

Summary of
All India People's Science Network (AIPSN)
Feedback on DNEP 2019

1. AIPSN is concerned that the Union Government has not waited for the completion of the process of public feedback. A beginning has been made with the allocations provided in the first budget of the Union Government for the National Research Foundation (NRF) and the programme called "Study in India". The Government is viewing the completion of the process of public feedback as merely a formality.
2. The Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) is already reported to be ready with the plans to implement the contentious, controversial National Tutor Programme (NTP) for the facilitation of takeover of the system of education from within. The NTP will now cover not only school education but also higher education.
3. AIPSN notes that rather than strengthening the norms and standards which the Right to Education (RTE Act) provided, the draft policy will remove the norms and standards prescribed by the RTE Act through its proposed amendment. The National Tutor Programme, home schools, volunteer teachers, community schools, flexibility in schooling without even the RTE norms, and alternate low-cost models of school education, philanthropic funding, private financing, market forces (read corporate interests) running "not-for-profit" institutions in name, all of these mechanisms will help the party in power to capture the system from within.
4. AIPSN notes with concern that the ideas of institutional autonomy and accountability have been reconfigured to gain a compliant, confirming and loyal intelligentsia. The draft policy allows the takeover of education to the party in power from within. The draft policy offers complete monopoly over the processes of decision making to the party in power. The draft policy proposals will allow structurally and institutionally the Union Government to push the RSS cadres to undertake the state takeover from within.
5. The proposal reneges on all the statutory commitments given to the nation on all the important constitutional mandates of equality of national languages, secularism, social justice, balance in Centre-State relations and a wide range of areas of governance. The expansion of education will occur through community-controlled colleges (Hindu, Sanatan Dharma, Arya Samaj, Brahmin, Rajput and Yadav or Sikh, Muslim, Christian and Parsi colleges). The political capture of educated minds through these institutions is at stake.

6. The draft policy completely reneges on the requirement of adhering to a balance of power between Centre and States provided constitutionally in the field of education. A highly centralized Rashtriya Siksha Aayog (RSA) is recommended wherein the Prime Minister will control by design the functions of steering and coordination, financing, accreditation, regulation and governance.
7. AIPSN notes that at the level of the institutions of higher education the Vice chancellor has been designated as chief executive and given all the powers of management in the draft policy. Therefore, the proposal to remove all the safeguard of participation of the elected representatives of students and teachers in decision making and to provide merely grievance redressal committees is a highly dangerous proposal.
8. AIPSN believes that the imposition of extreme privatization and centralization will harm the integration and transformation of education, research and innovation activity. The cumulative grip of extreme privatization and centralization, combined with the control over the philanthropic financing, will allow the processes of integration of education, research and outreach missions and innovation activity to come under the influence of the big business and international funding agencies.
9. AIPSN finds that the draft policy will not help to solve the problem of growing wastage in education or help to tackle the challenges of employability. Forget about education system tackling the grand challenges of 21st century namely agrarian crisis, climate change, urban squalor, transportation, energy, environment and water.
10. AIPSN notes that the increased public funding commitment to the extent it is spoken of is not going to be realized. The plans of economic take off are the basis of financing proposals of the committee. The proposed pathways of “extreme privatization” and “extreme centralization” must be rejected and replaced with democratic control and state funding.
11. AIPSN is concerned that all types of educational institutions will have to finance from multiple private sources of funds to survive and develop. This will cripple the system from inside. Private interests will have the license to directly interfere with the agenda of education and research. Consumers will be the students paying for the price of degree. Customers or users of competencies of faculty and students within industry and government will also suffer and lose. The draft policy promises not do anything to regulate tightly fee structure of the private institutions.
12. AIPSN believes that private not-for profit financing should be mobilized like a Cess is mobilized by the Central Government from the public. Corporates should be asked to contribute to a fund to be operated under the gaze of a body which has the central and state governments and the elected student and teacher bodies to influence the decision making on where and how to spends funds for what kind of public purposes.

13. AIPSN notes that the draft policy will formally promote the acceptance of the post-truth claims such as that how the Prime Minister has transformed the system of education and that how the critics of the Prime Minister are only contrarians and professional pessimists would be the meta- narrative of the political establishment. The elites, middle classes, public representatives would be asked to take a false pride in the Vishwa Guru status.
14. AIPSN finds that the plan of political capture from within is a new element in the unfolding story of India's educational system. The logic of extreme centralization will end up in chest thumping by the government to make false claims to maintain its grip over the masses.
15. AIPSN notes that since the political party in power is pursuing the politics of upper castes and the land and business owning classes and is refusing to acknowledge the centrality of caste, class and gender in perpetuating inequity the committee has taken the easy route of recommending school complexes, digital technology and volunteer tutors as the solutions. School complexes, digital technology and volunteer tutors cannot address the lacunae of learning among the disadvantaged sections of students. The draft policy did not even consider the option of common neighborhood schools.
16. AIPSN finds that while the draft policy speaks at length about STEM and the humanities and the arts, calling for extensive integration of these, and bats strongly for multi-disciplinary institutions, the problem is with the failure to understand why there is no effort for multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary collaboration or how come the STEM education is wary of social sciences. Critical thinking" requires openness to the ideas advocated by the philosophers and social sciences, science, technology and society studies.
17. AIPSN is concerned that technology is equated with ICT (information and computational technology); the entire attitude to technology is reflective of the predominant culture in education that the draft policy itself seeks to change.
18. AIPSN notes that the draft policy treats public and private education "on par" at every step. Even when the document insists that education be "not for profit" pays little attention to the ills of rampant commercialization of education that besets equally now the system of school and higher education. The magic wand of "light but tight" regulation is waved to cure this deep social sickness, and the draft policy talks glibly of "private philanthropic" institutions.
19. AIPSN believes that the draft policy makes a complete mockery of the notions of public accountability. The draft policy will allow the powerful to declare arbitrarily some existing institutions as useless.

20. AIPSN expects the rankings will be manipulated. Finance capital will require the higher education institutions to manipulate rankings to mobilize funds, earn fees and attract students and faculty. Recently only the country saw the “Jio Institute”, the non-existent institution, being declared by the Prime Minister Office and the MHRD as an Institute of Eminence. Education system has been unevenly developing and needed to receive now all the support in terms of infrastructure and faculty.
21. AIPSN believes that quality means transformation only when it is able to serve public purposes and achieve the constitutional goals of sustainable economic development, jobs, ecological and social justice. The draft policy has been formulated without undertaking a rigorous diagnosis of the disease or the analysis of the steps that the previous commissions recommended.
22. AIPSN notes that the committee has set an impossible deadline for the restructuring of higher education system and for the updating of National Curriculum Framework by the year 2020.
23. AIPSN finds that the committee has chosen to load the education system with the classical language like Sanskrit at the school stage. It is not desirable to load the young ones with a burdensome load of language learning for no rhyme or reason. The draft policy also recommends that the core components of the text books will be prepared centrally. The states are only permitted to adapt the centrally prepared books.
24. AIPSN is concerned that the draft policy does not commit minimum support for the majority of the students, proposes however the principle of more output from lesser input. School consolidation and rationalization is another name for closure and merger of publicly funded schools. This is a clear prescription to handover the schools to school complexes to be built and run by the real estate builders.
25. AIPSN believes that the draft policy has failed to recommend a central role for a self-reflective and critically active teacher in the classroom. The draft policy dilutes elementary education to the implementation of foundational learning requirements. The policy of performance assessment and promotion of teachers by parents and other local members of School Management Committees (SMCs) is objectionable. This recommendation will end up harming the teachers from disadvantaged sections rather than transforming the system of school education. The proposed constitution of SMCs will not allow the disadvantaged sections to influence the system.
26. AIPSN notes that the draft policy takes the route of dismantling rather than strengthening the framework of affiliated colleges in an organic way. The three Tier system of higher education is clearly a poor substitute for achieving either excellence or relevance in the existing system.

27. AIPSN notes that while the committee report explicitly mentions about how multi-disciplinary education is necessary to enable the building of competencies required for addressing the complex and wicked problems of urban planning, water governance, and management of energy, transport and environment. But the draft policy has no definite binding suggestion to make to the government.
28. AIPSN believes that the draft policy could have easily addressed this connection if only it had thought concretely about the mechanism of public employment of three to five-year duration for all the graduates to be implemented by the Union Government. Public employment with full remuneration with the involvement of the faculty of educational institutions in the tackling of grand challenges is the need of the hour.
29. AIPSN notes that the research universities or the world class institutions have been granting undergraduate and post graduate degrees as a merit elitist good in India with disproportional funding going for a select few. Only a small section of student body gets admission. There is a coaching industry to help this small section. The draft policy is clueless about the role and conception of research universities and world class universities. The has only envisaged research as an adjective added without even thinking about how are such institutions going to integrate research, teaching and outreach missions.
30. AIPSN notes that the draft policy recommends that the proposed three-Tier system should be including the domain of vocational and technical education as an integral component of higher education. The draft policy also adds that over time the Tier II and III institutions can also begin to conduct research across disciplines and introduce graduate programmes, and may thereby aim towards becoming either Type II or Type III Institutions. High quality teaching or research without infrastructure, faculty and funds is a pipe dream. The Tier III HEIs, as conceptualized in the committee report, are expected to graduate to degree or diploma or certificate granting autonomous colleges. In practice these colleges will get reduced to substandard degree granting factories.