REFERENCE NOTE

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NEW EDUCATION POLICY

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Objectives

The New Education Policy seeks to meet 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 the shortage of manpower in science, technology, academics, industry etc. The focus is on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, transparency in education management and restoring its credibility.

The core objective of this Policy is to provide information, knowledge, skills, and values; instil social attitudes to enable students to become good human beings, proud citizens and contribute to the development of the country. Besides imparting quality education, the policy seeks to emphasize the need to foster an interest in India's history, culture and traditions, respect for all religions and acceptance for the diversity that exists in India. The Policy seeks to create an understanding of the need to promote social cohesion and national integration. The Policy recognizes the immense opportunities for using tools of modern communication and technology to promote education at every level.

Challenges

Despite many gains, the Indian education system faces several problems. The main challenges include:

- Absence of minimum standards in the provision of schooling facilities, processes and student outcomes, and equity in educational opportunities;
- Lack of professionalization in educational planning and management;
- Absence of requisite disaggregated data, particularly at sub-national and institutional levels for evidence-based management of education;
- Lack of competent and committed teachers, resulting in poor quality of

education;
- Substandard quality of teacher education and training;
- A curriculum which encourages rote-based learning;
- Malpractices in the examination system;
- Neglect of skill and vocational education, overemphasis on acquiring dead-end qualifications which do not lead to employment;
- Failure to make ICT as functionally integral to the management of pedagogy of education;
- Mushroom growth of private coaching classes and degree shops;
- Corruption and politicization of education management at all levels;
- Mediocre status of a majority of higher education institutions; and
- Pursuit of degrees and qualifications at any cost.

The State of Education in India

- Overall literacy rate in 2011 was 74 per cent, with a male literacy rate of 82.1 per cent and a female literacy rate of 65.5 per cent as compared to only 12 per cent in 1947; world average is 84 per cent
- The earlier National Education Policies had endorsed a norm of 6 per cent of GDP as the minimum expenditure on education. The expenditure by Education Departments of the Centre and States never rose above 4.3 per cent of the GDP, and is currently around 3.5 per cent
- Education quality in terms of learning outcomes is poor, particularly in the government school system and approximately 80 per cent of all recognized schools at the elementary stage are government run or supported
- Half of all children in Class V have not yet learned basic skills that they should have learned by Class II. Close to half of all children will finish eight years of schooling but will still not have learned basic skills in arithmetic.
- Teacher absenteeism is estimated at over 25 per cent every day

Elementary Education (Classes I - VIII)

Students Enrolment

- Total of 14 lakh schools in 2014-15 of which 11 lakh are Government schools with 11.9 crore enrolment; 3 lakh Private schools with 8.56 crore enrolment; 23,529 unrecognised institutions and 3750 unrecognised *Madrasas* with 33 lakh enrolment

Teachers Strength
- 80 lakh teachers at the elementary level of which 47 lakh teachers worked in Government schools
- More than 8.6 per cent teachers are engaged in private aided schools; 29.9 per cent in private unaided schools; and 2.6 per cent were in unrecognised schools and *Madrasas*

Enrolment Ratio
- Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER[1]) was 100.1 per cent, Net Enrolment Ratio (NER[2]) was 87.4 per cent, Adjusted NER was 92.1 per cent at primary level (grades I-V) in 2014-15
- GER was 91.2 per cent, NER was 72.5 per cent, Adjusted NER was 82.4 per cent at Upper primary level (grades VI-VIII)

Retention
- A large number of children leave school before completing elementary education
- Four in every 10 children enrolled in Grade I were leaving the school before completing Grade VIII
- Retention rate at primary level was 83.7 per cent and it was as low as 67.4 per cent at the elementary level

Quality
- Over 75 per cent of children in Class III, over 50 per cent in Class V and over 25 per cent in Class VIII not able to read texts meant for the Class II level
- The number of children in rural schools in Class II who could not even recognize letters of the alphabet increased from 13.4 per cent in 2010 to 32.5 per cent in 2014
- In Class V, almost 20 per cent of children could only read letters or were not literate even at this level; 14 per cent could read words but not sentences; and 19 per cent could read sentences but not longer texts
- Quality of education, in terms of learning outcomes is poor, particularly in the government school system and approximately 80 per cent of all recognized schools at the elementary stage are government run or supported

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[1] Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER)- Total enrolment in a specific level of education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the eligible official school-age population corresponding to the same level of education in a given school-year.

[2] Net Enrolment Ratio (NER)- Enrolment of the official age-group at a given level of education expressed as a percentage of the corresponding population.

Secondary & Higher Secondary Education (Classes IX to XII)

- Approximately 51 per cent of the secondary schools and 58 per cent of the higher secondary schools are privately managed
- Uneven spread of secondary education throughout the country
- Regional disparities as also differences in access depending on the socio-economic background of students
- Absence of teachers; lack of incentives; and low academic standards in government schools have contributed to the rise of the private sector in secondary school education.
- *Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan* (RMSA) aims to enhance access to and improve the quality of secondary education in the country
- RMSA aims at achieving a GER of 100 per cent by 2017 and universal retention by 2020.
- Demand for secondary education and increase in the number of secondary schools.

Higher Education

- 711 universities, 40,760 colleges (UGC Annual Report 2014-15) and 11922 stand alone institutions in higher education sector in India in 2014-15.
- 3.33 crore enrolment in higher education in 2014-15 comprising of 1.79 crore boys and 1.54 crore girls
- 14 lakh teachers with 39 per cent female teachers
- 23.6 per cent Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER), (24.5 per cent for boys, 22.7 per cent for girls; 18.5 per cent for SCs and 13.3 per cent for STs)

Committee on New Education Policy

The Human Resource Development Ministry constituted a five-member Committee for Evolution of the New Education Policy (NEP) on 31 October 2015 under the Chairmanship of Shri T.S.R. Subramanian, former Cabinet Secretary to the Government of India. The Committee submitted its report on the 27 May 2016 after an elaborate consultation process. It has made a large number of recommendations covering areas like Governance in Education, School Education and Higher Education.

Some of the recommendations are given below:

Governance in Education

- Use of ICT as a tool for improving quality of education and education data management
- Constitution of a high quality think tank in the form of a Standing Education Commission to study emerging challenges, evaluate and interpret policies and programmes and provide information and guidance to the HRD Ministry
- Need to restrict political and other distractions on University and College Campuses
- Non-recognition of student groups that are explicitly based on caste and religion.
- Restricting the period of stay of students in campuses as most of the disruptive activities on the campus are led by students who remain enrolled for many years than normally required to pursue the course of study for which they have enrolled
- Creation of an All India Education Service with officers being on permanent settlement to the State Governments but with the cadre controlling authority vesting with the Ministry of HRD.
- Establishing Administrative Tribunals attached to the Ministry of HRD at the centre and regions, to deal with the litigation with a time-bound approach

School Education

- Focus on development of school education from physical expansion to consolidation of the existing school system
- Need for special academic and other support to children from socially and economically weaker sections
- Six per cent of GDP as the norm for the national outlay on education
- Vesting of disciplinary powers to the School Management Committees and the School Principals to deal with the teacher's absenteeism, vacancies, accountability and indiscipline
- Introduction of a four-year post senior secondary, integrated BA/B. Sc, B.Ed. courses in all States to improve the quality of teacher education
- Use of ICT for School Management and school performance
- A school-led governance system with an appropriate framework of autonomy with accountability to enable the school system to respond to changing circumstances, and to initiate remedial action, where required

- Pre-school education for children in the age group of 4 to 5 years should be declared as a right
- Facilities for pre-primary education in all Government primary schools
- School education should also play an important role in providing vocational and skill education
- No detention policy must be continued for children until completion of Class V
- RTE Act needs to be amended to provide, in addition to infrastructure requirements, norms for learning outcomes which directly affect quality of education
- To review extension of Clause 12(1) (C) of RTE Act, 2009[3] to minority institutions.
- Significant stress needs to be given to sports and physical education as part of the schooling process
- Reaffirming government's commitment to basic literacy and providing an opportunity for continuing education and lifelong learning for all illiterate persons above the age of 15 years
- Need to reduce curriculum load and avoidable emphasis on rote learning; focus to be on making learning joyful, creative, participatory, and to stimulate and encourage the child to think
- Teachers and students should have access to multiple source of knowledge
- Process of examination needs to be transparent and objective, placing due emphasis on analysis, understanding and cogent writing skills, in lieu of the existing emphasis on rote memory and ability to reproduce text books
- Class X Board Examination in mathematics and science should be in two levels: Part A at higher level and Part B at lower level
- Promoting skill education and teacher education in tribal areas
- Setting up of an independent board under the State Education Act or through a suitable mechanism to oversee the implementation of schemes for children with special needs
- Every school must have access to the services of a professional counsellor to help a range of students
- Extension of Mid-Day Meal Programme to cover students of secondary schools
- A national programme of regular and periodical health checks for all school children, using 'Digital India' connectivity, through well-equipped mobile vans, which can undertake basic diagnostics, with real-time connectivity to banks of doctors

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[3] Clause 12(1) (C) of RTE Act, 2009 provides admission of children belonging to weaker section and disadvantaged group to the extent of at least 25 per cent of the strength of that Class I.

- Expansion of Kendriya Vidyalayas, Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas, and Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas with priority being given to relatively educationally backward areas

Higher Education

- Depoliticization and merit based selection process and appointment of Vice-Chancellors
- Manpower study every five years at the central and state levels to determine the need for faculty positions in institutions of higher education
- Practice of appointing ad-hoc and part-time faculty should be discouraged
- Accreditation should be made mandatory for all institutions of higher education including technical education, medicine and agriculture, both in public and private sectors
- Need to give freedom to universities to focus on improving their academic performance through their own initiatives
- Using ICT applications to monitor performance of higher education institutions
- To enact a National Higher Education Promotion and Management Act, to cover the present and future needs of the higher education sector
- To appoint a Task Force with membership of experts and scholar to study recruitment, promotion and retention procedures
- Revamping the system of accreditation in higher education
- Encouraging foreign universities to establish their presence in India through collaboration with Indian universities
- Restructuring medical and agriculture education
- Reforming and strengthening of national level institutions- (a) All India Council of Technical Education (AICTE), (b)National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), (c) National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA) and, (d) University Grants Commission (UGC)
- Creation of two regulators, one for higher education and the other for school education, to promote, support and regulate Open and Distance Learning

Conclusion

India today has one of the largest education systems in terms of number of institutions, teachers and students. An enormous infrastructure exists. Over the years, because of a number of reasons like insufficient focus, lack of adequate attention and mismanagement, etc, the quality of our education system has been seriously eroded.

While access has sharply increased, inequalities persist. The country now needs to invest on its strength, *i.e.* its children. The process of regeneration can only start if the capacity to improve standards and the zeal to engage teachers and students become the guiding ethos of those responsible for providing education. The recognition of the need to bridge the educational divide and include every aspiring learner is the guiding spirit of the New National Policy on Education. This Policy has tried to address the deficiencies and challenges, along with the need to sharply increase the quality of Indian education, across the board. It could offer a framework for change, make education modern with optimal use of technology, without compromising India's traditions and heritage.

Sources Consulted:

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3. Lok Sabha Starred Question No.2, dt.18.07.2016
4. Rajya Sabha Unstarred Question No.471, dt.21.07.2016
5. NCERT, Department of Educational Surveys & Data Processing, Manual on Statistics and Indicators of School Education, March 2006.
6. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009.