

# **Need for a New Education Policy**

## **HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA – CHALLENGES, ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES**

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### **Abstract**

The National Policy on Education was framed in 1986 and modified in 1992. Since then several changes have taken place that calls for a revision of the Policy. In 2016 the government constituted TSR Subramanyam committee to review and propose new education policy for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. But the government was unhappy with its recommendations appointed Kasturi Rangan Committee for further research in to the issue in 2017 July. But the committee recommendations are not yet publicized.

In the wake of these issues, it is pertinent to identify certain challenges to the higher education in the contemporary Indian society. Higher education system is not meeting the needs of the market. There is no adequate attention to the Research and Development. Universities are politicized. Caste politics plaguing the management of the university education. PhD holders applying for the constable posts. In all our higher education system is producing only the well disciplined employees but not the innovators. It is producing followers but not leaders.

Hence there is a need for concentrating on these issues which will have long term socio, economic and political implications. Budget allocated to the education is inadequate. But mere enhancement of the budget allocation will not solve the crisis. A political and policy commitment is needed to improve higher education that can impart knowledge, and has capacity to produce the leaders and initiators.

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K. KasturiRangan Committee report on higher education is ready and the Central Government would declare National Education Policy very soon. The National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) would also be applicable for smaller universities. The government is trying to upscale and give new directions to the education system. Quality, Research and Innovation are the three pillars on which government is focusing. Outcome based education' seems to be the priority of government.

In this context it is pertinent to throw a bird's eye view on the higher education system in India, its issues, challenges and needed reforms.

### **Education Policy:**

The National Policy on Education was framed in 1986 and modified in 1992. Since then several changes have taken place that calls for a revision of the Policy. The Government of India would like to bring out a National Education Policy to meet the changing dynamics of the population's requirement with regards 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 and industry. Let us review the issues in the existing education policy before analyzing the proposals for the new policy proposals.

### **Issues in the present university education:**

The major issue has been unemployability of the well educated people. The gross enrolment ratio in the country has risen sharply in the last decade but industry complains that most students are unemployable. Talented and skilled people are migrating abroad.

There is not even one truly outstanding institution among 700 universities and over 36,000 colleges. Universities are merely producing the degree holders.

A “casual” approach to higher education is adopted by the policy makers. There has been a too much government interference in top appointments in institutions. Political interference in top appointments is a crucial factor in the decline of institutions of higher learning. Particularly it is visible in the appointments of VCs, Directors and Principals. As a result, the academicians and management in the universities are politically active but academically weak. This has led to a leadership crisis in the universities.

There has been an Un necessary focus on managing an institution rather than fostering creativity, or encouraging a questioning spirit. Ideas from the Western universities are being mechanically borrowed for implementation in India. This clear and present in the case of the adoption the methods like - Choice based credit system (CBCS) and massive open online courses (MOOCS) and idea of Meta University (Meta university implies – having university departments in the same building, inter disciplinary approach which requires lot of synergy)

Academic leaders often make their institutions playgrounds for caste, regional, political and community politics. More over, there is also a feudal culture prevailing in most institutions of higher learning. It is marginalizing the excellence. As a result there is no innovation and no invention

Wrong learning systems are adopted that focus more on learning by rote that kills inquisitiveness. Even in the IITs and IIMs – there is no scope for questioning because of the heavy dose of curriculum. Most teachers also learnt by rote and they reproduce that in the classroom. Exams test the capacity to mechanically reproduce what is mugged up. Exams and degrees have become a passport to a job.

In the present system of education, the students need not attend the classes need not be attended. As result,corruption has seeped into exams as found in the VYAPAM scam.

The shortage of faculty aggravates this crisis. Consequently, overworked, part-time and ad hoc teachers, lacking in skills, carry the burden and teaching suffers. Research guidance deteriorated.

Prescribing the standard qualifications like MPhil, PhD, NET, Refresher course completion, Academic Performance Index (API) for recruitment, promotions and better increments etc., are not

achieving the standards in the education. Teaching is not viewed as a qualitative element but as a matter of time and motion studies

Many academicians play the game cynically to earn points for promotion as a part of API score. Contact with students has been devalued since that gets few points. Poor quality dissertations, journals and conferences enable academics to collect points. Those playing the numbers game are accumulating points mechanically while genuine academics fail to do so for their promotion; mediocrity gets privileged over talent.

#### **RUSA related failures:**

There has been a failure of RUSA in the strengthening the universities and colleges. States have failed to establish the project directorates of the RUSA. Where they are established, the directors have no awareness of the RUSA. There has been a failure on part of the states in utilizing the RUSA funds. Where they are withdrawn, there is a misuse of funds.

There is also a problem of inaccessibility of the funds released under the RUSA. For instance in AP out of the 19 universities only 3 have got 100% funds.

#### **The problem of job relevance:**

The relevance of the higher education and technical education to the job market is least in India when compared to other countries. The policy of the government is also paralytic. The report of the Ministry of labor says that, unemployment among the people in the age group of 18-29 is 13.3%.

A study by an organization called "Aspiring Minds" – Annually 1 million Engineers are produced by various engineering colleges in the country. Out of them, only less than 20% are qualified to be suitable to software jobs.

Factors responsible for this condition are multiple –

There is a lack of qualified teachers at the higher education level. There is dearth of synchronization between the professional colleges and the industry. Colleges are sanctioned permissions without minimum standards.

There is no policy to properly utilize the human resources in the country ( there are 55 crores of young people who are below the age of 24 years). More over, Curriculum is not reflecting the requirements of the market. Even the lack of encouragement to research and development in the educational institutions as it is done in the western countries.

Most of the educational policies are still continue to be colonial hangover. The curriculum is not designed to create interest among the students. Lack of proper budget allocation to the higher education

### **Consequences of improper development of higher education:**

The graduates are forced to take coaching after their academic education. There will be underemployment. Wide spread unemployment ( not due to lack of jobs but due to lack of professionally qualified and eligible candidates)( unemployment rate by 2030 is estimated as 25 cr.). Unemployment results in convulsions.

The candidates are not having adequate skills like arithmetic, English language skills etc. As a result, the market requirements are not properly met. The young generations will not have security of their livelihoods. India emerge as largest youth country by 2020, but they will not have capacity to work.

Industrial growth will come down because of failure to utilize the human resources. There will be scarcity of skilled human resources in all the sectors ranging from industrial to infrastructure sector

### **Recommendations of the TSR Subramanyam Committee:**

The T.S.R. Subramanian committee, entrusted with preparing a new education policy for India submitted the report to the government in May 2016 suggesting measures that the country must take to improve the sector that caters to over 300 million students in the country. Important among the 95 recommendations are –

#### **1) A new AIS for education:**

An Indian Education Service (IES) should be established as an all India service with officers being on permanent settlement to the state governments but with the cadre controlling authority vesting with the Human Resource Development (HRD) ministry.

#### **2) Enhanced GDP:**

The outlay on education should be raised to at least 6% of GDP without further loss of time.

### **3) Minimum eligibility:**

There should be minimum eligibility condition with 50% marks at graduate level for entry to existing B.Ed courses. Teacher Entrance Tests (TET) should be made compulsory for recruitment of all teachers. The Centre and states should jointly lay down norms and standards for TET.

### **4) Teaching license:**

Compulsory licensing or certification for teachers in government and private schools should be made mandatory, with provision for renewal every 10 years based on independent external testing.

### **5) Pre school education right:**

Pre-school education for children in the age group of 4 to 5 years should be declared as a right and a program for it implemented immediately.

### **6) No Detention Policy:**

The no detention policy must be continued for young children until completion of class V when the child will be 11 years old. At the upper primary stage, the system of detention shall be restored subject to the provision of remedial coaching and at least two extra chances being offered to prove his capability to move to a higher class.

### **7) On demand Board exams:**

On-demand board exams should be introduced to offer flexibility and reduce year end stress of students and parents. A National Level Test open to every student who has completed class XII from any School Board should be designed.

### **8) Mid day meal:**

The mid-day meal (MDM) program should now be extended to cover students of secondary schools. This is necessary as levels of malnutrition and anaemia continue to be high among adolescents.

### **9) UGC reforms:**

UGC Act must be allowed to lapse once a separate law is created for the management of higher education. The University Grants Commission (UGC) needs to be made leaner and thinner and given the role of disbursement of scholarships and fellowships.

### **10) Regional university campuses:**

Top 200 foreign universities should be allowed to open campuses in India and give the same degree which is acceptable in the home country of the said university.

## **Kasturi Rangan Committee on New Education Policy**

The recommendations of the T.S.R. Subramanian committee were not received well due to differences between some members the committee and the then HRD minister Smriti Irani. In view of this, the Union government in July 2017 formed another committee, headed by space scientist K. Kasturirangan, to come up with the blueprint / final draft for a new education policy. It takes at least six to seven months to submit the report.

The committee has been mandated to make Indian education contemporary, improve its quality, and internationalize it. It could also provide a roadmap for the entry of foreign universities into India.

The new committee would take into account the ground work done over last 30 months and inputs received from the Subramanian committee. The recommendations of this committee will supersede the Subramanian committee.

### **What is needed to be done for a better Education Policy:**

#### **1. Consider the Ground Realities :**

It requires a historical view essentially because the problems have not appeared overnight. Reports like the Ambani–Birla Report (1999) or the Knowledge Commission Report (2007) lacked a historical understanding of the evolution of the Indian system of higher education and did not address the ground realities of the system. They implicitly assumed that the system is flawed because of its public sector character and suggested its betterment and expansion through privatization. The pressure from the World Trade Organization (WTO) is also in the same direction and concerned people worry about the commitments there.

#### **2. Make the education autonomous.**

As far as possible, education system should be left autonomous. It should be neither controlled by the market nor regulated by the state.

#### **3. Common syllabus need not be imposed**

A common syllabus result in standardization that will kill the creativity and teaching becomes mechanical

#### **4. Rationality in the privatization policy.**

It leads to an increase in resource availability but often also to a demand to cut public funding for education. It should be recognized that the private sector is best suited to deal with the short-term issues and that reinforces narrowness of conception, which is counterproductive.

### **5. Role of Central Government:**

Theseats in the government educational institutions should be increased. The government has to show its initiative as it shown in the implementation of the GST.

In brief, if talent is to be nurtured, the NEP must overhaul higher education based on the ground realities and a holistic perspective. For this, diverse academic voices need to be heard rather than only of those at the top and who have been the problem and whose agenda may not be real reform

### **6. Technology and education**

Digital India program is an attempt to use technology for the benefit of people in order to overcome some of the challenges facing the country particularly in the field of education and health care, technology may be leveraged in the promotion of online courses in various fields of higher education.

## **Proposal to create HECI:**

The government has proposed to establish Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) to replace the UGC. It will have a chairperson, vice-chairperson and 12 members of whom which the first two shall be whole-time salaried individuals. The chairperson will be of the rank of Secretary to the Government of India. The secretary of the HECI will be an officer of the rank of joint secretary and above or a reputed academic and will serve as its member-secretary. Will she have voting rights as a member, as she will be appointed by the HECI? Besides, the secretary, higher education is envisaged to don many hats, serving as a member of the search-cum-selection committee of the chairperson and vice-chairperson, then processing their appointment as a key functionary of the government, and finally acting as a member of the HECI. Such multiplicity of roles may create difficulties and conflict of interest. Also, the power of the government to remove the chairperson and members is rather overwhelming and should be constrained.

It is intended to “provide for more autonomy and facilitate holistic growth” of the higher education sector and offer “greater opportunities to Indian students at more affordable cost”. The new commission will cover all fields of education except medical and, presumably, agriculture, and institutions set up under the Central and State Acts, excluding those of national importance.

However, it is going to give whole sale regulation to the government over the higher education system. This is mainly because of a separation between academic functions and grant-giving ones, the



former to be discharged by the HECI and the latter by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) directly.

To conclude, the government should play the role of a guide and philosopher and disseminator. It should only play a fiduciary role. Market system should not be allowed to penetrate in to the system. Education at the higher level should not be the domain of a handful of a few affluent sections. Universities should continue to remain autonomous, self financed, government budgeted, and market sponsored. Encouragement to the true research and developing indigenous systems to fulfil the dreams of make in India by the Indians.

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