% of GDP as a priority' (p. 41).

Discussion

This has been a long standing requirement and a commitment since the Kothari Commission recommendation (1964-66) and one that was recognised in all the National Education Policy provisions (1968, 1986, 1992). It is good to note the use of the phrase ''at least' and 'priority'.

If this note on draft inputs for the new National Policy on Education prepared by the MHRD based on the TSR Subramanian committee report is

to serve as an 'input' to the policy which will be drafted soon, it would be important to review the main proposals given therein with regard to how they contribute to the key concerns of education in contemporary times, namely, accessibility, equity, quality, affordability and accountability.

Note

All page numbers, unless otherwise referenced, refer to the document *Some Inputs for Draft National Education Policy 2016.*

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Archana Mehendale is a Professor at Centre for Education Innovation and Action Research, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai. She may be contacted at archana.mehendale@tiss.edu

Rahul Mukhopadhyay is a member of the Faculty at Azim Premji University, Bangalore. His research interests are in the area of sociology of education, education policy and sociology of organisations. He may be contacted at rahul.mukhopadhyay@apu.edu.in

Management, Administration and Governance of School Education in India: Proposed National Education Policy

Sujatha Rao

The National Policy in Education (1986) and the modifications made to the policy (1992) were key initiatives that attempted to enunciate a comprehensive framework that would guide the development of education in the Nation. These were landmark documents as they attempted to highlight the need for quality, equitable education for all and provided broad suggestions as to how education could be resourced, the kinds of programmes that could be implemented to help improve the status of teachers and the profession of teaching and suggestions for better management and governance of the very large public education system. The importance of a decentralized administrative system that was responsive to the needs of the community and was accountable to the larger public for the quality of education provided in public schools were the central tenets of the 1986 and 92 policy on Education.

Almost twenty five years after the last National policy on education was released, a new education policy has been proposed and it is useful to examine the manner in which ideas of 'management' and 'governance' are visualised in the proposed policy. Two key documents are available in the public domain as part of the public discourse on the proposed Policy on Education 2016. The first is the Report of the committee for Evolution of the New Education policy 2016, steered by T S R Subramanian and the second document is MHRD report titled "Some inputs for Draft National Education Policy 2016". Both these documents provide insights into the thinking and perspectives that have shaped the recommendations around the management, administration and governance of education in the country, specifically school education.

The key points made in the report of the committee for Evolution of the New Education policy 2016 are that the education system in the country is in disarray and the policy should focus primarily on improving the quality of education and restoring the credibility of the education system and that a great deal of the current inefficiencies in the system is because of political interference in the administering of the system across all levels (school to higher education). The report identified that

there were "serious gaps in teacher motivation and training, sub-optimal personnel management in the education sector, absence of necessary attention to monitoring and supervision of performance at all levels – in short an overall neglect of management issues in this field have contributed to the current state of affairs." (pg. 34). The committee's report set out to address this issue of lack of credibility in the education system and lack of optimal performance of stakeholders in the system by seeking to "usher in effective management mechanism into education" (section 5.1.6) and to "establish impersonal systems designed to ensure oversight of the work of Principals and teachers – in short management at the school level.

The desire of the committee to reduce political interference within the education system and to bring in greater efficiencies has led the committee to recommend that a managerial approach with strengthened control and supervisory mechanisms, tied tightly to the notion of accountability (particularly accountability of teachers and principals in school education) be taken. To that extent, the committee has recommended in section 5.1.17 that "all aspects in the hierarchy be reviewed to bring about transparency, clear-cut criteria in operations, establishment of open systems, independent outside verification to ensure compliance; and use of Information Technology appropriately to achieve the above; build an effective quality monitoring system, linking the schools on hierarchical management system, at the block / district / state level; establish new transparent system for approval, affiliation and regular evaluation of new institutions, with transparent processes, based on clearly established principles, with full public disclosure and bring accountability at each level of operation.

These three pillars of New Public Management (Buschor, 1994) – transparency, accountability and efficiency of operations are tied together by the committee's hope of "appropriate use of Information Technology in every aspect of governance of the sector" with the committee stating that it is "satisfied that if substantive steps on the above mentioned lines are taken, the

quality of governance will sharply improve, with consequent significant enhancement in the quality of education." (pg. 42). The committee places great confidence in ICT and its ability to remarkably change school administration by stating in section 5.2.35 that "Once this is rolled out, this system has the potential to be a game changer. Every student (in every school, college, university or higher education institution), every teacher, Principal, school could have a unique identity – with real-time monitoring of education progress of students, teachers' contribution to learning, Principals' performance and the role of school / institution in the education process. This can be an extremely powerful monitoring and management tool, to upgrade the education process phenomenally, in an open and transparent manner."

The dominant focus of the committee – the restoring of the credibility of the education system and specifically of teachers – has been approached with the familiar administrative tropes of strengthening the bureaucracy, but alleviating some of its deficiencies with the rhetoric of new public management – accountability, transparency and efficiency. The committee has recommended standardised mechanisms for teacher recruitment, selection, deployment and transfers; establishment of special educational tribunals to deal with service related issues; creating a specific cadre of school principals vested with disciplinary powers; the vesting of additional disciplinary powers with SMCs; using of ICTs to monitor teachers as well as to integrate student outcomes with teacher performance; compulsory training provided to teachers and principals leading to licensures; and mandatory school evaluations based on accepted frameworks of standards for which teachers and principals would be held accountable.

These approaches have been used in many countries in the 80s and 90s and seek to bring in market-efficiency arguments into failing public sector services (Aucoin, 1994; Boston, Martin, Pallot, and Walsh, 1996). However, such accountability measures that other systems and countries have attempted have included ideas of autonomy and school based decisions and management. But the overarching fear that the committee senses over the declining quality of education in the country,

coupled with despair over the politicisation of education with its vested interests and rent-seeking behaviour and a lack of confidence in the competency of teachers and principals in the system seems to have forced the committee in detailing out a governance approach that is control based and mechanistic (Rowan, 1990) with little scope for autonomy or for alternate conceptualisations of 'management".

While the committee speaks briefly about restoring the credibility of teaching as a profession, the unidimensional application of managerialistic principles without considering the specificities of education as a domain is a deep lacuna in the report. Teaching is a complex activity, requiring teachers to make 'real-time' decisions in the classroom that contribute to student learning. This requires teachers to have the autonomy to tailor content, pedagogy, evaluation, and teaching processes to suit the needs of the child and the specific context of the school. Such a profession requires not a mechanistic response of 'control and evaluate' but alternate approaches that recognise the centrality of the teacher and support mechanisms needed to make sure that teachers are able to perform their role effectively. This requires turning attention to other forms of management – for example organic structures that are not control but commitment based (Rowan, 1990). The committee makes no mention of ideas of teacher collaboration, peer and self-evaluation, collegiality, teacher learning communities, distributed decision making, teacher leadership or shared vision and the building of school cultures. In their attempt to reduce issues of teacher absenteeism, politicisation, and teacher truancy, the committee has ignored more viable and democratic forms of school management and instead sought ICT enabled surveillance regimes with strengthened supervisory mechanisms within the bureaucracy as a strategy to improve schooling and student learning outcomes. This results in what can be referred to as "controlled de-control" pursuing accountability without sufficient autonomy provided to teachers and principals to improve learning outcomes at the level of the school.

While the committee's report can be accused of being overly supervisory and control based

in its management recommendations, it is clear that this is being driven by the committee's very explicit recognition of the corruption and political interference that happens at all levels of the system and their desire to reduce this to a minimum. However, the draft report of the MHRD makes no mention of these fears and conclusions of the committee – in fact it does not refer to the committee's report at all. The draft report reiterates the need to improve the quality of school education by pointing out factors that contribute to the "perceived' failure of schools in the government system: existence of a large proportion of schools that are not compliant to the prescribed norms and standards for a school; student and teacher absenteeism; serious gaps in teacher motivation and training resulting in deficiencies relating to teacher quality and performance; slow progress in regard to use of information and communication technologies in education; sub-optimal personnel management, inadequate attention to monitoring and supervision of performance etc." (pg. 8). The draft policy seeks to address these through the use of ICT in administrative processes, in reiterating the need for mandatory training for teachers and principals and in once again using the rhetoric of "empowering SMCs to take disciplinary action against absent teachers and principals". In addition, the draft committee takes on board the committee's suggestion for a dedicated cadre of trained school principals (although the nature of such training is unclear).

The draft policy does not address the fundamental issue of lack of trust that the system faces (which the committee's report had clearly identified). In choosing to ignore the problem of lack of institutional legitimacy that the education system is experiencing, the draft policy does not incorporate or consider learnings from education that provide clearer directions on how changes in school systems and educational reform actually take place. The fundamental ethical role, identity and autonomy of the teacher in the system is left unaddressed. While teacher training is mentioned, the notion of teaching as a profession and the teacher as a professional working in a complex space is left completely unaddressed. The draft report's recommendations suggest a superficial response to the issue of teacher 'management' rather than the core issue of teacher professional development.

Strengthening teacher education, competency and school administration is necessary. However, evidence from around the world suggest that this is best achieved when schools are able to make decisions that are contextually relevant and meaningful to children and teachers feel supported in their efforts to ensure that all children learn. This requires teacher and school autonomy, the development of a shared vision among the stakeholders of the school, the creation of a robust school culture that encourages learning and collaborative practices that involve all stakeholders in decision making in schools. The draft report makes no mention of teacher autonomy and the connections that the committee was endeavouring to make between teachers' performance and student learning, even though problematic, is completely ignored in the draft report. This suggests that the ministry itself recognises that the recommendations being made in the report on strengthening teacher management processes will not necessarily lead to any significant changes in the learning levels of the children or in improving the quality of schools.

The report in its specific management and governance recommendations is delinked from a fundamental understanding of educational goals and aims, of the complexity of teaching and the support required for teachers to perform. It ignores the issues of political power and interference that has plagued the education system and makes no effort in addressing these fundamental issues that will derail any reform initiatives. Given these large gaps, it is difficult to see how additional supervisory and regulatory powers within the hierarchy or the belief in ICT as providing transparent decision making will lead to any improvements in either student learning or in the quality of school education in the country.

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Sujatha works in the area of school leadership, school improvement and educational change. She works with schools and with NGOs working in this space. Sujatha teaches at the Azim Premji University and at the Indian School of Development Management. She may be contacted at sujatha.rao@apu.edu.in

Educational Policies in Challenging Areas

Saswati Paik

As per the Right to Education (RTE) Act 2009 in India, every Indian child is eligible for 'free and compulsory education' from 6 to 14 years. Assuming that a child is in 1st grade at age 6, and reaches 9th grade at 14. During these 8 years of 'free and compulsory education', a child can get free books, uniforms and mid-day meal on school days from the government S/he does not have to pay any tuition fee for schooling. There are variations in terms of this policy from state to state, but in general, these are the common benefits expected from the government. But once a child reaches secondary level and costs increase, parents are supposed to bear the shortfall. S/he may become vulnerable to dropping out, especially if issues like poverty and resource availability Issues, access to school, teachers' behaviour in school, traditional practices within the society become additional constraints

Challenges with complications

The situation becomes remarkably complicated in

Direct impacts of natural disaster include (i) destruction of school building, (ii) damage of roads connecting the school resulting in uncertainty of reopening, irregular attendance ultimately impacting their learning process. Indirect impacts include long term closure of a school due to temporary conversion of school building to a rehabilitation centre, silent exclusion of children from school belonging to families in distress through displacement or migration, resulting into child labour, child marriage and child trafficking. Naturally this set of children lag behind expected learning outcomes levels by many years.. Their exclusion from the school system cannot be interpreted merely as poverty or lack of parental awareness: the roots go much deeper.

Schooling in unfavourable natural settings

Approximately 85 per cent of the Indian subcontinent is vulnerable to one or multiple natural disasters, 22 States have multi-hazard zones. The following table provides an overview:

Area and type of disaster	Estimated area affected as per National Policy on Disaster Management 2009
Earthquake prone areas	58.6 per cent of landmass
Land prone to flood, riverbank erosion	12 percent of land
Drought prone	68 per cent of cultivable land
Coastline prone to cyclones and tsunamis	5700 kms out of 7516 kms in total

Source: National Policy on Disaster Management 2009

challenging geographical and geo-political contexts such as natural disaster prone areas and armed conflict areas. Also, there are areas experiencing access related challenges. These challenges rarely attract adequate attention of policy makers and implementers, though there are isolated cases of good practices in a few such areas. The causes of dropout in these areas are complicated and not necessarily always associated with poverty. I will discuss a few areas of which I have got a broad understanding through visits about school related challenges and policies. The areas focused on here are: (1) Uttarkashi in Uttarakhand, (2) Barmer in Rajasthan and (3) Dantewada in Chhattisgarh.

Reality in Uttarkashi (Uttarakhand)

About 86% of total area of Uttarakhand State is located in a seismically active hilly zone with the region being prone to floods, flash floods, landslides and cloudbursts (Government of Uttarakhand, 2015 and Das, 2013). Uttarkashi District located in the northernmost part of Uttarakhand, borders Himachal Pradesh in the north and China in the north-east. This district was worst affected in 2013 during the flash flood of Rudra Prayag. Out of the six administrative blocks, the worst affected was Bhatwari. A geotechnical assessment of twenty villages of Bhatwari, Dunda and Barkot Tehsil was carried out by a group of geologists from Geological

Survey of India (GSI) at the request of the Uttarakhand government to assess the magnitude of damage, causative factors and short term and long term remedial measures.

This survey found sixteen villages badly damaged and it was suggested that eleven of these be partially relocated.

A study on some schools in Bhatwari Block conducted during November-December 2015 revealed the following:

(i) Schools are categorised from A to F, depending on their access to main road, availability of transport facilities, health facilities, post office, educational facilities, commercial centres, telecommunication, general public amenities and altitude above sea level. Many schools in Uttarkashi are located far from the main road, the terrain is tough and access is a big challenge. One of the main reasons behind the existence of numerous single teacher schools is lack of willing teachers to serve the schools having access related issues. According to an Education Department estimate, in 2013 floods affected 29 schools, of which three were completely damaged, 26 schools experienced partial damage such as collapsed walls, roofs and gates, damage to the drinking water facility, washrooms, classrooms etc. Despite frequent disasters, schools do not have a structured plan for disaster mitigation.

(ii) In numerous locations, increase in sediment load in Bhagirathi River, unplanned construction and inadequate protection measures have also aggravated the situation as mentioned in the report by GSI and also observed during the survey in the field.

Policy Initiatives and Good Practices in Uttarakhand

Some evidences of context specific policy initiatives and practices were observed which must be appreciated:

1. This State has taken some special measures to ensure continuity of education of children. The residents of areas experiencing snowfall for two to three months annually come downhill, arrangments for the schooling of their children is made in local schools. The schools located at higher altitude also follow little different academic calendar with longer winter break and shorter summer break in keeping with prevailing weather conditions.

2. The District Disaster Management Office (DDMO) in Uttarkashi acts as the advisory to many departments on providing technical assistance. After finishing reconstruction of houses affected during the 2013 flood, DDMO has started assessment of public buildings which include schools.

3. The bulldozers used for levelling and repairing roads are generally stationed at regular intervals on the main road to ensure quick repair and regular maintenance.

4. The network of active NGOs is another unique practice in Uttarkashi which has reduced the duplication of work and ensured their reach to community. The NGOs work in multiple areas such as generating mass awareness regarding disaster management in villages and schools, providing expert consultation for farming and livelihood related aspects, co-operative buying and selling of raw materials and produce.

5. The Nehru Institute of Mountaineering (NIM) charts out paths for new roads and trains youth volunteers from villages so that they can act as first responders during emergency.

Public Schools in Rural Barmer in Rajasthan

From the state bordering China, we come to a state bordering Pakistan, namely, Rajasthan, where Barmer district is located. It comprises eight blocks, two municipalities, 380 gram panchayats and 1933 inhabited villages. According to the 2011 Census, literacy rate in Barmer is 56.5 per cent while the state average is 66.1 per cent. Both male and female literacy rate (70.09 and 40.6 percent respectively) are lower than the state averages (79.2 and 52.1 percent respectively). Within this district, Sheo block shows female literacy rate lower than that of district average (38.12 percent) and very low sex ratio (863 whereas The district average is 902), both of which are quite alarming.

The challenges facing the school system in Barmer are associated with its geo-physical location, livelihood and educational policy.

1. Productive land and livelihood opportunities both are very limited here. 49.11 percent of the total area in Sheo is cultivable, only 0.62 percent of which is irrigated (GoI, 2014). Villages hardly receive water from planned Indira Gandhi Canal. Few schools have initiated rainwater harvesting, but rain is scarce, resulting in a perennial drinking water crisis.

2. Schools are located in isolated places, shops are rare. Despite having mid-day meal (MDM) menu fixed by the department, school children mostly get only *daliya* or *khichdi*, so nutrition is at stake, It still remains an attraction as it is sometimes their only meal of the day.

3. The population is so sparse that establishing a school at every kilometre (as per RTE norm) does not make sense, therefore, a public school caters to multiple small hamlets *(dhanis)*. Many schools are not connected by *pukka* roads and public transport, therefore students from distant villages have to walk barefoot on the sand. One can imagine the situation in summer when temperature can go above 50 degree celsius!

4. Caste hierarchy and practices of caste based discriminations are so strong that in the school children have their meals on plates meant for their respective castes and never ever mess up in that practice. Even the cook is chosen from the dominating caste of the community of the area.

5. Women of high caste families hardly get permission to work outside their households, therefore the cooks are often men, very poorly paid (usually Rs 1000 per month for making meals for 100-120 children per day for six days a week). As a result, there is frequent absenteeism of cooks and the teachers have to manage the cooking.

6. Lady teachers are rare in rural schools. The main reasons are (i) lack of women's education, (ii) remote location of schools, (iii) long distance from the main roads and extremely poor access. Therefore, girls usually dropout from the school after elementary education or even before that.

7. In few schools even the male teachers have to stay in the school premises as they are not able to drive bikes on the sandy terrain and the area lacks decent rented accommodation.

Policy Initiatives in Barmer

Some policy initiatives in Barmer are listed below:

1. To retain teachers appointed for Barmer (dark zone) Schools, the Government has restricted transfers.

2. The head teacher of a school is usually assigned the position of nodal officer who is

supposed to collect demographic data from the local community and update the local administration. This process is time consuming for a teacher. As per the policy, the number of educational functionaries is extremely low, there is only one BEO and one resource person in entire Sheo block which have more than 300 schools.

3. In public schools, only books are supplied by the State Department of Education. In the villages, where shops are rare, transport system is so poor, it is surprising to learn supplying school uniforms is not a priority.

4. The operational aspects expected in a decentralised set up of educational governance are missing. There is no functional School Management Committee (SMC) in most of the schools.

5. Considering the food crisis in the area during summer, schools arrange a mid-day meal during the summer vacation in keeping with government policy. But it is difficult to imagine a child walking four or five kilometres, barefoot, on sandy terrain at 40-50°C just to have lunch!!

Schooling in armed conflict areas

In most of the conflict-affected areas, 'the combination of poverty and conflict appears to be most potent with the highest concentrations of out of school children' (Smith, 2010). Although education is generally considered to be 'a force for good', research studies show that 'conflict can distort its benefits and introduce additional risks' (Nicolai, 2003). In a zone of conflict, schools may be unsafe as school buildings can be used as army or military shelters which are attacked during conflicts, thereby putting both children and teachers at risk. This is true of parts of few Indian states such as Jammu and Kashmir, parts of Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Orissa, West Bengal, Assam, Manipur and Tripura.

Schools and Policy Initiatives in Dantewada, Chhattisgarh

Dantewada district in Chhattisgarh is well known because of its socio-political issues. According to Census 2011, the literacy rate of Scheduled Tribes population for the rural part of this district is 29.33 percent. There are 138 villages where literacy range is 11 - 20 percent, these villages constitute 23.39 percent of total villages and 23.91 percent of total population of Scheduled Tribes in this district. There are eleven villages where the literacy rate of the ST population is zero percent (Directorate of Census Operations, 2014).

Numerous villages in this district face the issue of armed conflicts where schools remain closed for most of the academic year. The state of education of the children in those locations can be imagined. Many children are orphaned due to the conflicts, while many get excluded from the school system. Recognising the fact of such silent exclusion and vulnerability of the children of school going age, the Chhattisgarh government has taken some unique policy initiatives. To name a few:

1. The State Government has installed separate pre-fabricated structures for residential schools for boys and girls, known Pota Cabin schools, which are portable and can be easily moved from one place to another. The government takes care of all the expenses of the children and after the 8th grade, moves them to nearby public schools for secondary education.

2. The Education City in Geedam *tehsil* (on NH 16) is another unique initiative here. The huge area meant for educational initiatives of the government surely will draw the attention of any visitor here.

3. Within the Education City, the school called *Aastha* brings different perspectives of education altogether. It is presently providing co-education for around 800 children who belong mainly to families affected by armed conflicts in Chhattisgarh. This school also provides all provisions for the children, but their infrastructural facilities and school practices are quite different from those of the Pota Cabin Schools. The medium of education is English with partly western style uniforms and technically well -equipped classrooms.

4. A few metres away from *Aastha*, is *Saksham*, a residential school for children with special needs, with an enrolment of 170., This school is well equipped with infrastructural facilities for the visually impaired and those with hearing, speech and mental health issues. These

children go to formal school for three days in the week and use the special classrooms in their own premises for the other three. The purpose of this school is to equip the children with special needs to cope up with the formal school setting. The school is well equipped in terms of infrastructure and facilities required for special needs children.

Concluding with Questions

1. In locations suffering from natural disasters or armed conflicts, disruptions in schooling are usual, but disruption remains unnoticed partially due to frequency of such incidents. As a result, the impact on the children's mental health and learning process in the long run remains unaddressed. Do these children, regularly suffering from disruption of schooling, ever experience 'equity' in education? Is their right to education limited to a maximum of 8th grade?

2. Lack of maps of schools showing their geographical locations, access roads, community surrounding and geo-physical environment associated with the area pose a major challenge in understanding the risk and vulnerability of the schools and the need for appropriate policy interventions. Deeper understanding about similar set of schools in different states may help to design possible educational policy framework to address context specific issues in such challenging areas. This may be possible with the use of the GPS in some areas, but will require manual mapping in others. Who will take the initiative to map these schools and when?

3. Researchers and civil society organisations hardly visit the schools in such challenging areas to understand the issues and there is a general lack of political will to focus on the school -related issues caused by natural and man-made disasters. How can we draw attention of researchers and civil society organisations to such localities to ensure meaningful policy interventions to aim for long term benefits of children

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Saswati is a Faculty in School of Education, Azim Premji University. Her main areas of interest are educational policies and public school systems in challenging areas. She has started mapping some schools in challenging areas in India which suffer from physical access related issues, natural disasters and armed conflicts. . She may be contacted at saswati@apu.edu.in

Language and Literacy in Draft National Education Policy (DNEP), 2016

A Giridhar Rao and Shailaja Menon

In this paper, we take a brief look at how language and literacy have been addressed in the 43-page document – *Some Inputs for Draft National Education Policy* (MHRD, 2016b; hereafter DNEP). We believe that it is not possible to understand DNEP without reading it in conjunction with the 217-page *National Policy on Education 2016: Report of the Committee for Evolution of the New Education Policy* (MHRD, 2016a; hereafter CENEP). Hence, we have considered both in our commentary. (Strangely, CENEP is not listed among the 'Relevant Documents' on the MHRD website!) We first take a look at policies related to language, then literacy.

Language in DNEP-2016

Language is dealt with directly in only one section of DNEP – 'Language and Culture in Education' (pp 30-31). The Three Language Formula (TLF), people's desire for English and instruction in the mother tongue (or first language) are the three issues related to language it lightly touches upon. It notes that TLF is being followed unevenly in the country, '...there are deviations in the implementation of TLF in many states' (p 30). CENEP is more explicit about the situation:

6.13.11 Not all States are providing education in three languages up to the secondary stage; in fact, the variations in so many states, as well as local variations within states are of such nature that it can be even argued that the TLF is observed more in the breach than as a national policy. In some States, only two languages, the State language and English are being taught, presumably for political reasons. In some of the Hindi-speaking States the TLF is of-ten interpreted as providing for the study of Sanskrit in place of any other modern Indian language; indeed contrary to the spirit of the TLF no South Indian language is generally taught in most schools in Hindi speaking states. Some Boards of School Education allow students to pass the secondary school examination with only English and another foreign language, permitting them even to avoid learning Hindi or any regional language.

DNEP's recommendations regarding TLF are:

Knowledge of English plays an important role in the national and international mobility of students and provides an access to global knowledge. Hence, it is important to make children proficient in reading and writing English. Therefore, if the medium of instruction up to primary level is the mother tongue or local or regional language, the second language will be English and the choice of the third language (at the upper primary and secondary levels) will be with the individual states and local authorities, in keeping with the Constitutional provisions. (p. 31)

The autonomy of 'individual states and local authorities' to choose the third language of instruction sounds positive. But, it is the first language of the school that is the problem for children of Indigenous Peoples and Linguistic Minorities (IPLM). It is imperative, therefore, that we pay close attention to what the document says about mother tongue instruction.

We find that DNEP appears to endorse mother tongue medium education. DNEP acknowledges that 'Students learn most effectively when taught through their mother tongue' (p. 40). But this is diluted in the very next sentence, 'On the other hand, there is a growing demand for learning English language and schools with English as medium of instructions'. The phrase 'On the other hand' suggests that a mother tongue education and learning English are somehow opposed to each other. Successful bilingual education systems worldwide show that this is a false opposition: children can and do learn both the mother tongue and the 'other tongue' up to a high level.

In acknowledging that mother tongue education is best, DNEP echoes CENEP:

6.13.18 The Committee agrees with the view expressed in the 1968 National Policy on Education that: 'The energetic development of Indian languages and literature is a sine qua non for educational and cultural development. Unless this is done, the creative energies of the people will not be released, standards of education will not improve, knowledge will not spread to the people,

and the gulf between the intelligentsia and the masses will remain, if not widen further'(p. 98).

Fine words. But precious little of that commitment seems to have translated into policy.

DNEP's policy initiatives regarding language include

All states and Union Territories, if they so desire, may provide education in schools, up to Class V, in the mother-tongue, local or regional language as the medium of instruction (p. 31).

After declaring that learning outcomes are best in the mother tongue, the document adds the following riders: 'if they so desire', 'may provide education', 'mother-tongue, local or regional language'. All these are claw-backs and cop outs that legitimise denying mother tongue education to children of IPLM.

It should also be noted that it is in the matter of the education of these children that DNEP and CENEP are most egregious. It is here that we see that mother tongue education, in fact, means pre-primary education! The first mention of language in DNEP occurs halfway through the 40-page document. In the section on 'Inclusive Education and Student Support', the document observes, 'Education level of tribal children is a matter of grave concern.... Language and communication is also a problem for non-tribal teachers working in tribal areas' (DNEP 2016, p 23). In the Policy Initiatives in that section, we read:

'Experience has shown that tribal children have difficulty in understanding and learning in the regional language which is usually the medium of instruction. To overcome this impediment, steps will be taken to ensure that, wherever required, multi-lingual education will be introduced'. (DNEP 2016, p. 24)

The fact that children do not know the regional language is seen as an 'impediment' (with its associations of a physical defect). The system will 'overcome' this 'impediment' through 'multi-lingual education'. To understand what this 'multi-lingual education' is, we need to go back to CENEP. In the section on 'Education of Tribal Children', CENEP notes

6.12.16 In some interactions the Committee was told that tribals find it difficult to under-stand

the regional language which is the medium of instruction. However, the general feeling was that while the medium should be [the] regional language, in the initial grades, it should be taught through local dialect [**the** local dialect or **a** local dialect – we are not told]. The Committee was informed that already there are several programmes under implementation in states having a large tribal population where the teacher teaches in tribal dialect of the area. In other states efforts are being made to produce bi-lingual text books. In the initial stages teachers would need training and requisite learning material in local dialects (p. 95).

Notice the casual and disparaging label, 'dialect' for indigenous languages – for the Committee, tribals evidently possess only dialects, not languages. CENEP notes:

6.13.13 In implementing a language policy, primacy should be given to the mother tongue as the medium of instruction in the initial stages, before the child enters primary school. This is imperative, as repeated studies have indicated that basic concepts of language and arithmetic are best learnt in one's mother tongue. Indeed, a child learns the mother tongue naturally from her home and societal environment. At the pre-primary level and in Anganwadis, the emphasis should be on reinforcing this knowledge and establishing a sound foundation for all future education based on the children's mother tongue, including tribal languages.

The child's mother tongue has a place only in the Anganwadis, not once the child enters school. CENEP recommends the following:

9.23.6 It is the experience of many states that tribal children find it difficult to understand regional language which is the medium of instruction. To overcome this difficulty while the medium should be the regional language in the initial grades, classroom transactions should be through local dialects (p. 193).

In sum, the 2016 draft to the National Education Policy

- continues to deny mother tongue medium education to children of IPLM, even while paying lip-service to its importance;

- in effect, actively promotes a policy of linguistic assimilation;
- thus setting the stage for poor cognitive and emotional outcomes for children of IPLM.

Literacy Education

We have only a little to add to the conversation on early literacy, because it does not find mention at all in the document! The main point we wish to make is that its absence in a national policy on education is a serious gap that needs attention. Where literacy is mentioned in the document (and it does find several mentions), it is used in relation to adult literacy and lifelong learning, and terms such as 'basic literacy', 'functional literacy and so on, are used to characterise it.

We would like to make the argument that, with large numbers of first-generation learners entering our classrooms under Education For All and Right to Education policies and with so many of them failing to learn, we need to take a closer look at why this failure is occurring. At several points the document notes the poor quality of learning in the primary and upper-primary stages, and notes that these effects, laid down in the early years, cascade to secondary schooling finally reaching up to higher education. However, it leaves this aspect largely unanalysed, except in terms of attributing it mainly to issues related to teacher quality, motivation, absenteeism, schools not adhering to norms, slow progress in the use of ICT and so on (p. 8). Reading and writing underlie much of school-based learning—including content-area learning. Children's failure to learn to read and write proficiently in the early grades (as documented in several large-scale studies) sets up a weak foundation for all other school-based learning. It further sets them up as semi-literate for life—not able to read and write proficiently either for their own learning or pleasure, or for more practical purposes, such as employment opportunities. Therefore, we need a considered stance and policy towards the teaching of early reading and writing in schools. Simply stating that children should be taught three languages is, in our opinion, insufficient in terms of developing an informed position on issues related to early literacy.

The MHRD's own document *Padhe Bharat Badhe Bharat* (MHRD, 2014) identifies early grade reading and writing as foundational to school-based learning – and therefore, as very important contributors to overall learning levels and outcomes. This document has detailed a set of recommendations (system-level, and school-classroom level) that it believes the country needs to adopt. A few of these are:

- Clarity on medium of instruction. It recommends providing the space for children's home languages at least for the first 2-3 years of formal school instruction
- 2.5 hours per day (500 hours per year) mandated for early reading, writing and language
- Emphasis on teaching reading and writing with understanding (comprehension)
- Development and use of appropriate materials, including children's literature
- Capacity building of teachers, administrators, etc. on understanding the process of learning to read and write and how best to support it – in terms of curriculum, assessment, responsive re-teaching, material development, and so on.

CARE-India and the Centre for Early Childhood Education and Development (Ambedkar University, Delhi) have released a Position Paper on Early Language and Literacy Instruction (CECED, 2016), which considers the foundational role played by early language and literacy in all school-based learning. Since much of children's encounters with language in schools have a textual component to it, it suggests that issues related to early literacy deserve a unique space of their own that are not addressed by generic policies around language.

The ELLI position paper provides various recommendations for early literacy instruction that could easily be translated into policy recommendations. Several of these overlap with the recommendations of the document *Padhe Bharat Badhe Bharat*, but in addition, it suggests that the 3-8 age-group be viewed as a continuous period of learning, such that pre-primary and primary pro-grammes be planned in tandem. It also outlines a variety of principles that must be adopted in the early grade classrooms for supporting reading and writing. None of these currently available docu-ments have been considered in drafting the DNEP – a significant omission. We must address early

literacy explicitly in a national policy on education, and must do so without further delay.

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Giridhar teaches courses on language policy, language pedagogy, linguistic human rights, Esperanto and linguistic democracy, and science fiction at Azim Premji University, Bangalore. He blogs on these themes at bolii.blogspot.com. He may be contacted at rao.giridhar@apu.edu.in

Shailaja Menon teaches at the School of Education, Azim Premji University, Bengaluru, Karnataka. Concurrently, she leads the Early Literacy Initiative at Tata Institute of Social Sciences-Hyderabad, Telangana. Prior to this, she worked at the School of Education at the University of Colorado at Boulder, Colorado. She currently leads a longitudinal project, 'Literacy Research in Indian Languages' (LiRIL) and is a key anchor of an annual bilingual children's literature festival, 'KathaVana'. Her publications have appeared in international journals, and she serves on several advisory committees that shape policy and practice related to early literacy in India. She may be contacted at shailaja.menon@apu.edu.in

Education and Employment: A View from the Periphery

Vikas Maniar

I recently spent some time in a village in Gujarat almost exclusively inhabited by an Adivasi community called the Rathva. In my discussions with the community, 'dhandho' (a Guajarati word that roughly translates as occupation) was cited as the key reason why they wanted their children to attend school. 'Dhando' is a word that can mean jobs (public or private) or self-employment in petty businesses. When I dug deeper, it became evident that the preference is for jobs, particularly government jobs, typically for jobs as teachers, nurses, police constables or army jawans. These are entry level jobs in the government (Group C or Group D jobs as per the administrative classification) that are relatively abundant.

The view that education equips children to take up jobs in the industry is supported by Education Policy documents. In the ongoing consultation for the new education policy, a draft document[1] of MHRD website claims, 'The task of enhancing the employability of the products of the education system ought to be accorded high priority'. It also has academic backing. Human Capital Theory proposes that at an individual level, education is an investment in oneself, which can provide higher returns in the form of increased earnings in the future. At the national level, a higher investment in education is expected to bring in higher GDP growth in the future. Thus the education job linkage is quite strongly established in popular imagination. But ground realities told me quite a different story.

Bhilpur (name changed) is a village located in Chhota Udepur district of Gujarat with a population of 3000. The key economic activity in the village is subsistence agriculture complemented with migratory labour in various construction sites in the major cities of western India such as Jaipur, Vapi etc. Some families are also engaged in migratory sharecropping in the cotton fields in and around Rajkot in Gujarat. Spatially the village is organised into *falias*, a homestead of extended kin spread over a common ancestral land. The landholding is marginal with each family owning on average about 1-2 acres, with the holdings reducing every generation with land getting split among the male heirs. Land is primarily cultivated for self-consumption and is only a minor source of cash income. The migratory labour to construction sites is the main source of income to fulfil all other needs and most of the youth (aged 15 to 40) are away at least a few months each year to such sites. Most families, however, aspire to a job, particularly a government job, for their children. This is seen to be a way out of poverty and an insurance against the uncertainties of a life dependent on subsistence agriculture. Despite this, less than five per cent of the families have members engaging in the salaried jobs, whether in public or private sectors and, as is going to be discussed shortly, chances of them getting salaried jobs are slim.

There are four schools in this village: a Lower Primary School (grades 1-5); a Higher Primary School (grades 1-8); a residential Ashram School (grades 1-8); a newly opened Model School (grades 6-12). Many of the students who pursue secondary schooling also commute to secondary schools in Chotta Udepur. Last year, about 50% of the children who enrolled in secondary education in the Chhota Udepur taluk (block), were able to pass the SSC exams and those of who made it to the higher secondary only about 33% were able to pass the HSC exams. So, even for the students who made it to the secondary school, only about 17% were able to complete it. Considering that many children do not even make it to the secondary education, the rate of completion of secondary education in this region is likely to be in single digit in percentage terms and those pursuing higher education even smaller. This means that with SSC and HSC being the minimum qualification for many public and private sector jobs, a majority of the young people here are already precluded from the job market.

When one looks at the availability of jobs, the picture is similarly bleak. There are not many industries or other wage earning jobs in the vicinity that can be pursued. Of the few jobs that are available

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locally, for example dolomite stone crushing or sand quarrying, most are not dependable and pay poorly. The opportunities for coveted government jobs are seriously limited despite the members of the community being eligible for reservations in these jobs through affirmative action under the Scheduled Tribes category. As a result they resort to informal sector jobs as and when they are available, often under adverse conditions. The most feasible option for jobs is to migrate to cities for manual construction labour since formal sector jobs, whether in the government or private sector, are simply too few to accommodate most aspirants. The scope for skill based self-employment within the village is under - explored, but that too is unlikely to be a major source of livelihood. After all, this village can accommodate just a handful of electricians and plumbers, whereas the youth seeking employment are far more. Setting up a petty business requires capital that may be out of reach for most of the families who are in a day to day survival mode. In the meantime, educated youth are moving away from subsistence agriculture that has traditionally shielded the families against the uncertainties of the labour markets.

A common response to this situation is to blame the youth or their families for not taking education seriously. Or else, to accuse the education system of not doing a good job, for not delivering 'quality' education. The situation is often presented as a skill mismatch between what youth possess and what the industry wants. There is an element of truth in these claims. But this is less than half of the story.

Even the young men and women who have competed higher education are unable to find employment and if they do, it is likely in the informal sector. As per some estimates more than 90% of the jobs in India are in the informal sector. The rhetoric of job creation that successive governments have resorted to has not borne fruit on the ground. In fact, we are staring at a spectre of jobless growth[2] where mechanisation more than offsets the need for more people in industry. Profit- seeking capitalist enterprises are indifferent

to employment generation, and if they had a choice they would make do with a minimum amount of employment if it helped maximise profits and ease operations. Klees (2014)[3] makes powerful argument when he states, 'unemployment is not a worker supply problem, but a structural problem of capitalism. There are two or more billion un- or under-employed people on this planet, not because they don't have the right skills, but because full employment is neither a feature nor a goal of capitalism'. This condition is particularly acute in case of postcolonial countries such as India as the demographic and economic landscape is very different from the developed west.

In the meantime, exodus from traditional modes of livelihoods and subsistence is an empirical reality. My conversations with community leaders and local administration corroborated this analysis. While in casual conversations, they reiterate the common sense belief that education is good for jobs, whenever I had a more serious discussion they accepted that jobs are hard, almost impossible, to come by and education is not helping in the process. A community member referred to the educated unemployed as people possessing a half-baked education (Gujarati: *adhkachru bhanela*) who refuse to work in farms or engage in manual labour and are easy target for activities such as bootlegging or working as henchmen for local politicians.

If this is the case, it calls for a serious reassessment of the education – employment linkage. To be clear, this is not a call to abandon attempt at creating jobs or developing skills, but a request to reflect on the limitations of an exclusive reliance and a blind faith in this approach. So far the entire debate on frittering away the 'demographic dividend' has focused on jobs in the capitalist economy. This is also not a rehash of the old relevance debate where one educated a child for her 'station in life' and in the process denied her the opportunities that the 'modern' world can offer. It is merely a suggestion to explore other possibilities that education can offer in securing economic wellbeing

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[2]*See for example a recent article in the Hindustan Times on March 15, 2017. 'India must be careful: Jobless growth can lead to social unrest'.*
[3]*Quoted from 'Education, Economy and Society' by Salim Vally and Enver Motala.*

of the mass of youth. It is a call for preserving what has worked so far, and abandon it only when viable alternatives are available. To focus on livelihoods as well as jobs. This is not a new debate. Gandhi had anticipated this when he proposed his *Nai Talim* that dovetailed with his vision of *Gram Swaraj*. The ashram shala that was established in this village in the 1950s embodied this Gandhian vision, but has now succumbed to the current discourse of skills and jobs.

In the present time, scholars such as Bonaventura de Sousa Santos also point to looking at alternatives that look beyond the capitalist modes of production and propose a search for cooperative modes of production or solidary economy, alternative development and alternatives to development. For our education policy to be able to respond to this suggestion, one must first acknowledge the ground realities as they stand, and then seriously try to understand the nuances of how they manifest in real terms. Bhilpur is just one village: other villages may have different dynamics at play, while the urban poor may have yet another. But we will only be able to respond if we are willing to acknowledge and understand their predicament.

Vikas Maniar is a faculty at the School of Education, Azim Premji University. He may be contacted at vikas.maniar@apu.edu.in

Re-visiting the Delors Report: Lessons for India

Archana Mehendale

At a time when the education system in India is on the cusp of undergoing reforms and when policy recommendations emerging from diverse sources with their competing claims are more likely to confuse rather than clarify or guide, it is worthwhile revisiting the Delors report titled "Learning: The Treasure Within" (1996) for its sharp analysis of prevailing educational challenges and the role of education in personal and social development. UNESCO constituted an International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century under the chairmanship of Jacques Delors, to examine realities and propose how education systems could address learning concerns that would surface in the new century. This exercise needs to be seen as a continuation of international efforts starting with the adoption of the World Declaration on Education for All (1990) at Jomtein, which emphasised the importance of education in reducing world poverty, ignorance, exclusion, oppression and war and helping attain peace, freedom and social justice. After over a decade and half into the new century, it is time that we review the main observations of this important report and understand how they are relevant in guiding us through the policy flux in the present-day Indian education sector.

Building learning societies

The Delors report underlined that learning how to learn forms the essence of building learning societies where each individual would be in turn both a teacher and a learner. It built on the earlier UNESCO report titled "Learning to Be" (1972) prepared under the chairpersonship of Edgar Faure, and undertook the difficult task of drawing universally valid conclusions and recommendations that could be applied nationally. It offered some fresh perspectives, such as looking at education as an 'expression of affection for children and young people, whom we need to welcome into society, unreservedly offering them the place that is theirs by right therein'(page 12). It upheld the primacy of the formal education system and the significant role of the teacher by observing, 'nothing can replace the formal education system, where each individual is introduced to the many forms of knowledge' (page 19) and that 'there is no substitute for a teacher-pupil relationship' (page 19) and a teacher whose is

responsible 'to impart to the pupil the knowledge that humankind has acquired about itself and about nature and everything of importance that it has created and invented' (page 20). One of the main tasks of the report was to emphasise the importance of lifelong education and 'the need to advance towards a learning society'. The title of the Delors report is drawn from its main proposition that 'none of the talents which are hidden like buried treasure in every person must be left untapped' (page 21). These include potentials of memory, reasoning power, imagination, physical ability, aesthetic sense, aptitude to communicate with others, leadership and other such qualities.

The report identifies seven 'tensions' that must be overcome in the twenty-first century and proposed four pillars that would help to build learning societies (see Boxes 1 and 2). These are considered to be the key highlights of the report. The report talks of a vision of sustainable human development, democracy and mutual understanding and, towards this end, it identifies the seven tensions that must be overcome. Without suggesting any pathways to actually surmount these tensions, the report alludes to the various factors contributing to the tensions that must be dealt with by policy makers. Among the four pillars, the report specifies 'learning to live together' as the most critical pillar in ushering a 'new spirit' and for greater common understanding and fostering interdependence. The other three pillars, 'learning to know', 'learning to do' and 'learning to be' are visualised as providing bases for 'learning to live together'.

Tensions to Overcome
1. The Global and The Local
2. The Universal and the Individual
3. Tradition and Modernity
4. Long term and Short term considerations
5. Need for competition and the Concern for Equality of Opportunity
6. The extraordinary expansion of knowledge and human beings' capacity to assimilate it
7. The Spiritual and the Material

Box 1

Four Pillars to Build Learning Societies	
1. Learning to know	Includes breadth, depth of knowledge, learning to learn
2. Learning to do	Includes acquisition of occupational and social skills
3. Learning to live together	Includes appreciation of interdependence
4. Learning to be	Includes ability to act with personal autonomy, judgment and responsibility

Box 2

Relevance to policy context in India

Despite its valuable critique and recommendations, the Delors report did not receive much attention from the academic community or policy makers. This could have been due to the fact that India was going through a different set of struggles and changes during the mid-nineties, which included adoption of new externally funded mission mode programmes for meeting the goals of universal education, reforms in education governance, decentralisation and opening of education sector for public- private partnerships. Delors report did not appeal to these basic challenges and hence failed to make a dent on the policy agenda. The question that we need to ask is, are we now ready to engage with the vision of learning societies and the larger aims of education as proposed by the Delors report?

The contributions of this report have a strong bearing on the way education systems need to be organised in this rapidly changing globalised societies. Engagement with these ideas at a policy level would entail reviewing the aims of education, philosophies of education, curriculum, language, and pedagogical tools used. Rather than a piecemeal approach, it would require laying down of a new policy on education which simultaneously builds on relevant ideas from the earlier policies that have been neglected or partially implemented and is also forward looking, going beyond the immediate challenges.

The National Curriculum Framework (NCF 2005) broadly refers to both the 'tensions' and 'pillars' in various ways. The tension of balancing the global and the local in the curricular objectives and the challenge of assimilation in face of rapidly expanding knowledge have been acknowledged not only by the policy makers in the NCF but also by teachers and educational practitioners.

The challenge of preserving the individual and traditional systems in the face of universal and modern pressures has been confronted by those working at the grassroots, especially with regards to preservation of languages, local culture, arts, crafts, and traditional skills. The tension between promoting competition and equality of opportunity keeps surfacing as a contentious issue, especially in higher education, although the Indian Constitution provides for affirmative action and equality of opportunity.

The balancing between the long term and short term goals is a another 'tension' which policy makers continuously grapple with, given that political contestation often tends to prioritise short term issues and agendas. Long term goals of education tend to border on rhetoric if not accompanied by concrete operational road maps and hence fail to catch the imagination and enrol support of political constituencies. As a result, any policy making exercise, although inherently meant to guide future directions, does not in reality go far beyond alleviating the immediate pressures. It is important to ensure that the tensions do not get seen as a menu of extreme positions, as 'either-or' propositions, but are understood as a continuum with the challenge being to constantly negotiate and locate one's position on the continuum. There may also be a need to articulate whether these broad contours on the continuum be decided through an official policy that would be binding on different state and non-state actors or if various positions on the continuum are offered as a menu of options, with the choice lying with parents on how to mix between these competing choices or the 'tensions'.

In other words, should the policy prescribe the extent to which curricula should be global versus local or should various providers be free

to make their offerings as per their convictions and aims about the 'global' and 'local' and leave it to the parents or students to choose what kind of education they would like to receive. It is also important to recognise that the tensions are directly or indirectly inter-related and decisions made with regards to one may affect how other tensions are negotiated.

While the NCF alludes to the four pillars proposed in Delors report, it must be noted that among them, the report identified 'learning to live together' as a key pillar that needs to be built for meeting global challenges of the twenty-first century, with other three pillars- learning to know, to do, and to be, providing bases for the same. The translation of this holistic understanding of learning is hardly found in the way our education system has been organised. Even the narrow focus on knowledge is limited to preparing students to gather more and more information, rather than 'learning' to know and learning how to learn. The other pillars related to learning skills and realising one's potentials remain largely ignored. The most important pillar as per the report, which focuses on learning to build solidarity and live together, seems to be outside the framework of our current education system, perhaps due to its significant political overtones compared to the other three pillars. A pertinent question that needs to be raised here is what aspirational value do these four pillars bring to our understanding of learning and aims of education.

Some of the policy proposals of the MHRD note on inputs of the proposed National Education Policy also resonates with the recommendations of the Delors report. The vision outlined in the note refers to the urgency to meet global demands while protecting the locally rich heritage and ancient knowledge systems. It aims at responding to the fast-changing global, knowledge- based economy while professing goals of equity and inclusion. Although not indicated as a tension, the policy note pushes for both knowledge and skill development. The goal of lifelong learning is also endorsed in the policy note which states that educational opportunities should be made available to all segments of the society.

Summing up this reflection on the relevance and insights of the Delors report, it would be useful to recall that the education system has undergone some slow, yet definite, changes in recent times. While it continues to grapple with myriad issues and challenges not very different from those faced by other countries, it would be useful to take note of the contributions of this report. Instead of dismissing it for its high rhetoric, it is time that the education community places these questions on the table and examines closely how these ideas can help shape our education system and what we think deserves to be actually learnt.

Archana Mehendale is a Professor at Centre for Education Innovation and Action Research, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai. She may be contacted at archana.mehendale@tiss.edu

SECTION B

Field Experiences

New Teacher Transfer Policy to Bring In Greater Efficiency and Transparency

R Parthasarathy

Teaching is a very demanding profession that carries with it a great social responsibility. In order to do justice to their profession, teachers need to be able to focus on their school, children and their community without getting burdened by other distractions. One such distraction used to be teacher transfers. Teachers have location preferences which need to be balanced with the needs of schools, however, the information in these matters is not systematically available to teachers, which makes them go from pillar to post trying to extract information. It gives undue power to those with the information and results in injustice to student learning. In the Union Territory of Puducherry, the Department of Education has introduced a new policy for teacher transfers in order to bring in greater transparency and equity in the process of teacher postings. This note provides an overview of the issues with the earlier system, transfer norms and processes proposed in the new policy and our experience of rolling this out in the first cycle.

I. Background

Pondicherry is a union territory comprising of 4 non-contiguous districts – Puducherry, Karaikal (located in Tamil Nadu), Yanam (located in Andhra Pradesh) and Mahe (located in Kerala). There are 419 schools in the UT, of which 277 schools are located in the district of Puducherry. Out of a population of 2.5 lakh students, 32% are enrolled in government schools.

There are 3 grades of teachers in the Union Territory

- Primary School Teachers (PSTs) teaching classes 1 to 5. They need to have passed class 12 with a diploma in teacher education. They also need to clear the Teacher Eligibility Test (TET).

- Trained Graduate Teachers (TGTs) teaching at middle and high school levels. The qualifying criteria is a graduation degree and B.Ed. 40% of the posts are filled through promotion of PSTs to TGTs.

- Lecturers for higher secondary grades. The qualifying criteria is a post-graduation degree and B.Ed. 80% of posts are filled through promotion of TGTs to lecturer level.

II. Some issues faced recently in the area of teacher postings

- **Mismatch between student enrolment and teacher postings:** Over a period of time, with migration of students to private schools, there has been a decline in enrolment in government schools. This decline has been sharper in urban areas. However the number of posts in urban schools were not rationalised accordingly. This resulted in poorer pupil teacher ratios in rural areas despite the availability of excess teachers elsewhere. Teacher vacancies would also not be correctly reflected in some cases because of outdated records. E.g. retired / deceased teachers would continue to reflect in the records.

- **Oral order postings resulting in teacher shortage in rural areas:** As a consequence of the greater demand for postings in urban areas and areas closer to teacher's residence, functionaries and political leaders received multiple requests for 'oral order' postings – where the teacher is officially posted to a school, but is actually working in another school on an oral order, thus creating a parallel system of teacher posting.

- **Impact on teacher motivation:** Because of this lopsided teacher distribution and informal arrangements, there was many rural schools where one teacher had to take care of 2-3 classes at the same time. This also created demotivation among teachers who had to travel to far off locations while some of their peers managed to bypass the system.

- **Long leave:** In addition to eight days of casual leave and ten days of earned leave in a year and 120 days of maternity leave, teachers are eligible for two years of child care leave in their service tenure. While these measures are necessary for the welfare of teachers and their family commitments, when teachers take long leaves of absence, it affects student learning because there is no systematic provision of substitute teachers.

III. Improved process for teacher transfer adopted in the year 2015-16

- **Rationalisation of posts** – As per the norms prescribed in the transfer policy, a rationalisation of teaching posts was done based on the latest student enrolment data. Schools with higher enrolment and insufficient teachers were sanctioned additional posts. Similarly, the number of sanctioned posts were reduced from schools where enrolment has declined.

- **Cleaning up records** – The database of teachers was cleaned up. Cases of retired / deceased teachers were removed to show an accurate reflection of the number of vacancies and the number of teachers available.

- **Transparent online counseling starting from a 'zero' base** – A transparent counseling based process was used for teacher transfers starting October 2015. In order to ensure a fair opportunity for all teachers to get the location of their choice, all schools were brought to 'zero' posting status and allotments were made from scratch. Teachers were invited in the order of seniority to choose their schools. At the end of each day, a fresh list of 'availability' was created and updated online. This allowed teachers to check the availability of their preferred schools before they came in for counselling.

- **Fresh appointments and buffer teachers** – In addition to a revised transfer process, a fresh appointment of 429 primary teachers was made to ensure the availability of one teacher per class. Teachers were rationalised by posting them where there was a vacancy because of teachers on maternity or child care leave.

The Department has received a very positive feedback from teachers, teacher associations and the establishment on this process as it brought in greater transparency and sense of fairness in allocation of schools. This has been the first time in many years where there were almost no requests received by political leaders to influence the posting.

IV. Additional improvements in the policy to be implemented going forward

There are some more improvements in the new teacher transfer policy that have already been passed and will be rolled out going forward.

- **Division of the Union Territory into urban, semi urban and rural zones:** In order to fairly balance the distribution of teachers in urban and rural areas, schools in the four districts are divided into different zones. For instance, schools in the Puducherry district were divided into four zones:
  o Zone A – town
  o Zone B – periphery of town
  o Zone C – rural areas
  o Zone D – far off rural areas

Teachers need to spend a minimum of one-third of their service tenure in rural areas. Teachers newly recruited in the district of Puducherry will first be posted in zone D. After completing four years in that zone, they will be transferred to zone C, and so on. After completion of four years of service in Zone A, they will be transferred back to zone D and the cycle continues. Similarly, on promotion, teachers will first be posted in zone D and will be eligible for transfer to zone C after four years of service, and so on.

Exceptions are being made for teachers with three years of service left or less, differently abled teachers, teachers with serious ailments and in situations where vacancies are not available in the eligible zone of transfer.

- Regularization of transfer cycle, limitations on mutual transfers and office orders: All transfers will be done in the month of May in order to avoid disturbing the school calendar. There will be no transfers on oral orders. No mutual transfers are allowed in the probationary period in case of newly recruited teachers or in the first year of service in case of other teachers. Mutual transfers are allowed only in zone C and D in Puducherry district. A teacher can seek a mutual transfer a maximum of two times during the entire tenure of service.

- Merit criteria for transfers: Going forward, teachers will be invited for counseling in the order of their 'entitlement points'. These points are based on the academic performance, co-curricular service and tenure. Some illustrative criteria in each category are given below:

Performance criteria

o Performance of students in class X and XII, class average marks in VI-IX school exams
o Enrolment of drop-out children (in case of primary school teachers)
o Performance in national talent search Navodaya entrance exams (in case of primary school teachers)

Co-curricular activities

o Co-curricular activities like National Cadet Corp, National Service Scheme, Central Service Scheme and National Green Corps
o Guide teachers at science exhibitions and seminars at state and national level
o Presentation of research papers

Tenure

o Points for every year of service
o Additional points for services rendered in regions other than their own

Similar criteria has been formulated for school heads, technical and special teachers.

V. Gaps that are yet to be addressed

- Performance measures: Entitlement points is an initial step. The system needs to be refined to account for teacher performance more comprehensively. More than absolute measures, relative measures of improvement need to be devised to account for the varying level of social disadvantage faced by different schools.

- Subject knowledge of middle and high school teachers (TGTs): Automatic promotion of primary teachers to middle schools on tenure grounds is not a very healthy practice. They may not have sufficient knowledge of the subject to teach middle and high school levels. There should be an eligibility test for teachers to be promoted to middle school / high school levels.

- Alternative growth options for primary teachers: Moving from PST to TGT should also not be the only growth option for primary teachers. There should be alternative growth trajectories – master teachers, cluster / block resource persons in addition to the current roles of school leaders / high school teachers. This will allow teachers to move into roles where their strengths can be better utilized. There could also be an option for a teacher to continue in the role of primary school teaching instead of moving to a role he may not be suitable for. The compensation could grow with years of service without compromising the fulfilment of a role.

- Avoidance of high school postings: During this process, many of the senior teachers avoided postings in high schools and chose middle schools to avoid the pressure of public exams. Up to middle school, there is a no detention policy, and so no accountability for teachers. This does disservice to students. Going forward, this issue can be addressed by tightening performance measures and stipulating a minimum service period in high schools.

With the new teacher transfer policy, there is a greater transparency in the process. With some of the above measures, we should be able to further move in the direction of ensuring quality education for all children.

The full version of the teacher transfer policy can be accessed on the website of the Puducherry Department of Education. The link to the document is given here http://schooledn.puducherry.gov.in/HTML/CircuTenders/circular2015/TeachTransferPolicy.pdf

R Parthasarathy is a retired Joint Director in the Department of Education, Govt. of Puducherry. He has Master's degree in Zoology and Education. Currently doing research in education on 'Active learning'. He has 20 years of teaching and 14 years of administrative experience. He held the post of State Project Director of SSA in Puducherry for over six years. He has proficiency in using computer and applications in the field of education administration. He was instrumental in implementing the counselling – based teacher transfer process in Puducherry. He can be contacted at parthamanasa@yahoo.co.in

There is no Alternative to This

Braj Shrivastava

Six to ten years of age is appropriate, suitable and wonderful for natural learning. What one learns at this age proves decisive for future plans and laying the quality foundations of a subject. A child of this age coming to school is most ready for learning. It is based on this that many of the recommendations for the implementation of educational schemes, including CCE, are made. These schemes are still on their way, dreaming of reaching their destination.

The Right to Education Act 2009 may well be considered to be the beginning of a new, second era in the field of education. In its light not only has there been an expectation of trying to develop an understanding about the child with utmost attention, an initiative has also been taken to create an environment for every class of society to surely pay attention to this. Changes in points of view, the way we look at things, is a major component in the journey of civilisation and in these thousands of years human beings have been able to understand that to be human is the only achievement worth being mentioned. As Ghalib has said -

'Bas ke dushvaar hai har kaam kaa aasaan honaa
Aadmi ko bhi mayassar nahin insaan honaa'

(It is difficult for each task to become easy. So much so that it is not given to Man to become a human being)

What is the journey from being a man to becoming a human being? This is the journey we know as being that of education – this at least is the expectation from education. When a child joins this journey, (s)he becomes a sensitive and responsible person who can be called a human being, not by bookish knowledge but through practical, self-constructed knowledge that is naturally put into practice.

But it seems that we have got ourselves into a situation in which a child is transforming into an instrument rather than a human being – or growing up into a man, living and viewing life from just one angle. We have tied him to examinations, made the examinations more traditional and forced him to memorise books like a parrot. We are doing nothing but testing and examining, without becoming a teacher - a 'guru' – expecting the child to continue demonstrating his being a student. We forget that

Parakhna mat, parakhne mein koi apna nahiin rahtaa
Kisii bhi aaine meiN deir tak chehra nahiin rahtaa

'Test and examine not, for in doing so none remains our own
No mirror can retain a face for long'

Any way of examining in which whatever is aimed at does not remain, could be dangerous. And what is aimed at is supposed to be someone full of feelings, someone who understands relationships. I have no hesitation in saying that the present, recommended scheme of Comprehensive and Continuous Evaluation encompasses this aim within its framework.

For CCE to be projected amongst the children, first the teacher, including the learning institutes, will have to re-establish beliefs and postulations in accordance with changes in the present. Monitoring agencies will also have to not only accept this but make efforts towards establishing this. If this happens, it is possible that our community too will accept it. I write on the basis of my experiences in implementing it in my school as the Headmaster of a school that while interacting and working with students, each one of these influences will have to adopt just one principle – of continuing efforts with hope and patience.

We begin the daily routine of our school with a prayer meet. This prayer should not be considered as just the practice of spiritual joy and bliss, nor should one nurture a big hope in this context. The only significant thing here is the collective spirit. Following this, children have to go through self-evaluation in the class. This is an interesting, creative task that can be done, the only condition being that the one who conducts it is a committed and enthusiastic person. Undoubtedly, children understand the meaning of daily routine when the teacher does just this much. If CCE is able to create this awareness, this is adequate enough because a person is successful in life only after being able to manage his daily life. It is actually not easy to manage a group of children with different individual capabilities but this is difficult only till such time as the one who manages them is passive or works without a context. CCE also teaches how

alert a teacher should be, for (s)he is driving a class and has a great accountability.

Children in the six to fourteen age-group are playful and naughty and there is bound to be a lot of noise when there are many of them around. But why be bothered by this? A teacher with even a little bit of wisdom and understanding can make use of this situation in such a way that children begin talking about useful things. There are elements for creating such an understanding in the CCE – working on project-tasks, getting activities done, teaching in an interesting manner in consonance with the nature of subjects, examining home-work, commenting, preparation before teaching, encouraging children etc.

There are some formulae that are the bases of CCE and are the backbone of the teaching method of the new times. I feel that this a method without alternative, and whenever teaching methodologies will dream of a change within themselves, the help and support of CCE will surely have to be sought for the dream to become a reality.

(Translated from the HIndi by Sri Ramnik Mohan)

Braj is a Head Teacher at Government Middle School, Vidisha, Madhya Pradesh. He has worked as Assistant Project Coordinator, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan at District Project Office, Vidisha. He has been a member of the State Resource Group. He was associated with the CCE pilot project in the State and contributed in development of the assessment policy as well. He enjoys writing poetry and doing innovations in his school. His poetry and articles have been published in many renowned magazines and newspapers, such as, Outlook, India Today, Sakshatkar, Hans, Vagarth, Vasudha, Jansatta, Nav Dunia, Rashtriya Sahara, etc. He may be contacted at brajshrivastava7@gmail.com

Emerging Challenges before Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation: From a Teacher's Point of View

Pankaj Tiwari

After the announcement of demonetisation we saw the Reserve Bank of India changing the rules and directives on a continuous basis. Whatever the view taken by others on this, as a teacher in a school I could very well understand it. For the achievement of some specific goals, if I move ahead, and after some time feel that I need to change the old directives for achieving my goals, I immediately bring about the required changes. Then, observing the reactions of children, till the time the goal is reached, the children in the class and I continuously accept the changes required for that purpose. When I talk to colleagues, however, I feel that some of them believe that once given instructions should be followed to the last letter. They believe that they will set the goals and also show the way, for that is what they had done as students.

While talking to colleagues and their students, it comes out that there are two types of teachers around me. First are the ones who believe in first completing a lesson and then getting the students to memorise answers to questions at the end of the lesson in the traditional way. In arithmetic, such teachers take the students straight to the exercises and write the answers to some questions on the board even as they advise the students to memorise some formulae. The second type of teacher is the one who, as the discussion in the lesson moves ahead, prepares new questions in the class and presents new challenges for the children. If the challenge is a bit too tough for them, some examples of a similar kind (which may also be called 'hints') are presented before them and the dialogue moves forward. In the case of mathematics, such teachers move ahead from the daily life experiences, increase the confidence of children by giving very simple examples and then present the challenges in such a way that the children achieve their goal and yet don't even realise that they have done so.

While working on a mathematical concepts in school we often see that teachers who teach the subject pay more attention to questions likely to come in the examination question paper and advise the students to repeatedly prepare those select questions and memorise the answers. In a few schools in Madhya Pradesh, a pilot project is being conducted on Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation. While talking to the Maths Teachers of these schools on a continuous basis, here are some points that have come to the fore.

In these schools, while working on a particular concept in Maths, the students took many examples that could not be called mathematical questions but they brought to light the uneasiness in their minds with relation to it. A teacher related that in Class III, there was a long discussion amongst the children the previous day on the topic of measurement of length. The next day an electrician had come to the class to install a ceiling fan and was to draw a wire from the electric board on the wall up to the fan in the ceiling. The children drew an outline of an obtuse angle on the room's floor and measured it with a scale and when this was discussed with the electrician, he was found to have liked this method of measurement. The children were happy to learn that in order to measure the length of the wire connecting the fan to the electric board, they did not have to take measurements between the two with the help of a ladder. As the children did this, their teachers were observing how some of the children were devising their own methods for the correct measurement and the rest of them were discussing the difficulties and problems involved. Some of them were drawing a line of the floor with the help of a chalk and supposing it to be the wire and some were measuring it with a wooden scale and calculating the required length of the wire. Two students suggested that a wire be placed on the line from one end to the other. This turned out to be a very interesting activity based on the discussion about measurement the previous day.

What happened in the class is a good example of some of the characteristics of Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation, such as – preparing an environment for actual learning, evaluation of the ability to use subject-related knowledge in situations of daily life when required, and developing an understanding of the related concept even as one enjoys the process along with one's fellow-students.

During this process the teachers were constantly observing and thinking about how they could bring about positive changes in the nature of teaching in this class related to the concept of measurement. During assessment and evaluation through traditional methods, we usually see that marks are given to students in monthly tests on the basis of some select questions. This can be compared to a situation of children having been made to sit on the steps of a ladder on the basis of marks obtained by them. In the Grade system of evaluation one child would not be sitting on each step of the ladder, but we can consider them sitting on the steps of a staircase in a house, 2-4 children on a step, others on a step above or below them. In the CCE scheme of things, we see them as standing at different places on the ground and like players on a football-ground, changing their place constantly and in this process of change, a child is at times ahead and at others behind but whatever work all of them do, they are improving their understanding even as they take joy in it. This includes an environment that is free from rote-learning and fear. The atmosphere is joyous and a strengthening of understanding is inherent in the process.

In almost all the developed countries of the world, CCE is considered to be the best pattern for the complete development of a child's personality. In this, instead of putting all emphasis on the textbook, adequate attention is paid to an evaluation of all aspects of the development of the child's personality. There is a need for teachers to work very minutely in this. They need to be free of prejudices or pre-conceived notions, should have a positive approach, dedication to children and they have to be professionals interested in teaching. Even though a lot of emphasis is being placed on CCE at present, the mentality of the teachers supposed to transform it into a reality, however, does not seem to be one of accepting it very easily. There is, of course, a lack of commitment on the part of teachers but equally responsible for the

state of affairs today is the department that has not arranged comprehensive yet compact trainings of teachers. The teacher has been left alone after the bringing in of the wonderful pattern of CCE.

I believe that physical changes are visible immediately but changes at the level of the mental state are visible only after a long period of time. We show ourselves to be modern by having a smart phone but when a cat crosses our way, we start thinking about so many superstitious things and stop in our tracks. Similarly, a CCE Module – a modern concept - was given to the teachers, a few things were talked about in this context and it was thought that they will be able to do it all. The teachers too thought themselves to be updated but the implementers have not been able to mentally prepare themselves for this. Teachers will first have to be prepared psychologically to take the path of laying emphasis on learning and understanding rather than rote. For this right from those involved in policy-framing to implementing agencies and the institutions that provide academic support to teachers, will have to be prepared.

Some difficulties have also come to the fore after our continuous dialogue with teachers in schools implementing CCE. It is very important to discuss these issues. Visitors from outside, for instance, pass comments about the inadequate implementation of CCE and this upsets the teacher in the class. On observing the teacher sitting in a group with the children and talking to them or students writing on the blackboard, the visitors blame the teacher for being careless and the comments registered by them on the Inspection Register become a basis for those who come as visitors or for observation later. The observers who are somewhat liberal also give suggestions only in accordance with traditional methods of teaching and try to accord greater significance to external evaluation – because they do not have an adequate enough understanding of Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation.

Pankaj is a Mathematics teacher at Government Urdu Higher Secondary School, Seoni, Madhya Pradesh. He has been working in the field of school education for the last two decades. Pankaj is associated with Rajya Shiksha Kendra (SCERT) Madhya Pradesh, where he contributes in writing and editing textbooks, training modules, evaluation system, material for activity-based learning and teaching-learning material. The government of Madhya Pradesh awarded him State level "Acharya Samman". Pankaj is one of the key members of the State resource group and associated with NCERT as a subject expert for developing training modules and short-term courses for mathematics teachers. He enjoys doing mathematics, organizing metric melas, working with children and playing football. Pankaj is a state level football referee and was a national level gymnastic player. He may be contacted at ptiwari740@gmail.com

The Mid-day Meal Scheme

The Mid Day Meal (MDM) scheme is an initiative that directly aimed to decrease the nutrition gaps of children especially in the pre-primary and primary age groups. It was started 'with a view to positively impact enrolment, retention and attendance and simultaneously improving nutritional levels among children' (MHRD website). In 2001, the MDM scheme became a cooked mid-day meal program 'under which every child in every government and government-aided primary school was to be served a prepared mid-day meal with a minimum of 300 calories of energy and 8-12 grams protein' (MHRD website). This was raised to 450 calories and 12 grams protein in July 2006.

In a conversation with Learning Curve, Mr. L Ramanath of Azim Premji Foundation gave us a brief account of some of the steps the Karnataka government has taken in order to make MDM program accident-proof. The Government of Karnataka (GoK) is partnering with Azim Premji Foundation (APF) in this task.

The food grains, like rice and wheat, are provided by the Food Corporation of India (FCI) at a subsidized rate to the state Governments. The food grains given are supplemented by prescribed quantity of dal, vegetables, oil, and salt. The whole idea is to provide a well-balanced meal. Occasionally, apart from the government, local panchayats and farmers contribute produce to the mid-day meal.

The modalities are well-structured. Every school has a head cook aided by an assistant, if the enrolled numbers warrant it. The Head Teacher gives the indent to the government official in charge who then organises to deliver the supplies, including micronutrients in the form of iron and Vitamin on the basis of student strength. MDM project is run by a Joint Director MDM with a team of Assistant Director of Public Instruction (ADPI). All educational functionaries support this initiative.

The MDM has three aspects – safety, nutrition and taste. The nutrition angle is taken care of by the government by prescribing norms. It is in the safety aspect of the mid-day meal that the government is focusing. Accidents are not unheard of, while contamination resulting from poor hygiene standards can result in emergencies.

This is really a huge task considering that there are 48,000 school kitchens in Karnataka alone. Reducing the number of incidents has to have a multi-pronged approach. So, a diagnostic study was conducted with twenty schools participating for us to know the As-is situation on the ground. The gap areas included presence of expired items, cooking and non-cooking items being stored together, absence of kitchen hygiene, direct serving from a large vessel and so on. The joint team of GoK and APF then went on to emphasise the importance of standardised safety and scrupulous hygiene rules. Special importance has been placed on safety in the two areas where accidents are most likely to occur - the cooking process and the serving.

To counteract these, some standard operating procedures (SOP) were prepared with clearly defined roles and responsibilities. Checklists were defined for monitoring of SOP's by specific roles. Posters (more pictures, less words) were created to cater to Cooks and other functionaries. In addition, a 13-minute film on safety procedures has been made as a training resource.

The second common problem - lack of hygienic standards - has also received attention. All aspects of cooking, cleaning, storage were checked.

Processes were defined for First In First Out (FIFO) or First Expiry First Out (FEFO) in the storage aspect, a protocol was established, for example, boiling some water in an utensil before it is used. Then the milk powder which is supplied in large packets has to be stored in airtight containers after being opened in order to avoid fungal deposit. Deep cleaning of the kitchen is carried out once a month, with the shelves being emptied, cleaned and the contents replaced in order of age. Sample collection of cooked food for quality control, wearing gloves and caps, collecting the same in a sterilized container and sending the same to a testing laboratory are some more steps in the MDM process.

In all these procedures, the Head Teacher of the school, assisted by a Nodal teacher, is given the responsibility to make sure that the processes are being followed. The functionaries from the MDM team will assist to ensure we move towards 100 % compliance – Zero % accidents in all the MDM kitchen in Karnataka.

Roll out is being studied in the first two trial districts of Mandya and Kolar before GoK decides to roll it out to rest of the State.

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**Classroom
Experiences**

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