

**RESEARCH PAPER****New 'National Education Policy 2020': A Minimalist Vision of Education and Teachers****Pratibha Goplani**

School of Education, MATS University, Arang, Raipur, (C.G.)

Received: 20th Feb. 2023, Revised: 10th March 2023, Accepted: 20th March 2023**ABSTRACT**

The present paper reviews the New Education Policy 2020 with a specific focus on the teacher education. The policy seeks to bring reform in the education system by bringing structural changes in the system with minimal financial input and other resource allocation. It is argued that the policy carries forward the neoliberal agenda of market and promotes privatisation of education at all the levels. Teacher education is one of the main areas to improve the quality of education in the country. Only qualified educated and trained teachers can help towards the building the Nation and contribute towards economic development. This paper also examines and discusses how the new education policy attempts to bring drastic changes in the teacher education and attempts to improve teaching profession using the incentives such as performance based promotions and tenure. The policy presents a minimalist vision of education and teachers.

Key words: Teacher Education, Teacher, Policy, Performance, Learning

INTRODUCTION

The New Education Policy 2020 brought by Central government is going to define the vision of education in many ways. A number of structural alternations are proposed in the new education policy 2020 to uplift the face of Indian education system. The policy promises to allocate 6 percent of GDP towards education budget. It is one of the most welcome steps as financial support can bring substantial quality improvements in the provision of educational services.

From pre-primary to higher education level new the policy attempts to bring drastic change in terms of structure and function of the entire system. The main highlights of the NEP 2020 are changing the 10+2 school education system to 5+3+3+4 and introducing four year bachelor programmes. The proposed four year bachelor course will make the Indian students fare better and get admission in foreign universities.

The policy recognises the fact that increasing demand for education cannot be met only state provision but private sector also needs to be encouraged to provide educational services. To bring changes in the Higher education system many reforms are proposed. Teacher education is no exception to this re-structuring and the policy proposes drastic measures for teacher training intuitions as well as the teaching profession. Teachers are one of the important pillars of the education system. However, teacher in government schools are at the centre of criticism and quite often blamed for the poor performance of the students at elementary level (Atherton & Kingdon, 2010). The policy also sets the precedence how learners and teaching learning process would be perceived. The overemphasis on the acquisition of cognitive skills of reading and writing undermines the child centred approach. The new policy tends to reform teaching-learning process as well as the teacher is going to have serious implications particularly for the future of elementary education in the country.

PERFORMATIVITY AND TEACHERS

Ball argues (1999) that the education policies across the globe despite sociocultural and economic diversity are being organised around two main thrust or principles; first is entry of market form and second is performativity. It is argued that introduction of market in education will provide choice and incentive to compete with different service providers hence improving the quality of education. Within this context performativity entails setting of targets and performance indicators to drive evaluate and compare educational products (Ball, 1999:1). Both these principles form the

core of New Education Policy, 2020 in India. At all the levels of education provision privatisation is encouraged and regulation and performance standards are set exclusively for government funded educational institutions while privately owned intuitions have the freedom to self-report.

The policy also reduces the notion of education using the narrow lens of learning and mere tutoring. The policy curtails teacher's autonomy by defining learning achievements for children, where the primary emphasis is on acquisition of fundamental numeracy and literacy skills. This also reduces the notion of education to a minimalist' level. The policy says,

The highest priority of the education system will be to achieve universal foundational literacy and numeracy in primary school by 2025. The rest of this Policy will become relevant for our students only if this most basic learning requirement (i.e., reading, writing, and arithmetic at the foundational level) is first achieved (GoI, 2020:8).

It also tends to underline the principle of homogeneity and such statements render teaching learning activity devoid of the context and unidirectional. However it is important to keep in mind that teaching work is bidirectional and it not only includes helping children to acquire cognitive skills of reading and writing but also requires the teacher to have a set of cultural, social and emotional competencies, sensitivity, and communication skills besides subject expertise to make the teaching learning process effective.

Improvement in quality of education in terms of students learning can only be achieved by bringing substantial changes in how we prepare our teachers and what kind of support inservice teachers require. The teacher appointment criterion for teachers at elementary level of schooling is not in sync with the provisions of Right to Education Act 2009. The Act highlights the importance of availability of professional trained teachers to bring reform in the school education (RtE, 2009, section 23). Ball and Forzani (2009) have distinguished between the work of teacher and other mundane teaching'by parents and other individuals in everyday life. They argue that, the work of a teacher is instead specialized and professional in form and nature. Decisions about what to do are not appropriately rooted in personal preferences or experiences but are instead based on professionally justified knowledge and on the moral imperatives of the role. Intuition and everyday experience are poor guides for the specialised work and judgement entailed by teaching (ibid: 500).

To support the teachers to meet the changing expectations of the curriculum, pedagogy and technological advancement a robust system is required. But in the policy no attempt towards institutional capacity building is taken. No effort is made to develop professional competencies among the teachers through per-service and in-service programmes. For instance, in year 2015-16 only 14 percent of elementary school teachers received any kind of in-service training (DISE, 2017) it shows that the provisions for in-service support for teachers is inadequate.

The NPE 2020 clause to hire eminent local person to teach at school further damages the teaching profession as it sets the precedence that subjects such arts, crafts, music and physical education are not worthy to be taught by trained teachers in these field. It is also important to note that in a society like India which is based on the principle of graded inequality who will decide this 'eminent person worthy to be invited to teach in the schools. It is also against the constitutional spirit of equal opportunity. Such provisions fail to take cognisance of failure of outsourcing services done in past to deliver education services effectively through NGOs. A classic example in this regard can be cited from policy documents such as SSA (Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, 2000) which talks about participation of civil society to spread awareness about the education for all programme and encourage participation of local people in the delivery of primary education. This led many NGOs modifying their working to suits the requirements of the government funded projects. The problem with such an approach is that such NGOs tends to focus on short terms gains as they exclusively depend upon the funds provided by the donor agency. This output oriented attitude leaves much to be done on the ground. As many of the NGOs in their attempt to scale up their models fail to release the complex social structure of different regions and diverse needs of disadvantaged social groups which might prove counterproductive. The new policy attempts to bring competitiveness among the teacher by introducing performance based tenure and other benefits. Provision are made to hold teacher accountable for the learning achievement of the children which also reflects the lager market ideology of commodification of education, performativity, instead of making provision of

carrier advancement based on incentives, the teachers are de-incentivised at various levels in terms of job tenure and pension benefits. The policy states, Teachers doing outstanding work must be recognized and promoted, and given salary raises, to incentivize all teachers to do their best work. Therefore, a robust merit-based structure of tenure, promotion, and salary structure will be developed, with multiple levels within each teacher stage that incentivizes and recognizes outstanding teachers. A system of multiple parameters for proper assessment of performance will be developed for the same by State/UT Governments that is based on peer reviews, attendance, commitment, hours of CPD, and other forms of service to the school and the community or based on NPST given in Para 5.20 (GoI, 2020:22). The bias towards detailed monitoring and setting performance parameters for teachers in educational institutions often pervades the view that teaching is not a creative endeavour and only thorough extrinsic motivation of reward and punishment better quality education/set goals can be achieved. It is also important to note that at elementary level of school majority of the teaching workforce in India is female. Such regressive measures will have long term implication for the education of women in the country. Despite many contestations teaching at elementary level is feminised and in popular culture it is seen as the most viable career path for girls. According to DISE data in year 2015-16 the percentage of female teachers was 48 at all India level. For the same year, the percentage share of teachers belonging to SC and ST communities was 12 and 8.5 respectively (DISE, 2017). For optimal functioning of the education system and effective delivery of educational services to the diverse population requires incentives to retain and motivate the teachers. The policy tends to prefer merit over diversity. The merit based structure for carrier advancement without giving any heed to the sociocultural, gender and economic background of the teachers tends to marginalise those coming from already disadvantaged background. There is no commitment towards increasing the recruitment and retention of the teacher to cater to the demands of the ever growing student population. On contrary the state started hiring teachers on contractual basis from 1990s and the teachers were called para' teachers. The new policy also carries forwards this trend and the teaching profession is disincentives by linking promotion to the performance. The policy curtails the avenues of salary increment and promotions it mentions, Promotions and salary increases will not occur based on the length of tenure or seniority, but only on the basis of such appraisal. The professional standards will be reviewed and revised in 2030, and thereafter every ten years, on the basis of rigorous empirical analysis of the efficacy of the system (GoI, 2020: 22-23). There were 543,671 contract teachers in India in 2008-09 (Atherton & Kingdon, 2010). No attempt is made to bridge the gap between regular and para' teacher at school level and casualization of teaching profession is encouraged. The new policy also fails to recognise the huge number of teachers employed in private schools especially the low fee private schools. Most of the low fee private schools function on hire and fire teachers at will policy' (Verma, 2017) and most of the time they are underqualified and paid very less as compared to teachers of elite private and government schools. There is no mention of any kind of service regulations and incentives for private school teachers and regulation private schools itself. The progressive step to end the inspection regime and allow schools to self-report is going to complicate the situation given the fact that there is a lot of ambiguity in the functioning of private schools and it is well known that quite often is under and over reporting of certain facts and the data. Also, this will create problems for data collection for the purpose of research is going to be very challenging.

TEACHER TRAINING PROGRAMMES

The policy acknowledges acute shortage of teachers in public elementary education system. To supply the demand for trained teachers the policy emphasis the need to increase the number of teacher training intuitions and establish multi-disciplinary universities. At present there are a variety of teacher training intuitions existing in the country under government as well as private management offering different degree and diploma courses. Approximately 90 percent of the teacher training intuitions are under private management (Srinivasan, 2015) and many of these are of sub-standard quality. Much remains to be done in terms of regulating the privatisation in the field of teaching education as the policy is silent on the question of private B.Ed colleges. It can be said provision and regulation of teacher education institutions was never on the top priority of the

government. New Education Policy 2020 also carry forwards this legacy and instead of regulating the operations of standalone teacher education institutions the policy recommends developing multidisciplinary universities where teacher education can be located. The teacher training programmes are under scrutiny and many committees have evaluated and recommend reforms in these programmes. The much debated issue whether teacher education institutions should be brought within the ambit of higher education are put on hold by NPE 2020. The standalone teacher education college will cease to exist by year 2030. The policy talk about light' but tight' regulation in disguise to curtail whatever autonomy is left with public funded educational institutions and teachers, A light but tight' regulatory framework to ensure integrity, transparency and resource efficiency of the educational system through audit and public disclosure while encouraging innovation and out-of-the-box ideas through autonomy, good governance, and empowerment (GoI, 2020:5). It is pertinent to mention that the policy integrates the pre-primary classes with grade 1 and 2, but there is no road map to prepare teachers for the same. Nothing is said about appointment of regular teachers and how this would affect the work of Aganwadi workers. The policy absolves the government from making appropriate provisions for the training of pre-primary teachers by suggesting the use of technology and distance learning. However the research in the field of early childhood care and education and the National Policy on Early Childhood and Education 2013 recommends that teachers should be trained to develop theoretical understanding of the child development and pedagogy. The private schools are given the freedom to continue with nursery classes as it is. However nothing is aid about the appointment and training of teachers in private schools.

In the name of innovation and out of box thinking privatisation is promoted. Instead of allocating funds and resources to uplift the face of teacher education institutions, the most apparent reform is to increase the duration of teacher training programmes. It suggested that the teacher training courses will be of four year duration to improve the quality of teachers. However, the policy contradicts this provision by making provision for special shorter' local teacher education programmes to be available in BITEs and DIETs. No time period is given to define this shorter' local teacher education programmes. Such disparities will exacerbate the already existing quality issues in terms of teaching learning activities. The special shorter' courses would fail to bridge gap between theory and practices.

Sarohe (2018) based on a study of Bachelor of Elementary Education (BELED) programme and Diploma in Education (DEd) programme which are of four year duration in Delhi attempts to understand the notions of citizenship from teacher-students and concludes that most of the candidates hardly get any space and scope to engage at an in-depth level with stereotypes around citizenship and notions they have about many social issues. Hence it can be said the teacher education programmes find it hard to challenge the social and cultural biases and teacher-students are socialised in the dominant curriculum.

DELIBERATE GAPS

The Indian education system is marked by hierarchies and social inequalities in terms of caste, class, gender and religion. To maintain the social cohesion and harmony it is essential to give equitable representation to diverse social groups in the education system especially at higher education level. However very slow progress is made in this regard and majority of the marginalised social groups remain outside the purview of higher education. Batra (2005) argues that education system in the country is dominated by upper caste which tends to maintain the status quo on the questions of caste, community and gender asymmetry'. The policy tends to set the course whether education is going to be an agency for social change and strengthen democratic principles or its going to exacerbate the existing social hierarchies. Sarohe (2018:32) highlights the importance of Teacher Education programme in shaping the worldviews of teachers as well as students; she argues that, teacher education programme should underline an active engagement in public life, and dispositions and sensibilities for living in plural societies with a commitment to social cohesion and solidarity.

The new policy deliberately avoids using the constitutional mandate for positive discrimination at higher education level for disadvantaged, marginalised and religious minorities. This is going to

have discernible effect on the future of teaching profession as there would limit diversity in terms of representation of individuals from SC, ST, OBC and other minorities. The teacher education training intuitions have failed to cater to diverse classroom as majority of the teachers are urban based. The teacher education programmes do not cater to the needs of diverse population groups across the country. The policy attempts to wish away with these issues by bringing structural and curricular reform but it fails take any substantial efforts to make the educational institutions more democratic spaces. It can be said that teachers are public intellectuals who shape the future of the country. To a great extent the quality of any education system at intrinsic level depends on the quality of its teachers. In the name of performance and improving standards the policy promotes neoliberal agenda of privatisation and managerial regime in the field of education. The policy document uses authoritative language and there is no scope for dialogic process and equitable representation of different social and cultural groups. To conclude it can be said that the policy promises to re-establish the lost credibility of the teachers but in spirit it tends to further degrade the value of teachers.

REFERENCES

1. Atherton P. and Kingdon G. (2010): The Relative Effectiveness and Costs of Contract and Regular Teachers in India. CSAE Working Paper Series 2010-15, Centre for the Study of African Economies, University of Oxford.
2. Ball D.L. and Forzani F.M. (2009): The Work of Teaching and the Challenge for Teacher Education. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 60(5): 497-511.
3. Ball S. (1999): Global Trends in Education Reform and the Struggle for the Soul of the Teacher! Paper Presented at the British Educational Research Association Annual Conference, University of Sussex. Brighton: September 2-5.
4. Batra P. (2005): Voice and Agency of Teachers Missing Link in the National Curriculum Framework 2005. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 4347-4356.
5. DISE (2017): Elementary Education: Trends India 2015-16. New Delhi: National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration.
6. Government of India (2010): Right to Education Act. New Delhi: Ministry of Human Resource Development.
7. Government of India (2013): National Early Childhood and Education (ECCE) Policy. New Delhi: Ministry of Women and Child Development.
8. Government of India (2020): New Education Policy. New Delhi: Ministry of Human Resource Development.
9. Sarohe S. (2018): The Role of Teacher Education Programmes. *Economic & Political Weekly*, LIII(40): 27-32.
10. Srinivasan S. (2015): Revamping Teacher Education. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 35: 22-24.
11. Verma R. (2017): Cultural Politics, Neoliberal Markets, and the Privatisation of the Urban 'Other' Educating India's Children of Poverty. In B.S. Ndimande & C. Lubienski, *Privatization and the Education of Marginalized Children Policies, Impacts and Global Lessons*, 103-119.

How to cite this article:

Goplani P. (2023): New 'National Education Policy 2020': A Minimalist Vision of Education and Teachers. *Annals of Education*, Vol. 9[1]: March, 2023: 48-52.