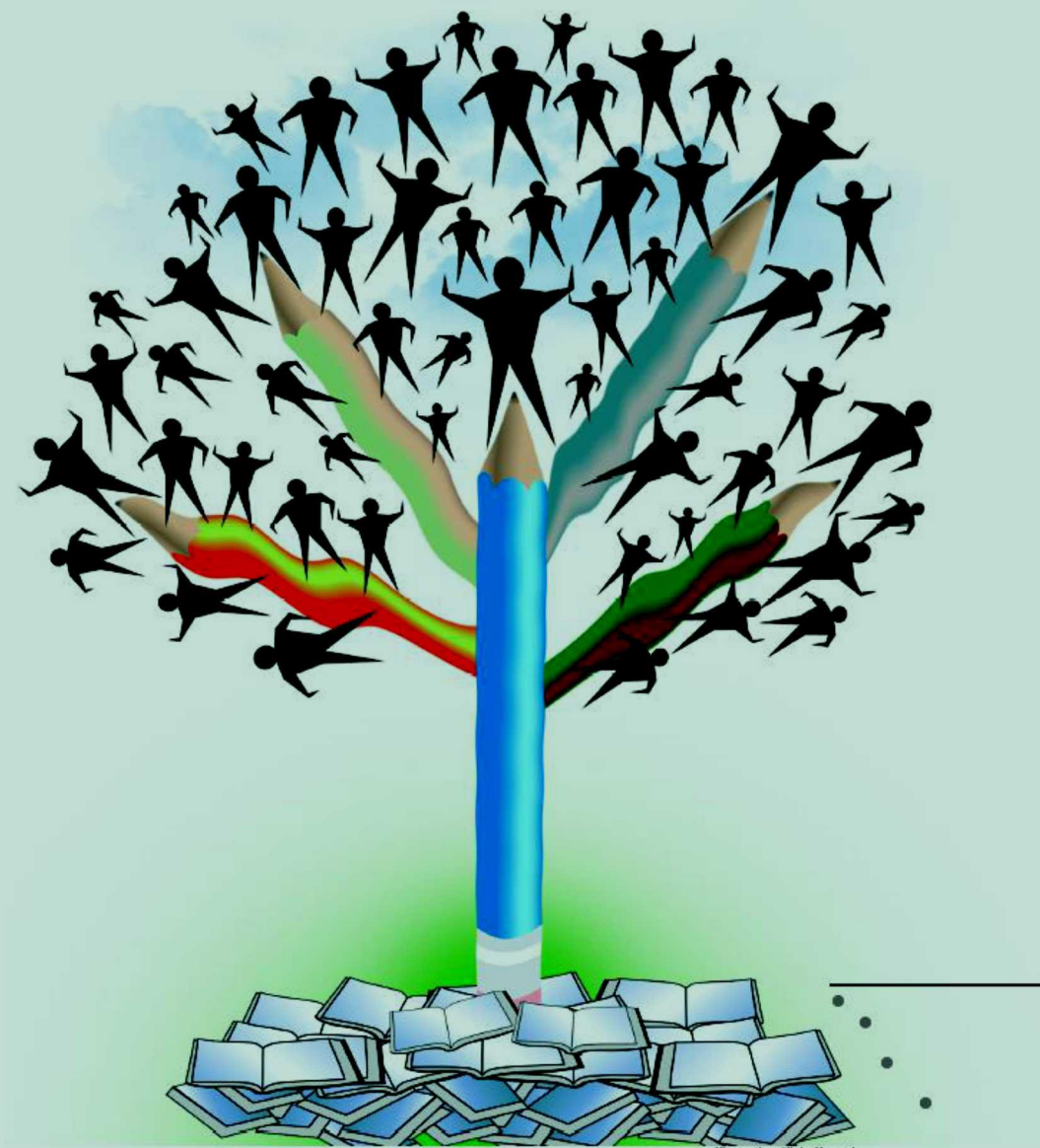


# Rethinking the Agenda on Education Reforms





# Rethinking the Agenda on Education Reforms



## Rethinking the Agenda on Education Reforms

Published by:



CUTS International  
Public Policy Centre

&



D-217, Bhaskar Marg, Bani Park  
Jaipur 302016, India  
Tel: +91.141.228 2821, Fax: +91.141.228 2485  
Email: [info@cippolc.in](mailto:info@cippolc.in)  
Web site: [www.cippolc.in](http://www.cippolc.in)

Author: Abhishek Kumar

©CUTS International, 2015

First published: May 2015

The material in this publication may be reproduced in whole or in part and in any form for education or non-profit uses, without special permission from the copyright holders, provided acknowledgment of the source is made. The publishers would appreciate receiving a copy of any publication, which uses this publication as a source. No use of this publication may be made for resale or other commercial purposes without prior written permission of CUTS.

#1521

# Contents

Abbreviations .....	i
1. Context .....	1
2. Background .....	2
3. The Contextual Setting .....	3
4. Summary of the Government Consultation Paper .....	6
5. Critical Issues Missing from Public Discourse .....	13
6. Conclusion .....	26
Annexure 1: List of Themes for Consultation on School Education in the Government Consultation Paper .....	30
Annexure 2: List of Themes for Consultation on Higher Education in the Government Consultation Paper .....	31
Annexure 3: Further Readings .....	32



## Abbreviations

AICTE:	All India Council of Technical Education
API:	Academic Performance Indicator
ASER:	Annual Status of Education Report
CBSE:	Central Board of Secondary Education
CSS:	Centrally-Sponsored Schemes
DIPP:	Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion
ECCE:	Early Childhood Care and Education
GBS:	Gross Budgetary Support
GER:	Gross Enrollment Ratio
ICDS:	Integrated Child Development Services
ICT:	Information Communication Technology
ISCE:	Indian School Certificate Examination
MDM:	Mid-day Meal
MHRD:	Ministry of Human Resources Development
NCERT:	National Council of Educational Research and Training
NCTE:	National Council for Teacher Education
NIOS:	National Institute of Open Schooling
NKC:	National Knowledge Commission
NSQF:	National Skill Qualification Framework
NUEPA:	National University of Educational Planning and Administration
ODL:	Open and Distance Learning
PPP:	Public Private Partnership
PTR:	Pupil Teacher Ratio

RMSA: Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan  
RTE: Right to Education Act  
RUSA: Rashtriya Uchcha Shiksha Abhiyan

SCERT: State Council of Educational Research and Training  
SSA: Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan

UEE: Universalisation of Elementary Education  
UGC: University Grants Commission



## Chapter 1

# Context

*A recent World Economic Forum global Human Capital Index has put India at the 100<sup>th</sup> position in a survey of 124 countries. The list has been compiled on the basis of 46 indicators about “how well countries are developing and deploying their human capital, focusing on education, skills and employment”*

Many new initiatives are being driven by the new union government in New Delhi, which includes getting our dismal education system right. At the same time to find ways to grow many other parallel initiatives are also on the anvil, such as Make in India, Skill Development etc.

All these initiatives get complex in view of the federal system which exists in India as States follow their own wisdom and strategy. It does not really matter much whether the state is ruled by the same party at the centre because of their own characteristics. There is no platform which promotes exchange of good and bad practices among our states, so that one state can take advantage of the same. Some amount of exchange does take place either through the union government or when one state makes an effort by seeking relevant information from another state. One hopes that the new NITI Aayog established to *inter alia* promote cooperative federalism can cover this deficit in a systemic manner.

Undoubtedly if we see the successful growth stories from other countries in the world, health care and education are two of the most critical areas which can contribute to creating a healthy and smart work force or human capital. A recent World Economic Forum global Human Capital Index has put India at the 100<sup>th</sup> position in a survey of 124 countries. The list has been compiled the basis of 46 indicators about “how well countries are developing and deploying their human capital, focusing on education, skills and employment”. Among BRICS countries, Russia is at 26<sup>th</sup>, followed by China at 64<sup>th</sup>, Brazil at 78<sup>th</sup> and South Africa at 92<sup>nd</sup>.

Like the Government’s hectic efforts to improve our Doing Business indicators to reach 50<sup>th</sup> rank from the current rank of 142 in 189 countries, should the Government of India also not set a target to reach a similar ranking in Human Capital Index in the near future.

## Chapter 2

# Background

*A consultation paper has been released by the MHRD which covers important themes on school and higher education, and raises pertinent questions... While worthy of appreciation, this approach has its own limitations. The consultation might be limited to issues which government deems important, thus ignoring other critical areas*

The need for reforms in Indian education sector has been a recurring theme in Indian policy circles. The Government of India has finally decided to give this area its due attention. A consultation paper has been released by the Ministry of Human Resource Development which covers important themes on school education and higher education, and raises pertinent questions.<sup>1</sup> The objective is to initiate an informed and structured policy debate on the issue.

While worthy of appreciation, this approach has its own limitations. The consultation might be limited to the issues which government deems important, thus ignoring other critical areas.

This CIPPoIC Discussion Paper is an attempt to fill this vacuum. It undertakes an in-depth analysis of issues remaining uncovered or attracting limited importance in the government consultation paper. The objective is to widen the scope of discussion on education reforms, and contribute to the policy debate.

This paper begins with briefly discussing the contextual setting and backdrop of discussion. A summary of the government discussion paper ensues which is followed by the most important part of the paper: critical issues on education reforms facing government neglect. This includes discussion on certain specific issues pertaining to school education and higher education. The discussion paper concludes with raising some important questions in relation to these issues.

## The Contextual Setting

*It is well known that the existing education policy was formulated in 1986 and modified in 1992. Much water has flown under the bridge since then and India is staring at several compelling factors that necessitate a new direction to the education sector in the country*

It is well known that the existing education policy was formulated in 1986 and modified in 1992. Much water has flown under the bridge since then and India is staring at several compelling factors that necessitate a new direction to the education sector in the country.

Amongst others, some of the most compelling factors, in the backdrop of which the new education policy is being discussed, include the following:

- It is for the first time that India's education policy is being designed in the backdrop of overwhelming requirement of creating 500 million jobs by 2022 – a majority of which will be blue collar jobs i.e. skilled workers for manufacturing and services.
- It is for the first time the policy is being designed in the backdrop of 'cooperative and competitive federalism'. In effect, it means that policy will need to address a shared narrative between states and centre and at the same time should encourage states to take lead in designing their educational systems with a focus on vocational training.
- It is for the first time that the policy is being designed after the biggest ever award of the 14<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission which recommended devolution of substantive additional untied funds to the states.
- It is for the first time that education policy is being formulated after the Right to Education became a fundamental right.
- It is for the first time that unprecedented volume of independent research is available to inform the policy formulation in the education sector.

In addition to considering these recent developments, it is important to not forget the following backdrop, within which the new education policy is being discussed:

1. The number of people in India without any education stands at nearly 380 million. If the percentage of total illiterate in the country is added to the number of persons with just a primary level of education, the figure reaches approximately 63 percent of India's population.<sup>2</sup>
2. As per the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER), a body established by a leading NGO: Pratham, learning outcomes in schools in rural India are significantly low. This trend has continued unabated for past several years. The following are the main highlights of the report:
  - Only 25 per cent of children enrolled in Class-V could read simple English sentences and around 26 per cent of Class-III students could do a two-digit subtraction.
  - Percentage of children in Class-II who still cannot recognise numbers up to nine had increased from 11.3 percent in 2009 to 19.5 per cent in 2014.
  - Ability to do division among Class-VIII students has been dropping since 2010.
  - Children's ability to read English is relatively unchanged in lower primary grades for over past 5 years.
  - There is an increased inclination towards private schools in rural India with the figure stands at 30.8 per cent enrollment of 6-14 age group.
  - Recently, India has achieved universal primary enrolment and attained gender parity for primary and secondary education. However, illiteracy has reduced only marginally from 18 per cent in 2000 to 14 per cent in 2015.<sup>3</sup>
3. Universalisation of secondary education is an impending task but there is infrastructure deficit in secondary education in India.
4. At school level, India is short of 12 lakh teachers and 5.23 lakh posts are vacant (2010 figures).<sup>4</sup>
5. Skill education is still not fully integrated with school and university education.
6. The state of teachers and teacher education in the country is dismal. Teacher eligibility tests are either fraught with unfair practices or record a dismal pass result.
7. India's higher education Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) at 18 percent is currently well below the global average of 27 percent. The government plans to increase GER in higher education to

30 percent by 2020. In effect, it means that India would need another 800 universities and over 40,000 colleges in the next few years to provide for the planned additional 40 million places by 2020.<sup>5</sup>

8. The overall education sector can only be run for charitable purpose.

## Summary of the Government Consultation Paper

*The paper highlights a plethora of concerns such as shortage of teachers in general, shortage of teachers across subjects like science, math and languages, quality of teachers, status of teaching, quality of teacher education institutes and relevance of teacher eligibility tests*

The government consultation paper deals with 33 themes. 13 of these deal with school education (**Annexure 1**) and 20 deal with higher education (**Annexure 2**). Set out below is a brief summary of the important issues highlighted under these themes.

### School Education

*Elementary education:* Within the realm of school education, the discussion paper acknowledges low learning outcomes in elementary levels. This acknowledgement however comes without attributing this to any independent study as is being done under Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) over past 10 years. Instead, it underscores a similar study being done by National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) for elementary grades. Notwithstanding this, the paper stresses upon the need to ensure good curriculum and innovative strategy to provide a necessary boost to elementary education.

*Teacher availability:* Needless to say, availability of trained and effective teachers can make a huge difference in this regard. Therefore, the paper highlights a plethora of concerns such as shortage of teachers in general, shortage of teachers across subjects like science, math and languages, quality of teachers, status of teaching, quality of teacher education institutes and relevance of teacher eligibility tests.

*Universalisation of secondary education becomes an impending task. Therefore, newer ways are needed to fund expansion of school infrastructure and enhancement of teaching-learning process*

*Universalisation of secondary education:* It is common knowledge that despite several shortcomings in the schemes like Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and Right to Education Act, universalisation of elementary education has been achieved. The paper argues that with this accomplishment, universalisation of secondary education becomes an impending task. Therefore, newer ways are needed to fund expansion of school infrastructure and enhancement of teaching–learning process. Some of the ideas suggested in the paper to meet these challenges include reliance on Public Private Partnership (PPP) model and Information Communication Technology (ICT). However, it is also mentioned that ICT

***While there have been gains in overall literacy levels, adult literacy levels are low as it does not reach socially marginalised groups uniformly... it is argued that there is still a considerable gap in learning levels amongst these groups***

revolution in education may be compromised due to infrastructure deficit such as lack of uniform availability of electricity. It may also be important to mention here that the paper also identifies Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) as a main instrument to achieve universalisation of secondary education.

*Skill education:* Addressing the question of integration of skill education with school education, the paper accords importance to National Skill Qualification Framework (NSQF) and enunciates that NSQF would demand a complete revamp of education system. It stops short of mentioning what this revamp may entail.

*Assessment system:* It is said that results need to be measured to bring about a positive change. In the realm of education, this is traditionally done through mechanism of examination. However, in recent times there have been policy steps which have challenged the conventional system of examination. Accordingly, at the elementary level no detention policy precludes the child to be held back until s/he completes the elementary education while CBSE introduced continuous and comprehensive evaluation instead of annual examination system. Also, class Xth board exam has been made optional by CBSE. These steps haven't been without their share of controversy. The paper too opens up the debate between a need to have conventional system of examination and a need to have a less taxing but continuous assessment system. Here a point may be made that absence of examination does not mean absence of assessment.

*Adult literacy:* There are many factors that have an impact on the success of educational interventions in rural and semi urban areas. For instance, it is important that there is adult literacy so that parents see value in child's education and feel empowered themselves. The paper argues that while there have been gains in overall literacy levels, adult literacy levels are low as it does not reach socially marginalised groups uniformly. The same can be felt for enrolment and learning outcomes of SC/ST, Muslims and girls. It is argued there is still a considerable gap in learning levels amongst these groups.

***...there is general perception that English medium has advantages while entering the world of work***

*Language policy:* When focussing specifically on learning, a case has been made for comprehensive language policy. Importance of this point has been highlighted in the paper and is corroborated by the evidence that mother tongue based education has a positive impact on student's achievement in language and mathematics. This evidence comes from none other than NCERT. On the other hand, the paper also states that there is general perception that English medium has advantages while entering the world of work. Therefore, a need to debate these points has surfaced more so than before.

*...community participation in school management needs to be improved...*

*Other areas:* Lack of community participation in rural areas is cited as another reason for sub optimal performance of government schools. The paper highlights the fact that community participation in school management needs to be improved. Separately, the paper also emphasises the need to introduce accreditation system too in schools to ensure quality. The paper also talks about the need to have comprehensive education i.e. to balance scholastic as well as non-scholastic areas. This means that there should be focus on subjects like art, moral science, ethics, value systems and physical education, amongst others. This will ensure a wholesome growth of a child.

## **Higher education**

With regards to higher education, the paper conveys a general sense that higher education sector has expanded in an unplanned way and hence quality of both private and public institutions need to be checked.

*Accreditation:* It comes out quite clearly in the paper that accreditation should be followed in letter and spirit as a quality assurance system. Since the accreditation drive in the past has had few shortcomings such as delayed start and then suffering from policy decisions such as voluntary accreditation, it has had an unwanted impact on the quality. The paper highlights that the present challenge, in the wake of accreditation being made mandatory, is how to reach out to all the institutions. The paper mentions that in some states higher education councils have accreditation units. Similarly, some institutions have internal quality assurance cells. This signals that decentralisation of accreditation may be considered as a viable option.

*Quality of governance:* The paper states that quality of governance is closely related to autonomy at both university and college levels. The underlying rationale here is that more autonomy may bring more responsibility and hence better governance. (It may be noted here that autonomy to colleges was prescribed by the National Education Policy way back in 1986. But the recommendation remained unimplemented as the Government is not willing to part with the powers and pass them to colleges.)<sup>6</sup>

*The present challenge, in the wake of accreditation being made mandatory, is how to reach out to all the institutions...*

*Regulatory architecture:* The paper highlights that with respect to regulation there is multiplicity of regulators for the core objectives of equity, expansion and excellence. In other words, there is a need to discuss how fewer regulators can discharge effective regulation. At the same time, the paper also states that need for regulator cannot be undermined in areas like granting permission to enter, permission to operate, intake of students and



***Promotion of research in liberal arts and social sciences, including inter-disciplinary research is important too. The government support is needed to create conducive conditions to carry out research. Further at the institutional level, there is a need to link teaching with research***

***Strong higher education systems are developed in advanced regions of the world with liberal funding by the state and equally liberal funding by the society at large, specifically through donations and endowments from the corporate sector and individuals, including alumni***

introduction of courses, monitoring overall performance including issues related to governance, management and levels of student learning.

**Research:** The paper also implicitly states that central universities are of far better quality than the state universities which account for 90 percent of higher education enrolment. Therefore, central universities should have the pace setting role by being incubators for better research and training. The paper states that the universities should prioritise pure (basic) research, leaving applied research and development in all branches of science to other institutions. Private agencies should also devote more funds for research in the university system and share the cost of R&D with the public sector. Promotion of research in liberal arts and social sciences, including inter-disciplinary research is important too. The government support is needed to create conducive conditions to carry out research. Further at the institutional level, there is a need to link teaching with research. The government needs to invest in faculty development and provide incentives for research, promote collaborative efforts between institutions in research.

**Financing higher education:** The other important aspect the paper touches upon is financing of higher education. Here a number of issues have been discussed. For instance, higher education cannot be sustained only through public funding. Especially given a massive requirement for enrolment and expansion, the public resources may not be sufficient to meet the ever increasing demand for quality higher education and that our policy and regulatory framework should provide for necessary enabling framework to attract private investment and Public Private Partnership (PPP) in higher and technical education sector. In this regard the paper highlights the point that partnership with private sector does not mean privatisation, commercialisation and debasement of education. Thus, under the PPP mode, the cherished national objectives of excellence, social justice, inclusion as well as removal of gender, regional and social group disparities should continue to be the guiding principles.

The paper further highlights that strong higher education systems are developed in advanced regions of the world with liberal funding by the state and equally liberal funding by the society at large, specifically through donations and endowments from the corporate sector and individuals, including alumni. Student contributions in terms of fees constitute relatively a minor source of funds. Therefore, it is necessary to develop a framework in India that promotes this missing source of funds – the non-state and non-student sector. The paper also states that students' loans cannot be seen as a reliable method to finance higher education on a large

***The paper indicates that policy instruments of the government are required to be modified from the present role of funding and controlling to assuming a much wider role of being an enabler, facilitator, financier and regulator***

scale. The adverse effects of student loans on students' attitudes and approach towards higher education and the values that these loans impart, besides its accentuating role in commercialisation of higher education, need to be carefully examined before further expanding loan programmes.

*Modified government role:* The paper indicates that policy instruments of the Government are required to be modified from the present role of funding and controlling to assuming a much wider role of being an enabler, facilitator, financier and regulator. In the same sense, the paper also highlights a need to have public private partnership in forging linkage between skill development and economic development. In this regard, several measures are suggested in the paper that can be taken up in linking the two, for instance, possibilities of aligning NSQF, establishment of community colleges and polytechnics. The paper provokes thinking on the front that country may even start vocational studies programmes at UG level and introduce skill credit transfer to facilitate vertical /horizontal mobility.

*Addressing disparity:* The importance of addressing the disparity across groups and regions is a cherished national objective. In this regard, the paper highlights the need to address regional disparity between regions and groups in India. The paper has condensed two issues from the large data available on disparity. These are: 1) continuing disparity in enrolment at state and regional levels and among various social groups and females; and 2) Poor quality and lack of adequate facilities in the existing institutions. In this light a question has also been raised if Rashtriya Uchcha Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) is adequate to address the disparity issue. The disparity is also present at the level of accessing the incentive schemes including scholarships to students for the disadvantaged background.

*Integration of students' concerns:* The paper also advocates the shift from the top-down approach of planning to integration of student voice. In a nutshell, students need to be envisioned not just as passive recipients of policy transfers, rather as stakeholders with a voice.

***...major share of our teachers, especially in the colleges do not possess doctoral degrees. Invariably teaching profession is not high in the priority list when graduates look for jobs***

*State of teaching:* The paper highlights that a major share of our teachers, especially in the colleges do not possess doctoral degrees. Invariably teaching profession is not high in the priority list when graduates look for jobs. The salary levels and facilities provided to the teachers, although increased in the recent past, are less attractive compared to other sectors. The paper points out that research should be an equally important dimension to be emphasised since research improves the level of teaching and

*It may be good to adopt a selective purposive approach by identifying a few high quality select institutions abroad and invite them to come to India, to share teaching and research with Indian students and faculty, and vice versa*

academic credibility of the teacher. It is only through R&D activities, that teachers can update their knowledge, bring more clarity in their concepts, fly at higher level of teaching and reflect on through action research.

*Internalisation of higher education:* The paper argues that internationalisation of higher education can allow mobility of teachers, scientists, students, programmes and educational institutions and by facilitating collaboration and networking needs. This will help retain and attract talent besides generating new knowledge. In this regard, the paper deals with the concept of internationalisation in detail and expounds that internationalisation has two forms: a conventional one, and a modern one. The conventional one is focused on core academic values, while the modern one tends to focus primarily on education in the framework of international trade, with export/import and economic gains as the operative parts. The conventional one focuses more on student mobility and to some extent faculty mobility as a strategy, while under the modern one, business models are formulated that include not only student and faculty mobility, but also institutional mobility and programme mobility – all with a primary view to make economic gains.

Therefore, it may be good to adopt a selective purposive approach by identifying a few high quality select institutions abroad and invite them to come to India, to share teaching and research with Indian students and faculty, and vice versa. However, in doing so care has to be taken that academic considerations are not displaced by commercial interests.

*Cultural integration:* The paper also deals with two important issues concerning cultural integration through language and Open and Distance Learning avenues. With respect to the former the paper highlights that it is important for us to realise that the major languages of this country, including English, can flourish only in the company of and not at the cost of minor languages. Therefore, there are questions such as whether universities should include foundation courses on cultural integration. With respect to the latter, the paper states that about 10% of enrolment is proposed through Open and Distance Learning (ODL). There is however issues of quality in ODL which calls for reform. There is also a focus on e-learning and hence National Mission of Education through ICT was unveiled in 2009. This has expanded substantially but its efficacy needs to be found out to see how effective has it been.

*There are questions such as whether universities should include foundation courses on cultural integration*

## **Common Issues**

On a careful analysis of the issues discussed under the themes of school education and higher education in the government consultation paper, one gathers that there are some common areas of concern across these segments. Some of these refer to issue of universalisation of secondary and higher education, need for speedy and effective accreditation at both the levels, need to integrate skill education, opportunities available in the wake of ICT revolution, need to assess public private partnership model in order to ensure expansion and the significance of language in the education system to boost both learning as well as diversity.

## Critical Issues Missing from Public Discourse

As indicated earlier, there are several critical issues with respect to education reforms, which have either not be adequately raised in the government discussion paper or needed further elaboration. These are as under:

### A. Education sector and Cooperative Federalism

At the outset it must be stated that the constitution of India envisages a cooperative framework between centre and states. The distribution of powers in the seventh schedule is an apt testimony to that fact. Recent replacement of the Planning Commission by NITI Aayog is also a step in that direction.

*...constitution of India envisages a cooperative framework between centre and states... In light of this it is important for the government to identify and resolve issues that cause friction between centre and states. Education is one of the areas which can contribute to that friction*

In light of this it is important for the government to identify and resolve issues that cause friction between centre and states. Education is one of the areas which can contribute to that friction.

In this regard, 2010 Punchhi commission report on Centre-state relations notes “...*But when it comes to education or employment the scenario changes and State’s jurisdiction deserves greater respect and recognition. A large number of regulatory bodies (UGC, AICTE, NCERT, ICSSR, ICAR etc.) have been established by the Centre under Entries 25 of List III and 66 of List I occupying the field substantially. They have had a large impact on Centre-State relations as the ultimate control over these matters and authorities vest in the Central Government. For example, no State can make a law on any matter which is inconsistent with the AICTE Act. In effect it restricts State governments’ powers on technical education and is substantially curtailed by the Central enactment. The claim is often justified by the need for co-ordinated and planned development of technical education which claim can apply to practically every field of governance...*”<sup>7</sup>

Given union government’s resolve to usher in cooperative federalism, one can hope that the above stated observation will be taken on board. Even though, states have lately started resorting

*The Government has accepted the recommendations of the 14<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission... This signals that central government increasingly wants states to take ownership of developing education system as per their own needs*

to Article 254(2) of the Constitution to have a law that suits their needs, it may not be a sustainable way since a subsequent central law can render the state law redundant.

This further necessitates that the new policy looks at this issue in all its seriousness and unequivocally spells out a regulatory reform so that state's jurisdiction over education and employment can be strengthened.

## **B. Education sector and Competitive Federalism**

The other important aspect that needs consideration is that of competitive federalism which also forms policy premise for the current government. Recommendations of 14<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission and the budget allocations provide valuable indications in this regard.

The Government has accepted the recommendations of the 14<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission to increase devolution of the untied funds from the divisible pool of resources to the states and in lieu has slashed funding for centrally sponsored schemes pertaining to education sector.

This signals that central government increasingly wants states to take ownership of developing education system as per their own needs. While in theoretical terms this is an ideal way to push states to be more efficient in providing for their education needs, in practical terms it may have serious repercussions.

This is because the quantum of funding reduced is quite substantial and it remains to be seen if states will have the capacity to provide for the missing resources. For instance, with respect to Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and Mid Day Meal (MDM), the reduction is to the tune of 28.5% and 41% respectively compared to 2014-15 budget estimates. The reduction is significant even when compared to revised estimates.<sup>8</sup>

These two schemes are the fully centrally sponsored schemes and pertain to elementary level. They can be utilised subsequent to accessing Gross Budgetary Support (GBS) which too has been reduced to a very meagre allocation of ₹2,200 crore and ₹36crore for SSA and MDM, respectively.<sup>9</sup>

The scheme to develop 6000 model schools has been completely delinked from the central assistance while Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) and Rashtriya Uchcha Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) – the two Centrally Sponsored Schemes to promote

*...reduced allocations across the board do not match the 12<sup>th</sup> Plan objectives regarding expansion, growth, access, or quality of higher education*

secondary and higher education have also seen the budget allocation decrease by 57 percent and 47 percent respectively in comparison to 2014-15.<sup>10</sup>

In light of these developments former Minister of State for HRD, Shashi Tharoor has noted that the reduced allocations across the board do not match the 12<sup>th</sup> Plan objectives regarding expansion, growth, access, or quality of higher education.<sup>11</sup>

Since the 12<sup>th</sup> plan still continues, the relevant question for consideration is how to ensure that there is no set back to the growth of the sector in the wake of these developments.

### **C. Are Centrally Sponsored Schemes really needed?**

Related to above developments, another important question has emerges: *Are the key Centrally Sponsored Schemes pertaining to education sector on their dying leg?*

Primarily these schemes would comprise of four CSSs namely SSA, MDM, RMSA and RUSA and have been very briefly mentioned above. The reduced funding for these schemes and doubts over current capabilities of states to provide for the missing funds raise these questions.

Moreover, one may also ask: *why to even continue with schemes that are alleged to have been conceived in a top down fashion and therefore have been criticised for undermining the freedom of states to have schemes that suit their needs.*

An example of SSA may be instructive in this case. Conceived in 2000-01 for Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE) in a time bound manner, the mandate for SSA is to ensure free and compulsory education to the children of 6-14 years age group.

*Moreover, one may also ask: why to even continue with schemes that are alleged to have been conceived in a top down fashion and therefore have been criticised for undermining the freedom of states to have schemes that suit their needs*

A glaring example of top down structure of SSA is highlighted by economists Abhijit Banerjee and Esther Duflo in their book 'Poor Economics'. The authors argue that planners ignored past failures in bringing about social cohesion in villages while designing SSA<sup>12</sup>.

Closer examination of SSA would further reveal evidence of one-size-fit-all approach. For instance, for crucial elements like maintenance and repair of civil works only a meagre ₹7500 per school per year is allocated. Similarly there is a provision of only ₹500 per teacher per year on teaching learning material.<sup>13</sup> These needs may vary from school to school, state to state and region to region and hence the uniform amount for all schools in the country across such crucial parameters doesn't make sense.

*The other important aspect while designing the new education policy is to interlink pre-primary schooling, elementary, secondary and higher education segment*

If the intention of the government is for States to take lead and design their own schemes, an argument can be made that attempts should be made to handhold states in accomplishing this by providing technical assistance wherever they need. The role of NITI Aayog in this regard will be crucial. Proposed education policy therefore must lay down a road map to phase out CSS and replace them with State specific schemes in all States. Such a step will be in line with the spirit and philosophy of cooperative and competitive federalism as envisaged by the government.

#### **D. Inter-linkages in education system are a must**

The other important aspect while designing the new education policy is to interlink pre-primary schooling, elementary, secondary and higher education segments. Experts have indicated that in the past it has not been done because of over obsession with one particular segment at the cost of others. An apt testimony of this allegation would be what followed subsequent to the World Conference on 'Education for All' in 1990 which resolved to make primary education accessible to all children...<sup>14</sup>

As consequence, interdependence of various levels of education was ignored in India. It substantially ignored the fact that primary education provides inputs into secondary and higher education and higher education, in turn, provides teachers, administrators and others for school education. Secondly, what was also ignored is that growth in primary education would contribute to rapid rise in demand for secondary and higher education and the corresponding need for expansion of secondary and higher education.<sup>15</sup> As a result, today India is staring at another crisis which is manifested in the urgency to create a massive infrastructure at secondary and higher education level and to ensure quality teachers across the entire education spectrum.

*Further, we still continue to ignore what should be considered one of the most important parts of education system – the pre- primary education. Research suggests that pre-primary education is very important for the development of young children before they enter formal school*

Further, we still continue to ignore what should be considered one of the most important parts of education system – the pre-primary education. Research suggests that pre-primary education is very important for the development of young children before they enter formal school. It helps in cognitive development of children at the early grades of primary education and it has strong bearing on attendance and participation of children once they enter primary school.<sup>16</sup> This is why the National Policy on Education 1986 and its Plan of Action too placed immense importance on pre-school education.

However, the fact that it is handled by Ministry of Women and Child Development while education comes within the purview of



the Ministry of Human Resource Development indicates that it is not even considered a part of the mainstream education system.

Other factors like low quality of teaching, sub-optimal state of Aaaganwadis around the country and lack of trained teachers suggest that there is an urgent need to focus on pre-primary education. A beginning in that direction could be made by bringing it under one ministry for better coordination and planning.

The new policy therefore needs to take into account issues at each level of education and link them with each other rather than develop solutions in siloes. This may require assessing demand at each level and enable policy makers to draw perspective plans to meet those demands in short, medium and long term. Given the present scheme of things, this may eventually have to be done at the state level. Therefore, states will need to be forthcoming and competitive in order to meet the desired goals and find innovative ways of funding the education requirements.

### **E. Some specific issues pertaining to school education**

*NCF 2005 is a forward looking document which laid out a framework that seeks precedence of understanding over memorisation and recognises teacher as a pivot to deliver meaningful education*

One of the most comprehensive documents to address the needs of learning and role of teachers is the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005. Premised upon the 1993 report – *Learning without Burden*, NCF 2005 is a forward looking document which laid out a framework that seeks precedence of understanding over memorisation and recognises teacher as a pivot to deliver meaningful education.

It envisages an education system that produces individuals who are capable of responding to democratic process, capable of contributing to the economic process and capable of make a lasting contribution to social change. To achieve this objective the framework spells out the importance of mother tongue based early education, role of community engagement, recognition of children as knowledge creators, need to do away with rote based learning, importance of non-scholastic curriculum, peace education and focus on marginalised groups, amongst others.

To give effect to these objectives, NCF also envisaged a pivotal role for teachers. Therefore, in 2009 a National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education was also framed in the backdrop of NCF 2005. Amongst others, some of the important dimensions of this framework include reflective practice as the central aim of teacher education, creation of opportunities for student-teachers for self-learning, articulation of new ideas providing opportunities to student-teachers to observe, engage and communicate with children.

Clearly, these steps brought the ‘child’ at the focus. Accordingly, some of the operational mechanics that further facilitated this objective included no detention policy under Right to Education Act, and replacement of conventional examination system with Comprehensive and Continuous Evaluation (CCE).

But despite putting these seemingly progressive steps in place, not much seemed to have changed on the ground. Learning outcomes remain abysmally low and quite often steps like CCE and no detention policy in primary education are blamed for this outcome. Besides, problems in both design and implementation of Right to Education Act have surfaced over last five years. For instance, the Act seems to promote unaccountable behaviour on part of government schools while private schools are subjected to harsh conditions if they don’t meet the norms of RTE Act. An apt testimony of this fact is that government schools are to meet only Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR) norm mandated under RTE and there is no consequence for failing to meet this norm while private schools are subject to losing their recognition and shutting down if norms for PTR, infrastructure and qualification of teachers are not met<sup>17</sup>.

*The fact that India is short by 12 lakh teachers and over 5 lakh posts are vacant further worsens the situation. A part of the problem could be that dignity attached to being a school teacher is very low in India. Prof Yashpal in his foreword to NCF 2005 has also underscored this point*

Perhaps, this explains why in schools a huge number of teachers do not even have bachelor’s degree and the infrastructure is in shambles. The fact that India is short by 12 lakh teachers and over 5 lakh posts are vacant further worsens the situation. A part of the problem could be that dignity attached to being a school teacher is very low in India. Prof Yashpal in his foreword to NCF 2005 has also underscored this point<sup>18</sup>.

On the implementation side of RTE too there are gaping holes. For instance, with respect to the Sec 12 (1)(c) of the Act which deals with reservation of 25% seats for the disadvantaged students in private schools, even some of the well performing states seem to be circumventing the ultimate objective of the provision. The case of Rajasthan is instructive in this regard<sup>19</sup>. While on one hand Rajasthan figures as one of the top performing states in implementation of 25% provision, on the other hand one would discover that it has neglected the truly disadvantaged categories by framing rules which favour a more affluent section of population<sup>20</sup>. Further, many private schools subvert this provision by decreasing the number of seats at the prescribed entry level<sup>21</sup>.

Another unmatched insight with regards to working of RTE is provided by a 2013 study conducted by Princeton University for Accountability India, Centre for Policy Research, New Delhi. The study observes that notwithstanding the overall decline in the learning outcomes, districts with higher attendance performed better. Strikingly, it observes that factors father removed from

*There is hardly any debate on how to strengthen assessments within CCE so that competitive edge of students is enhanced without putting them under the stress of examinations and without promoting learning by rote*

the classroom such as school managing committees and infrastructure have little role to play in ensuring learning outcomes.

A question therefore arises – are we spending resources on unnecessary elements like school managing committees? Should not we be looking at elements that have direct relation to quality education? The case of Gujarat would be worth mentioning here. RTE Rules notified by the state declare that schools need not meet infrastructure norms if they can demonstrate that they achieve certain learning outcomes, both in terms of absolute levels and as improvement from that of the previous years.

### **Conventional Examinations Vs CCE**

With regards to CCE which has been criticised for blunting the competitive edge that students were able hone due to the conventional examination system, the debate seems to have gotten lost in the argument whether conventional examination system is good or bad? There is hardly any debate on how to strengthen assessments within CCE so that competitive edge of students is enhanced without putting them under the stress of examinations and without promoting learning by rote.

It must be borne in mind that CCE emanates out of the objectives enshrined in NCF 2005<sup>22</sup> and NCF itself, as a forward looking document, NCF seems to have a unanimous political approval. In this regard, the current HRD Minister has even stated that NCF 2005 takes care of any new development and concern in the school level education system<sup>23</sup>.

Given this, the larger debate should indeed focus on making a strengthened CCE universal across all boards and systems of school education? Currently, it is mainly implemented by Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) which functions under the overall supervision of the Department of Education under the MHRD.

Strengthening and universalising CCE may necessitate doing away with discrepancies across different systems of education that exist today because of multiple boards like CBSE, National Institute for Open Schooling (NIOS) and Council for Indian School Certificate Examination (ISCE). Besides, each state has its own board as well and hence different standards of education continue.

A common and grade specific syllabus across all these boards can possibly ensure comparable levels of learning and integration of CCE across the entire school system.

*It must be borne in mind that CCE emanates out of the objectives enshrined in NCF 2005<sup>17</sup> and NCF itself, as a forward looking document, NCF seems to have a unanimous political approval. In this regard, the current HRD Minister has even stated that NCF 2005 takes care of any new development and concern in the school level education system<sup>1</sup>*

*...teacher education is where the foundation of education quality is initiated. This mandated framing of NCF for Teacher Education in 2009 but six years on, the news from the ground is not encouraging*

### **Why there are no quality teachers:**

It has been discussed above that NCF accords a considerable value to the role of teachers. In fact NCF 2005 can not be operationalised without adequately training teachers so that teachers adapt to the changing learning needs of children and society and support a more student-centered learning environment.

In other words, teacher education is where the foundation of education quality is initiated. This mandated framing of NCF for Teacher Education in 2009 but six years on, the news from the ground is not encouraging.

As of 2010, 45 per cent of all elementary schools teachers did not have even a bachelor's degree (NUEPA 2010)<sup>24</sup>. Currently, there are 4.5 lakh untrained teachers at the elementary level<sup>25</sup>. Even the secondary and higher secondary education is fraught with low quality of teachers<sup>26</sup>.

With the aim to recruit quality teachers, CBSE introduced the Central Teacher Eligibility Test (CTET) and State Governments introduced the Teacher Eligibility Tests (TET). In fact, as per a MHRD order of 2009, schoolteachers - both at the primary and secondary level have to take the Teacher Eligibility Test (TET) every seven years. The outcome of the TET will become the basis of the teacher's continuation or termination of services<sup>27</sup>.

However, if example from states is anything to go by there are serious issues to consider. While in Bihar thousands of applicants to the posts of primary teachers have submitted fake TET certificates<sup>28</sup>, abysmal outcome has been reported from Maharashtra in these tests.

Enumerating the problems, education experts suggest that proliferation of low quality MEd and BEd colleges is one of the main reasons.

*...if example from states is anything to go by there are serious issues to consider. While in Bihar thousands of applicants to the posts of primary teachers have submitted fake TET certificates<sup>23</sup>, abysmal outcome has been reported from Maharashtra in these tests*

Expounding further on this issue is the 2013 report by Confederation of Indian Industry (CII). Titled '*Towards Professional Preparation of the Teacher Educators - A Critical Analysis of the Current Teacher Educator Profile and Competencies*', the report goes to the very core of the problem and highlights that at the heart of the problem is the absence of good teacher educators and this happens due to number of factors. The prominent among them are mentioned below:

- Only 892 institutions with an approved intake of 28,957 student teachers are recognized by the National Council for Teacher Education to prepare teacher educators.

*In other words, none of the other determinants of quality education may have as direct a relationship with learning outcomes of children. But this is not to say that other determinants are not as essential. In fact together they provide a conducive environment to both the teacher and the learner*

- Although M.Ed. is generally accepted as the requirement for a teacher educator qualification, the program currently offered in most universities is simply an extension of the B.Ed. program.
- The entire teacher education curriculum, both at B.Ed. and M.Ed. ignore components that are essential for teaching future teachers and handling adult learners - such as adult learner pedagogy, assessment and evaluation and skill-development of teaching adult learners.
- Curriculum is not in sync with the change taking place at school level. It focuses largely on disseminating knowledge and not on construction of knowledge through research, self-study, discourse and application.
- Assessment procedures assess primarily the theoretical knowledge of the student teachers. They fail to assess teaching, pedagogical skills and professional proficiency.
- There are not many systemic opportunities for professional development for teacher educators. Training occurs at sporadic intervals.
- Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) was introduced in the Central Government schools. It is mandatory for teachers to learn and practice “assessment for learning” and “assessment of learning”. Despite this a large majority of the teacher education colleges have not yet integrated teacher education with the requirements of CCE.
- Teacher education colleges prepare students for a career in education, including that of a Teacher Education. However the absence of campus recruitment devalues the course vis-à-vis other professional courses.
- In rural private institutes situated at socio-economically and geographically disadvantageous locations, norms regarding subject specialists having to teach courses are not strictly followed.
- Since promotion largely depends on seniority, there is a lack of interest in trying new practices or introducing innovative ideas in teaching-learning process. These factors deter meritorious students from choosing teaching as a profession.

The above gaps indicate multiple leaks in a single system of preparing quality teachers. More importantly there are hardly any incentives to become teacher educators. In many ways this could be considered the root of problem of quality education.

In other words, none of the other determinants of quality education may have as direct a relationship with learning outcomes of children. But this is not to say that other determinants are not as essential. In fact together they provide a conducive environment to both the teacher and the learner. The following section spells out some of those key determinants in the context of issues with regards to quality assurance at school level.

*...quality parameters need to be defined and need to be established consistently over different school types namely government school, affordable private schools and elite private schools*

### **Quality Assurance System for schools in India:**

Broadly, quality dimensions of a school would include infrastructure, management & administration, Community Support, Classroom Environment, Curriculum and Teaching Learning Material, Teacher and Teacher Preparation, Opportunity Time (Teaching-Learning Time), Classroom Practices and processes, Learners' Assessment, Monitoring and Supervision.

Primary concern here is with regards to ensuring consistency across these parameters. This is because there is multiplicity of quality assurance systems undertaken by various state governments and private institutes. In addition to several at the state level, some of the prominent ones would include CBSE's School Quality Assessment and Accreditation (SQAA) and Quality Council of India – NABET Accreditation (set up by the government of India and three industry bodies - ASSOCHAM, CII and FICCI).

In this regard, a 2014 report of the British Council titled '*Quality Assurance in Education in India*'<sup>29</sup> has observed that the national scoping of quality assurance is yet to be consistently established in India.

The report notes that the quality parameters need to be defined and need to be established consistently over different school types namely government school, affordable private schools and elite private schools. All schools, irrespective of their fee and type should be delivering a minimum established standard of education. The measurability of the outcomes should be holistically based on the school performance rather than just the academic outcome of the students.

### **F. Some specific issues pertaining to higher education**

The National Knowledge Commission (NKC, 2006), in its evaluation of the state of higher education in India, concluded that there is a "quiet crisis in higher education that runs deep. Pockets of excellence remain but the general impression is one of mediocrity".

Some of the major factors contributing to this state of affairs are listed below:

#### **Sub-standard Quality<sup>30</sup>**

The mediocre quality of higher education institutes can be attributed to a number of factors. First, curricula of universities are not revised frequently and often remained unchanged for decades. This is unpardonable in a dynamic global environment where the relative importance of issues and problems is constantly changing and new subjects are constantly coming to the fore.

*The National Knowledge Commission (NKC, 2006), in its evaluation of the state of higher education in India, concluded that there is a "quiet crisis in higher education that runs deep. Pockets of excellence remain but the general impression is one of mediocrity"*

*...there is a tendency to develop universities as teaching outlets rather than centres of excellence in high quality research*

Most of the Indian universities are still stuck in a system of annual examinations where memory rather than understanding reaps rewards. A well oiled credit based semester system is still the exception rather than the rule.

Second, there is a tendency to develop universities as teaching outlets rather than centres of excellence in high quality research. The result is that much of the human capital in university professors is under utilised and often depreciates because of lack of academic involvement and stimulation, and poor exposure to new developments in their subjects.

Moreover, potential synergies between teaching and research remain unutilised. The main reason for sub-standard quality of higher education is insufficient competition. The accountability for educational outcomes is too unsatisfactory, partly because the scope of “higher education” is not clearly defined (whether it is a service where the producer is responsible to the customer for quality).

#### **Absence of Top Quality Faculty<sup>31</sup>**

There is no effort to attract top quality faculty with good housing and offices facilities. The absence of rewards against performance makes education an unrewarding profession and academically bright young people are attracted to the more remunerative performance oriented private sector.

Parochialism runs deep among the faculty members of the universities, and in any given university most of the faculty members are drawn from the region in which the university is located. This prevents inflow of faculty from other regions with the result that no crosspollination of university faculties takes place. The UGC is responsible for academic stagnation as it has laid down standard norms for salaries which are not based on merit but on seniority based promotions, which diminishes any initiative on the part of faculty to be good at their job, teaching or research wise.

*Parochialism runs deep among the faculty members of the universities, and in any given university most of the faculty members are drawn from the region in which the university is located*

Further, in a thought provoking article Rahul Bajaj and Sanjay Bhargava note that in most government aided institutions teachers jobs are sold. For instance, the going rate in Maharashtra for a college teachers exceeds ₹20 Lakh. Further in institutions like Nagpur university 250 colleges were functioning without teachers and yet students were enrolled and being allowed to sit for exams. Even the much vaunted Pune University had 70 such college. (End Educations Licence Raj: <http://blogs.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/toi-edit-page/end-educations-licence-raj/>)

*Infrastructure in universities has undergone large scale obsolescence without adequate replacement – a factor partially responsible for poor quality of education and low levels of satisfaction among students*

In addition, Academic Performance Indicator (API) must share a quantum of blame for below par teaching standards. In this regard Prof. J.S. Rajput<sup>32</sup> notes that API is a ‘mechanical’ tool that gives equal weightage to items like attendance in a national seminar, presentation of a paper, publication of a paper in a refereed journal, and the like. This means that a good research paper published in a reputed journal that is internationally known for its reviewing standards is just as good as another published after paying a handsome amount to the publisher of a newly emerged refereed journal. Unscrupulous teachers use API for promotions and job confirmation. This also leads to teachers attending irrelevant seminars instead of concentrating on their research and innovations in libraries, laboratories and intensive discussions among peers.<sup>33</sup>

### **Insufficient Funds, Poor Utilisation and Crumbling Infrastructure<sup>34</sup>**

Infrastructure in universities has undergone large scale obsolescence without adequate replacement – a factor partially responsible for poor quality of education and low levels of satisfaction among students. The serious resource crunch in universities implies that there is little financial flexibility, given that certain expenditures are unavoidable. According to NKC (2006), 75 percent of maintenance expenditure is on salaries and pensions on an average. Much of what is left is absorbed by infrastructure costs such as rents, electricity, telephones and examinations. Thus, there is very little left for development of infrastructure from these funds with the consequence that laboratories, libraries and buildings are dilapidated and deteriorating rapidly.

Many facilities which are taken for granted in universities in the developed world such as broadband facilities for students and teachers and computerisation of admission processes and administration of exams are lacking.

### **Political Interventions in Governance and Regulation<sup>35</sup>**

Much of the state of higher education in our country can be attributed to the system of governance and regulation. The system of command and control implicit in the functioning of universities is unworkable and does not promote accountability. These institutions are constantly subjected to governmental pressures and intrusion of political processes.

The other cause of poor governance is the system of affiliating colleges to the university which yields revenue for the university through fees. Out of the total undergraduate colleges, only a minuscule percentage is autonomous. The rest are affiliated to

*The other cause of poor governance is the system of affiliating colleges to the university which yields revenue for the university through fees. Many universities have more than 100 affiliated colleges and there are some with more than 800 affiliated colleges each*



universities.<sup>36</sup> Many universities have more than 100 affiliated colleges and there are some with more than 800 affiliated colleges each. With so many affiliated colleges the universities become bulky structures. The need for joint examinations of affiliated colleges prompts standardisation and dilution of curricula and examinations with inadequate emphasis on flexibility in response to changing and varying needs of students.

*...44 universities had been blacklisted in 2009 by the Tandon Committee... Subsequently, UGC carried out its investigations and cleared 34 of those universities. However, MHRD has rejected that proposal*

There is also no opportunity therefore to nurture centres of excellence within the university systems. The large size of universities is due to poor regulation. A university can only be set up through legislation. This requirement is a formidable obstacle. Thus, universities keep expanding by taking on new colleges when the need is for new universities which administer a close cluster of colleges.

#### **Perception difference in standards within the government**

The other issue worth consideration is the lack of clarity and coordination between MHRD and UGC on standards a university must have. This can be explained by the fact that 44 universities had been blacklisted in 2009 by the Tandon Committee set up under the then HRD Minister. The committee found that these universities were lacking in the quality of education as well as the infrastructure that they provided. Subsequently, UGC carried out its investigations and cleared 34 of those universities. However, MHRD has rejected that proposal.<sup>37</sup> This clearly shows that standards in higher education are perceived differently by different organs and agencies of the government.

## Chapter 6

# Conclusion

The above discussion has brought out several crucial elements that need immediate focus of the policy makers. In addition, the government discussion paper has also touched upon many crucial aspects. The design of the policy must take into account these issues, however, if the intent of the government is to truly reform the education system, it must give due heed to what Rohit Dhankar, Professor of Philosophy of Education in Azim Premji University<sup>38</sup> notes with regards to policy and its implementation.

*...if the intent of the government is to truly reform the education system, it must give due heed to what Rohit Dhankar, Professor of Philosophy of Education in Azim Premji University notes with regards to policy and its implementation*

In his paper *'Aims of Education: Policy documents and demands of democracy'*<sup>39</sup>, he points out that there is a difference in the vision of education as pronounced in policy documents and what is implemented on the ground.

To quote him verbatim –

*"...A charitable explanation of this dichotomy could be that the liberal humanistic shift in policy will take time to translate into actual curricula and other concrete action plans. But actually one notices that the curricula are moving in a reverse direction. Thus perhaps a more plausible explanation would be that policy pronouncements are made for public consumption under the pressures of democratic polity. The pressures of economic globalisation and market forces are felt more acutely at the level of curricula and programmes of implementation. While at the policy level we give the impression of holding our ground for social justice, democratic values and dignity of individual; at the level of the latter the pressures of masters of the markets are accommodated with alacrity..."*

This is an important revelation and should serve as a valuable insight in the formulation of new policy. In a nutshell, it implies that policy should be framed in such a way that curricula and government programmes can not only be aligned with the policy prescription but can also be implemented.

In doing so, the government will have to build consensus across a wide spectrum of stakeholders. However, in the current scheme of things there are two issues that may preclude this from happening.

***NUEPA itself feels that while it may be a good exercise to ensure public participation in policy making, it may not be a feasible option... NUEPA has also questioned how these district and panchayat meetings are going to be conducted and if there is adequate manpower available to carry out such mass-level consultations***

The first issue is with regards to the methodology being adopted for formulation of the new policy. MHRD is currently holding series of long consultations involving participation at panchayat, block, district and state levels. These consultations will be based on an open ended questionnaire prepared by National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA) – a think tank of the ministry<sup>40</sup>.

Theoretically, it appears to be a sound way of putting a policy together but on practical front doubts have started to emerge on the value it will add. This is because the capacity of panchayats and urban local bodies is quite inadequate.

NUEPA itself feels that while it may be a good exercise to ensure public participation in policy making, it may not be a feasible option. As per comments of a senior faculty from NUEPA – a better way would have been to go to villages with a plan to seek suggestions and inputs. NUEPA has also questioned how these district and panchayat meetings are going to be conducted and if there is adequate manpower available to carry out such mass-level consultations.<sup>41</sup>

The second issue which raises concern pertain to the use of independent research. In its 10-year history, the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) has challenged the fundamental assumption of elementary education policy which was premised upon the fact that expansion of schooling system would ensure learning amongst children. Comprehensive and independent studies such as those done by ASER therefore add huge value to policy making exercise. However, the HRD minister in a recent interview suggested<sup>42</sup> that since ASER surveys are not conducted by trained teachers, the weightage will be less for such surveys as compared to the study being conducted by NCERT.

***The second issue which raises concern pertain to the use of independent research... the HRD minister in a recent interview suggested<sup>36</sup> that since ASER surveys are not conducted by trained teachers, the weightage will be less for such surveys as compared to the study being conducted by NCERT***

As per the government's discussion paper, NCERT has already completed 3 rounds of National Level Achievements Survey for Classes –III, V, & VII/VIII. States have been allocated funds to conduct State level achievement surveys and they are at different stages of the exercise<sup>43</sup>.

This not only amounts to duplication of efforts but also leads to questions on the veracity of the process and raises conflict of interest issues. Additionally, it is a well- documented fact that studies conducted by institutions attached to the government have tended to be less critical of the government<sup>44</sup>.

The above two issues are not a good news to anyone, least of all the government. This is because these issues have the potential to

isolate a sizable chunk of stakeholders and instead of building consensus they could create more discord.

What the policy needs is an implementable roadmap and for that a general agreement across the board is necessary. In its pursuit to aid the process of formulation of new policy, this discussion paper now poses several questions in light of the discussion thus far. While these questions are not exhaustive, they are important to aid the process of policy formulation:

- What is quality education and how should it be defined?
- What are the important aspects of quality education and how can they be prioritised?
- Is a good teacher the most crucial 'missing link' in quality education? How can India produce better teachers?
- How can Universalisation of secondary and higher education be ensured?
- How can the missing infrastructure at school and higher education level be provided? Can ICT in education be an alternative?
- Is distance education as effective? What can be done to promote it?
- Is CCE system of assessment the right way to prepare students for real world? What can be done to universalise and strengthen CCE system?
- How to remove discrepancies in quality assurance system? What are the characteristics of good quality assurance system both at school and higher education level?
- What can be done to promote early learning in mother tongue?
- How to boost community participation in education?
- How to operationalise the objectives of NCF 2005?
- What can be done to boost pedagogical research?
- What can be done to boost research output in higher education?
- How can education become more inclusive?
- How can student become a stakeholder and participant in the system of education rather than a mere recipient?
- How can internalisation of education happen? Will that boost competition in education?
- What will be the way to finance education? Should there be PPP in education/ should not education sector cease to be for charitable purpose only?
- Are centrally sponsored schemes desirable in education sector?
- How to make pre-primary education more effective?
- How should the education regulation look like? Should the regulation be mostly at state level?
- How to integrate meaningful skill development in education? Is NSQF sufficient for this purpose? Should not we be making secondary education a terminal point so that it can guarantee sufficient skills by the time a student passes out?

- How to standardise education at school and higher education level? Is it even desirable?
- How to seamlessly connect all levels of education?
- How to ensure autonomy of universities and colleges?

**Annexure 1:**  
**List of Themes for Consultation  
on School Education in  
the Government Consultation Paper**

1. Ensuring learning outcomes in Elementary Education
2. Extending outreach of Secondary and Senior Secondary Education
3. Strengthening of Vocational Education
4. Reforming School Examination systems
5. Re-vamping Teacher Education for Quality Teachers.
6. Accelerating rural literacy with special emphasis on Women, SCs, STs & Minorities through Adult Education and National Open Schooling Systems
7. Promotion of Information and Communication Technology Systems in School and Adult Education.
8. New knowledge, pedagogies and approaches for teaching of Science, Maths and Technology in School Education to improve learning outcomes of students
9. School standards, School assessment and School Management systems.
10. Enabling Inclusive Education – education of SCs, STs, Girls, Minorities and children with special needs.
11. Promotion of Languages.
12. Comprehensive Education – Ethics, Physical Education, Arts & Crafts, Life Skills.
13. Focus on Child Health

**Annexure 2:**  
**List of Themes for Consultation  
on Higher Education in  
the Government Consultation Paper**

1. Governance reforms for quality
2. Ranking of institutions and accreditations
3. Improving the quality of regulation
4. Pace setting roles of central institutions
5. Improving State public universities
6. Integrating skill development in higher education
7. Promoting open and distance learning and online courses
8. Opportunities for technology enabled learning
9. Addressing regional disparity
10. Bridging gender and social gaps
11. Linking higher education to society
12. Developing the best teachers
13. Sustaining student support systems
14. Promote cultural integration through language
15. Meaningful partnership with the private sector
16. Financing higher education
17. Internationalisation of higher education
18. Engagement with industry to link education to employability
19. Promoting research and innovation
20. New knowledge

### **Annexure 3: Further Readings**

#### **No Acche Din for Higher Education**

*Zoya Hasan\**

*The Hindu, May 20, 2015*

Despite the trend of passing on the responsibility of education to the private sector, there is a strong case to expand state funding of education. The role of publicly funded education in the democratisation of access to higher education in India is indisputable.

*\*Formerly Professor, Jawaharlal Nehru University and ICSSR National Fellow, Council for Social Development, New Delhi*

<http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/no-acche-din-for-higher-education/article7224444.ece>

#### **Digital Education Expected to Play a Pivotal Role in the Future, will Validate Investors' Confidence**

*Business Wire, May 20, 2015*

... This inadequacy of school teachers, disconnect between the syllabi of common entrance examinations with K-12 syllabi, and intense competition have resulted in the proliferation of coaching classes. So much so, coaching classes have become an integral part of the non-formal sector of education in India.

Apart from coaching classes, the use of multimedia in schools has rapidly caught the fancy of educators, students and parents. Its popularity has stoked substantial business opportunities for ICT companies that provide multimedia in classrooms on a contractual basis...

<http://businesswireindia.com/news/news-details/digital-education-expected-play-pivotal-role-future-will-validate-inve/43810>

#### **India must Consider Allowing For-profit Education**

*Mahesh Bhangriya\**

*Business Today, May 20, 2015*

... a comparative study for India with other emerging nations i.e. China, Brazil tend to favour for-profit system – at least to address the issue of low enrolments ratio...

*\*Vice President and Head, Corporate Strategy Career Point*

<http://businesstoday.intoday.in/story/india-must-consider-allowing-for-profit-education/1/219549.html>



## A New Education Policy

Anurag Behar\*

*Livemint, May 13, 2015*

...policy is only one dimension of the overall dynamic of education; there are many others, for example, action by civil society, research, societal changes. Nevertheless, some key policy events that set basic frameworks, directions and philosophy have very long-lasting and deep impact.

\* *CEO of Azim Premji Foundation*

<http://www.livemint.com/Opinion/5BlhwpXRZs8CRELt1FcS7M/A-new-education-policy.html>

## The Case for Liberal Arts Education

Vishakha N Desai\*

*The Hindu, May 11, 2015*

What is lost in the debates over meritocracy and access, or excellence and equity is the fact that in India, ever since the time of the country's Independence, we have privileged technical knowledge and applied sciences over a well-rounded liberal arts education...

\* *Special Advisor for Global Affairs to the President and Professor of Practice, Columbia University, President Emerita, Asia Society*

<http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/liberal-arts-education-in-india/article7190808.ece>

## A Knowledge Society in the True Sense of the Word

Smiriti Irani

*Business Standard, April 11, 2015*

Recognising the vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, of making education a pillar for the nation's character building, a new paradigm of education that fosters knowledge with analytical skills, logical reasoning and the ability to imagine beyond the given and stimulating life-long learning, is being adopted

\* *Union Minister for Human Resource Development*

[http://www.business-standard.com/article/opinion/a-knowledge-society-in-the-true-sense-of-the-word-115041100767\\_1.html](http://www.business-standard.com/article/opinion/a-knowledge-society-in-the-true-sense-of-the-word-115041100767_1.html)

## Meaningful Changes Needed

Alok Ray

*Deccan Herald, March 31, 2015*

The student unions (in many cases extensions of political parties) are engaged in protests over all kinds of issues under the sun but they would not agitate against teachers not taking classes or against sub-standard quality of teaching or library/lab facilities. Their goal is to somehow get a degree (considered passport to a job) and are not bothered about the quality of teaching or learning.

\* *Professor of Economics, Indian Institute of Management Calcutta, India*

<http://www.deccanherald.com/content/468826/meaningful-changes-needed.html>

## **Indoctrination in the Guise of Education**

*Rohit Dhankar\**

*The Hindu, March 30, 2015*

Properly speaking, secularism is a doctrine that rejects religion and religious considerations in the state's policies, their implementation, and decisions. Secularism is the doctrine of keeping religion out of the state's decisions and actions. But we have, instead, interpreted secularism as 'Sarva Dharma Samabhava,' where the state professes equal respect for all religions. This kind of an interpretation could be used to argue that compulsorily teaching selected verses from the Bhagavad Gita does not violate the principle of secularism. However, this interpretation is internally inconsistent and some implications of it are almost impossible to implement.

*– Professor and Director, Academic Development, Azim Premji University*  
<http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/indoctrination-in-the-guise-of-education/article7045761.ece>

## **More than half of all Education Loans in South India, TN and Kerala take 38%**

*Indian Express, March 30, 2015*

According to the data, collated from states across the country, over 54 percent of education loans have gone to applicants in South India.

<http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/more-than-half-of-all-education-loans-in-south-india-tn-and-kerala-take-38/>

## **End Education's Licence Raj**

*Rahul Bajaj\* and Sanjay Bhargava\*\**

*Times of India, August 05, 2014*

Government stranglehold on education is complete. Irrelevant systems exist which largely delay appointment of teachers and institutions' expansion, increase costs, and create black money.

*\*President and \*\*General Secretary of Shiksha Mandal, Wardha, a Bajaj Educational Trust*

<http://blogs.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/toi-edit-page/end-educations-licence-raj/>

## Endnotes

- 1 The discussion paper is available at [http://mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload\\_files/mhrd/files/ThemesSEHE.pdf](http://mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/ThemesSEHE.pdf).
- 2 Rebalance & Reform: An Agenda for The New Government : [http://orfonline.org/cms/export/orfonline/modules/issuebrief/attachments/Rebalance&Reform\\_1405398699256.pdf](http://orfonline.org/cms/export/orfonline/modules/issuebrief/attachments/Rebalance&Reform_1405398699256.pdf)
- 3 Need to pull up socks in education : <http://www.deccanherald.com/content/471675/need-pull-up-socks-education.html>
- 4 Not in the class: A story of India's missing teachers : <http://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/india-s—missing-teachers/article1-1269290.aspx>
- 5 2014 report of the British Council titled “*The future of higher education and opportunities for international cooperation*”
- 6 Naik B. M., Positive aspects of privatisation, <http://www.thehindu.com/thehindu/2001/07/03/stories/13030378.htm>
- 7 Report of the Commission on Centre-State Relations, <http://interstatecouncil.nic.in/downloads/volume2.pdf>
- 8 Of Bold Strokes and Fine Prints: Analysis of Union Budget 2015-16 : [http://www.cbgaindia.org/files/updates\\_on\\_ub15/Analysis%20of%20Union%20Budget%202015-16.pdf](http://www.cbgaindia.org/files/updates_on_ub15/Analysis%20of%20Union%20Budget%202015-16.pdf)
- 9 *Ibid*
- 10 *Ibid*
- 11 How Modi Government Is Undermining Indian Education: <http://www.ndtv.com/opinion/how-modi-government-is-undermining-indian-education-759854>
- 12 Tully M., A ‘blame’ policy is worse than policy failure  
<http://www.hindustantimes.com/analysis/a-blame-policy-is-worse-than-policy-failure/article1-1331631.aspx>
- 13 Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. <http://www.swaniti.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/SSA.pdf>
- 14 <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/education-for-all/the-efa-movement/jomtjen-1990/>
- 15 Absence of Policy and Perspective in Higher Education: JANDHYALA B G TILAK (Economic and Political Weekly May 22, 2004)
- 16 Pre-primary Education in India [http://www.nuepa.org/Download/Publications/Create/India%20Policy%20Brief/India\\_Policy\\_Brief\\_1.pdf](http://www.nuepa.org/Download/Publications/Create/India%20Policy%20Brief/India_Policy_Brief_1.pdf)
- 17 [http://www.idfc.com/pdf/report/2012/Chapter\\_1.pdf](http://www.idfc.com/pdf/report/2012/Chapter_1.pdf)
- 18 <http://www.ncert.nic.in/rightside/links/pdf/framework/english/nf2005.pdf>
- 19 Rajasthan govt to probe seat cut in private schools under RTE, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/jaipur/Rajasthan-govt-to-probe-seat-cut-in-private-schools-under-RTE/articleshow/46778306.cms>. Also, Only 1% fill-rate of students under RTE quota seats across private schools in Odisha: IIMA Report, <http://www.orissadiary.com/CurrentNews.asp?id=58193#sthash.IOX9Fq0k.dpuf>
- 20 Khan S., Rajasthan misuse of RTE provisions needs relook: Experts, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/jaipur/Rajasthan-misuse-of-RTE-provisions-needs-relook-Experts/articleshow/46844840.cms>

- 21 Khan S., Rajasthan misuse of RTE provisions needs relook: Experts, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/jaipur/Rajasthan-misuse-of-RTE-provisions-needs-relook-Experts/articleshow/46844840.cms>
- 22 <http://cbse.nic.in/circulars/cir39-2009.pdf>
- 23 <http://www.dnaindia.com/india/report-hrd-minister-smriti-irani-spells-out-government-stand-on-alternative-systems-of-education-2040861>
- 24 [http://www.idfc.com/pdf/report/2012/Chapter\\_1.pdf](http://www.idfc.com/pdf/report/2012/Chapter_1.pdf)
- 25 [http://www.business-standard.com/article/specials/india-s-94-bn-spend-on-basic-education-doesn-t-address-teaching-crisis-115050200118\\_1.html](http://www.business-standard.com/article/specials/india-s-94-bn-spend-on-basic-education-doesn-t-address-teaching-crisis-115050200118_1.html)
- 26 [http://mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload\\_files/mhrd/files/ThemesSEHE.pdf](http://mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/ThemesSEHE.pdf)
- 27 <http://www.asianage.com/mumbai/poor-ctet-results-symptom-610>
- 28 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/indiahome/indianews/article-3023643/Bihar-teachers-caught-faking-certificates-latest-forgery-scam.html>
- 29 [http://www.britishcouncil.in/sites/britishcouncil.in2/files/quality\\_assurance\\_landscape\\_in\\_india\\_-\\_reseach\\_publication.pdf](http://www.britishcouncil.in/sites/britishcouncil.in2/files/quality_assurance_landscape_in_india_-_reseach_publication.pdf)
- 30 Mitra S., Singh V.V., Regulation of Higher Education in India [http://www.cuts-ccier.org/pdf/Regulation\\_Higher\\_Education\\_in\\_India.pdf](http://www.cuts-ccier.org/pdf/Regulation_Higher_Education_in_India.pdf)
- 31 *Ibid*
- 32 Former Chairman, National Council for Teacher Education, NCTE and the Former Director of the NCERT.
- 33 Rajput J.S., The Education System Must Have its Roots in Indian Soil, <http://www.newindianexpress.com/magazine/voices/The-Education-System-Must-Have-its-Roots-in-Indian-Soil/2015/05/02/article2791090.ece>
- 34 Supra 30
- 35 Supra 30
- 36 Affiliation is also anticompetitive. That a college can get affiliated to a university in its own geographical area and not to any other outside it.
- 37 Smriti Irani to Rajya Sabha: UGC taking action against blacklisted universities, <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/education/story/smriti-irani-tells-rajya-sabha-about-ugc-action-against-fake-universities/1/432768.html>
- 38 Faculty Profile: Rohit Dhankar, <http://azimpremjiuniversity.edu.in/SitePages/rohit-dhankar.aspx>
- 39 Dhankar R., Aims of Education: Policy documents and demands of democracy <http://azimpremjiuniversity.edu.in/sitepages/pdf/Aims-of-Education-and-democracy.pdf>
- 40 Singh R., NUEPA upset with HRD ministry planning of new national education policy <http://www.dnaindia.com/india/report-nuepa-upset-wtih-hrd-ministry-planning-of-new-national-education-policy-2071151>
- 41 *Ibid*
- 42 Singh R., Chopra R., I am not defined by somebody's comments...I define myself: Smriti Irani [http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2015-01-16/news/58149964\\_1\\_school-education-union-hrd-minister-hrd-ministry](http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2015-01-16/news/58149964_1_school-education-union-hrd-minister-hrd-ministry)
- 43 Themes and questions for Policy Consultation on School Education, [http://mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload\\_files/mhrd/files/ThemesSEHE.pdf](http://mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/ThemesSEHE.pdf)
- 44 Is There an Opportunity to Develop a Whole-of-Government M&E Framework in India?, [http://www.cippolc.in/pdf/Is\\_There\\_an\\_Opportunity\\_to\\_Develop\\_a\\_Whole\\_of\\_Government\\_M&E\\_Framework\\_in\\_India.pdf](http://www.cippolc.in/pdf/Is_There_an_Opportunity_to_Develop_a_Whole_of_Government_M&E_Framework_in_India.pdf)

