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People's Science

an AIPSN newsletter



Advisory Board

Satyajit Rath D.Raghunandan Sabyasachi Chatterjee
Prajwal Shastri T.Gangadharan Satyajit Chakraborty
Komal Shrivastav P.Rajamanickam Pramod Gouri

Editor

Indranil

Editorial Team

S Krishnaswamy Biplab Ghosh Richa Chintan
Kavita Kabeer Arun Ravi Asha Mishra

Design

Arun Ravi

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People's Science

"People's Science" is a newsletter from All India People Science Network (AIPSN) – a network of over forty Peoples Science organisations spread all over India.

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Dear Readers,

We are bringing this issue of the newsletter as a special issue on the "Save Education and Save the Nation" Campaign.

The campaign, as you would know, was conducted in the context of developing a resistance against the National Education Policy. Since the very introduction of the illegal NEP (as it was not passed in Parliament) in 2020, the AIPSN has been very vocal against some of the highly contentious provisions of the NEP, disguised under apparently progressive content.

AIPSN felt the need to broaden the struggle against NEP by joining hands with other networks and bodies who also had similar concerns against the blatant attempt to pave way for greater privatisation of education and undo some of the progressive provisions of the Right to Education Act.

We noted with deepest concern that many schools are being closed across the country, while millions of children are out of school as a debilitating consequence of the pandemic. AIPSN, along with fifteen other organisations launched a nationwide campaign. We organised conventions at the state and district levels. , We also organised numerous consultations and webinars and most importantly organised kala jathas across states- in Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand and Delhi. It was a very enriching journey of campaign which culminated at Delhi during the end of April, as the National Education Assembly. The assembly brought together more than five hundred people from twenty states. The Assembly put forth brought out the charter of demands and the declaration with a call to reject NEP and resist privatisation of education. In this issue we provide bring in a summary of the campaign experience, the essence of Kala Jathas, some selective position papers, a glimpse of some speeches and also the follow up work we have undertaken in the states after the National Assembly. We hope that Our fight against the regressive provisions of the NEP would continue and we will would strive to ensure that every child goes to school and the vision of Education for All is realised.

Our call will always be REJECT NEP! SAVE EDUCATION! SAVE THE NATION!

Editorial Team



POSITION PAPER ON NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY 2020

(The materials related to NEP2020 campaign can be accessed in the Resources site of <https://aipsn.net>)

Lack of Federalism:

NEP2020 is highly centralised and intrudes heavily on the rights of States on a subject which therefore requires consultations with the state legislators. Discussions in State Assemblies are essential. Unfortunately, several aspects of NEP2020 are already being implemented by the Centre and in some States, pre-empting all participatory and democratic decision-making. The sharply increased centralization in NEP2020 will erode federalism and the rights of States. Even though Education is in the Concurrent List, under NEP2020 the States will only be allowed to implement Centrally-imposed policies under the supervision of Central agencies for examinations, admissions, standards, funding and assessment, and with centrally imposed text books. NEP2020 leaves almost no scope for State-level shaping of Education which is essential in India because of its cultural, social and linguistic diversity. This makes it all the more necessary that deliberations be held in State Assemblies, positions be taken by State Governments, and public opinion be mobilised in States to put forward State-level perspectives on education and the NEP2020 proposals. The trend of centralization is also reflected in NEP2020's call for National Textbooks, supposedly with "local content and flavour," instead of adopting a National Curriculum Framework and allowing States to develop their own textbook content. The centralization assumes more sinister dimensions in the clearly displayed desire to push a saffronisation agenda through the Sangh Parivar perspective of Indian society and culture in curricula and in schools in general. Despite talking about promoting constitutional values in school education, the word "secularism" does not occur even once in NEP2020. At the same time, NEP2020 only makes passing references to tribal and indigenous knowledge, showing what the present government considers "mainstream" or "marginal" knowledge traditions. Additionally, in language education in Grades 6-8, NEP2020 takes forward the idea of "one nation, one language" by emphasising the "remarkable unity of most... major Indian languages, [and] their common... origins... from Sanskrit," completely downplaying the independent ancient, historical and continuing Dravidian and different Adivasi and other language groups in the North-East. NEP2020 proposes a three language formula, where Sanskrit could be exercised as an option apart from the mother tongue or local language, and has already met with opposition by Tamil Nadu, exposing the lack of consultations with State Governments.

Commercialisation:

NEP2020 is full of lofty phrases, flowery language and appeals to aspirational sentiments of students. However, the concrete proposals actually do not offer socially desirable and practically feasible solutions to the fundamental problems outlined above. Some are completely impracticable and are therefore likely to fall by the wayside, and many proposals are such as to exacerbate privatisation and commercialisation, raise costs, and reduce access to socially and economically deprived sections, while negatively impacting quality with the possible exception of a few elite and expensive institutions which will be out of reach of the vast majority of students. NEP2020 will cause severe damage to quality of education, increase education costs, and sharply reduce access to education for students from SC/ST and other socially and economically underprivileged sections, when there is a legal obligation on the State to ensure quality outcomes in education for the large mass of students and youth as a right of all young citizens. NEP2020 provides an open playing field at the pre-school, school and college/university levels for corporate and private interests, while making token statements about preventing commercialization of education. NEP2020 talks of raising public investment in education to 6% of GDP, but so did the Kothari Commission Report way back in 1966 with implementation falling far short.



On School Education:

NEP2020 seeks to undo the right to education of good quality that poor and historically marginalised sections of society have managed to obtain after much struggle. It lays the groundwork for abandoning the justiciable Right to Education (RtE) Act for children of 6–14 years' age. While NEP2020 makes tall claims about “universal access” from 3–16 years of age, making it sound like an advance over RtE, mere access is actually a step backward from the guarantee of good quality education contained in RtE read with NCF 2005. It will also be non-justiciable, since NEP2020 is not backed by any legislation. Access to education will de-facto be restricted, especially for students from rural, tribal and remote areas, with NEP2020 proposals to close down many schools on grounds of “viability” and “efficiency.” A basic and fundamental flaw in NEP2020 is its attempt to replace the right to good quality outcomes guaranteed by the RTE Act read with NCF 2005, by mere access to quality education. This will take Indian school education back by 50 years. A large number of government schools, especially those in small or isolated communities, are to be shut down in the name of efficiency, viability and resource optimization. While such a process is already under way, NEP2020 now gives this process de jure status. Previous Education Commissions and Education Policies had called for a strong publicly-funded Common School System based on Neighbourhood Schools, although implementation never delivered. NEP2020 has now completely abandoned this basic and important idea for a deeply unequal society as prevails in India. NEP2020 introduces public national-level examinations after Grades 3, 5 and 8, apart from the existing exams after Grades 10 and 12. This “exam raj” runs counter to all global trends, and not only adds to the burden and pressure on children, it further exaggerates the importance of exam performance as a means to assess learning outcomes.



Regarding Teachers:

Teachers will be severely impacted by NEP2020 proposals for dilution of teacher training at the school level, for extending probation period in higher education institutions (HEI), and for linking tenure of service and other conditions of service to subjective assessments by autonomous and unregulated HEI managements. The well-known shortage of qualified and trained teachers, especially in the public education system and, within that, in tribal and remote areas, is acknowledged in NEP2020 but inadequately addressed. The NEP2020 scheme also introduces a 2- year BEd for Graduates and a 1-year BEd for post-graduates, again underestimating the special training required to become teachers, and instead assumes that graduate or postgraduate degree with brief training on teaching as such would be adequate. NEP2020 also introduces short-term courses of two weeks to three months for any person with or without adequate qualifications. These provisions will create under-qualified teachers adversely impacting quality of education, and will open the doors for commercialization of teacher training.



About Vocational Education:

Vocational Education (VocEd) in India has historically been badly managed and understood. In India's caste- and class-ridden society, stretching back thousands of years, the middle classes/upper castes received education while lower classes/castes received skills training passed down from earlier generations. This casteist framework persists to this day, where a virtual 'firewall' persists between the education system and the skills system, ill-suited to a modern industrial economy where the workforce requires not only advanced skills but also higher levels of knowledge in related areas. NEP2020 states that VocEd would be fully "integrated with the educational offerings of all secondary schools in a phased manner" and further, that towards this end, "secondary schools will collaborate with ITIs, polytechnics, local industry etc (NEP2020 Para 16.5)." The NEP2020 proposal to place VocEd in secondary schools also puts a burden on the already stressed school system with additional responsibilities, need for new teachers with adequate skills, experience and qualifications and, above all, expensive infrastructure in equipment/machinery for different trades/vocations. Schools are struggling even to have the most basic facilities such as science laboratories, and to expect them to be equipped enough to provide skill-training in a wide range of vocations is a pipe-dream. NEP2020 proposals on VocEd have been placed in a vacuum, divorced from the National Skills Development Mission, which is proceeding completely independently, with little or no linkage with the educational system. Therefore, NEP2020 and the government policy framework within which it is situated, completely fail to address the needs of Indian industry and economy, and will not meet the aspirations of India's youth with regard to the knowledge-and skill-intensive economy of the future.



On Higher Education:

NEP2020 makes the highly disruptive proposal to completely do away with affiliated colleges and move towards large, multi-disciplinary campus-based Universities or HEIs which would offer courses across all disciplines and categories, with a selected set of colleges becoming Autonomous Colleges with powers to grant degrees. NEP2020 would also lead to large scale closure of affiliated colleges, severely impacting access to higher education of rural, SC/ST and socio-economically deprived sections. NEP2020 which compels all Universities/Institutions to transform into multi-disciplinary campuses in this regard will either collapse under its own contradictions or will simply not take off except in a few cases where there are large corporate profiteering interests. NEP2020's proposal for 4-year undergraduate degrees with entry and exit points after each year with different Certificate/Diploma qualifications defeats the intention to expand higher education. The proposal provides for multiple entry and exit points. Such a schema will not enable obtaining the requisite upgraded qualification for mid-career learners, and on the other hand will destroy the integrity of the 4-year Bachelor's degree. NEP2020's intent of commercialization of education is clearly reflected in the corporate structures suggested for HEIs. Each HEI is to independently form its own Board of Governors (BoG) which would then take full control over all affairs of the University/HEI. Teachers are likely to be major victims of the NEP2020's corporate-style governance of HEIs, since Teachers' pay, type, tenure of employment, promotions etc will all be decided internally by each HEI BoG with no uniform standards or norms prescribed by government. The heavy hand of the Central Government is visible in the NEP2020 proposal to constitute multiple Central Institutions such as a Higher Education Council (HECI) at the apex, accompanied by NHERC for regulation, NAC for accreditation, HEGC for grants, and GEC to frame outcome standards. Assessments of outcomes would also be done centrally, which may well determine ratings, accreditation and funding. There is no space at all in NEP2020 for democratised governance of HEI. Teachers and students have no role to play in Universities, other than as "consumers". Within this neo-liberal landscape of privatised and corporatized HEIs, foreign universities are proposed to be invited to operate in India. They would implicitly set a standard or act as role models for Indian universities to follow, including corporate styles of governance, market-oriented course structures, casual or contract employment of teachers, and high fees. A centralised National Research Fund (NRF) is proposed to be set up in addition to the many agencies that already provide research funding. Only NRF will provide public funds for research to both public and private universities. A national examination for entrance to HEIs will also be conducted by a Central Agency, even though the value of this exam is open to question since, according to NEP2020, "It will be left up to individual universities and colleges to use NTA assessments for their admissions (NEP2020 Item 4.42)". The relevance of Central and State Boards, and exams conducted by them are also therefore open to question.



About Adult Education:

The whole concept of Adult Education is diluted as regards both purpose and delivery. Firstly, there is no focus on basic literacy, and life-long education is treated in a very casual manner. Secondly, focus is again on on-line transactions through digital primers and supplementary books. There is a shift away from the mass campaign approach pioneered by AIPSN/BGVS bringing together different government schemes to facilitate adult education. Despite acknowledging that the mass campaign approach had yielded substantial dividends, NEP2020 goes back to outdated concepts of the 1980s emphasising school-based approaches, “each one, teach one,” or by involving student volunteers for basic literacy and dependence on linkages with other programmes for life-long learning. There is also a systematic dismantling of the 4-decades old academic and professional institutions like Department of Adult Education (DAE) and State Education Resource Centres (SERCs), losing institutional memories and decades long proven experience of alternative approaches.

NEP2020 does not even mention Reservation even though it is enshrined in the Constitution. Everywhere only “merit” is mentioned as the basis for admissions at all levels, despite it being well known that so-called “merit” is only a reflection of privilege and benefits accruing from higher incomes and social status. There is a proposal that Socio-economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDG) (including disabled children), a new grab-all term which eliminates recognition of the unique historical discrimination against SC and ST communities, could be taught mainly through National and State Institutes of Open Schools (NIOS/SIOS), increasing their deprivation and widening the digital divide, instead of having reservations and special arrangements within the public education system.



NAGALAND-MANIPUR

On National Education Day November 11, campaign events were organised across Manipur and Nagaland on awareness and implications of NEP2020, demanding Implementation of Right to Education Act and Strengthening government schools. Similar campaign events were organised on awareness and implications of NEP2020, demanding strengthening government schools in Nagaland. The question was raised during awareness campaign why NEP does not deal with child labour, child marriage, gender or caste discrimination, poverty and other factors impeding a child's education or prompting dropouts.

The government schools in these states for elementary to higher secondary education were already decimated with more than 80% children having to go to the private schools. Most of the government schools are either non-functional or closed down. The outright privatisation of education and the poor performance of government schools is a point of concern. The question that is not analysed in the NEP is why after more than ten years of the RTE Act, making education a justiciable Fundamental Right, many children are still out of school and schools have not fulfilled RTE norms. Therefore, the focus of the campaign events was demanding implementation of RTE Act and strengthening government schools.

District level conventions were held from March 16 – April 10 focusing on the consequences of NEP on elementary and secondary education.

State level consultation on implications of NEP2020 was conducted on April 15 in Manipur, April 20 in Nagaland. It was discussed in these meetings the present situation of school education. It was decided to take this issue while campaigning on NEP2020.



ASSAM

At the initiative of AIPSN, co-ordination committee Assam a Convention of like-minded organisations was organised on 31.10.2023 to oppose the anti-education and anti-people provisions of New Education Policy (NEP) 2020, already adopted by the Central Government. The Convention was held at Chandra Prava Saikiani Bhawan, Guwahati and besides many PSM organisations the representatives of many student, youth, teacher organisations and some other NGOs took part in the Convention. After detailed deliberation on harmful clauses of NEP the Convention formed an organising committee of broad-based Platform with four convenors. The name of the Platform is "Forum for Right to Education, Assam" & the four convenors are Dr. K.P. Sarma, Dr. Indrani Dutta, Najibuddin Ahmed and Prof. Tapan Sarma.

After the formation of Forum for Right to Education Assam, we observed 'Nation Education Day' on 11/11/2022. A public meeting was centrally organised at Guwahati Press Club Hall and Dr. Akhil Ranjan Dutta, Professors Guwahati University address the meeting as chief guest. On the other hand meetings, padayatra were organised in Morigaon, Nalbari, Nowgaon, Goalpara district of our state.

Under the initiative of Forum for Right to Education Assam a booklet on anti-educational and harmful clauses of NEP has been prepared in Assamese and published. With the help of the booklet many group meetings/ interactive meetings etc. were organised with help of the constituent organisations viz Gyan Vigyan Samity Assam , CRU(NE), Ellora Vigyan Manch in different districts. Members of PSM organisations, students, youths, guardians of students participated in those dialog meetings.

Convenors of Forum for Right to Education, Assam also contacted the leaders of different teachers organisations and discussed about the harmful impact on implementation of NEP in our state. Convenors are frequently keep in touch with the office bearers of Teacher Associations in the level of Primary, M.E. M.V. Secondary, Higher Secondary Education.

A day-long interactive session was organised at the Conference Hall of State Primary Teachers Association, situated at Guwahati on 29/03/23. In this day-long session, several leaders of five nos. State level Teacher Associations took part. Those Teacher- Associations have expressed their willingness to work with the organising committee of 'Forum for Right to Education Assam' against the implementation of NEP2020.

This broad -based Forum is now planning to organise some programmes in the area where Government schools are closed or merged with other schools. The Forum is also trying to produce different campaign materials in local languages to intensify the campaign against NEP at grassroot level.



TAMIL NADU

The Government of Tamilnadu has constituted a committee for drafting New Education Policy as it has no consensus with the NEP. We are proud to have our leaders like Dr. Ramanujam, Prof S. Madasamy, Dr. Aruna. etc. They have been contributing their best for the betterment of Tamil Nadu Education Policy.

Meanwhile, after the announcement of seeking opinions from the public to receive inputs, TNSFnsf has conducted four regional meetings where experts from almost all districts gathered and shared their opinions. Listed inputs and ideas were collated and further discussed with educational experts with like-minded organisations like Aid India, Chudar and other individuals. Further pruned materials has been shared informally with a few of the existing committee members to and seek further inputs. Finally, an 80 pages document of our inputs have been submitted to Justice Murugesan who is chairing the committee.

Apart from these efforts several individuals from our organisation have been invited by the department of education to participate in the zonal level discussion organised by the department itself.



HARYANA

Save Education – Save School Jind Rally on 29th December, 2022

On 29th December 2022, the Save Education Movement on behalf of Jammahuri Adhikar Sabha and All India Education Rights Forum, organised Save Education,– Save School Rally at Jind. Shaheed Bhagat Singh's nephew Professor Jagmohan Singh, addressed the gathering, who came to support the Save Education Movement on behalf of Jammahuri Adhikar Sabha and All India Education Rights Forum. He emphasised in his concise address that the campaign for free, scientific and quality education for all, is like a movement for freedom which we did not get even after Independence. Just now a battle was fought by the farmers and labourers of the country in the name of the farmer's movement, which was a battle to save the future. This battle was won.

The fight for education is also a fight to save the future because if we do not have education then our future will be in danger. The important question of the mutiny of 1857 was whether the people of India would have the right to live or not! But with our struggle, we got the right to live. The same consciousness helped understand the real causes of the problems faced by the public. Professor Jagmohan Singh read the message on behalf of All India Education Rights Forum which opposed that when the present central government's efforts to destroy is bent on destroying democracy, constitution and the right to education of the people through the so called NEP. NEP2020, we support this initiative and express solidarity with it on behalf of the conscious class from Tamil Nadu to Kashmir. It is our responsibility to understand this era and explain to the public that when governments are waiving off loans worth lakhs of crores to corporates, the scholarship of students has been stopped through the education policy. It was noted that Thousands of schools have been closed in Haryana and fees are being charged taken from children in government schools. If the village school does not survive, our daughters will not be able to study. This has dispelled all illusions that these governments come to power in the name of working for the public and fill the corporate coffers. It was pointed out that In the provisions of the education policy, the age of going to school has been reduced from 5 years to 3 years instead of 8 years and the gap of going from home to school has now been increased from two years to 5 years so that the poor people can earn money for their children. Those who do not have money, their children will not be able to go to school. All this is being done by taking direction from a World Bank document which says that children have to be taught, whether they are inside or outside the school. In fact, they are being taken out of school and arrangements are being made there so that they do not study in schools because education empowers people and this is what governments do not want to happen.

Governments are creating divisions even today in the name of religion, caste and language. Gurus also said that knowledge is that which enables us to think. Our movement is moving in this direction by creating a broad unity among the public.



UTTARAKHAND



वैज्ञानिक नजरिया हो शिक्षा का आधार

देहरादून, मुख्य संवाददाता। राष्ट्रीय शिक्षा नीति 2020 को लेकर आयोजित शिक्षा संवाद में वैज्ञानिक नजरिये पर जोर दिया गया। शिक्षा के निजीकरण को लेकर चिंता जताई गई।

भारत ज्ञान-विज्ञान समिति की ओर से रेसकोर्स स्थित राज्य प्राथमिक शिक्षक संघ भवन में दो दिनी कार्यशाला हुई। पहले दिन राष्ट्रीय महासचिव एवं शिक्षाविद् प्रो. प्रमोद गौरी ने कहा कि सरकारों ने शिक्षा नीति को गंभीरता से नहीं लिया। अगर ऐसा होता तो आज भारत उन्नत देश में शुमार होता। मुख्य वक्ता प्रो. गौरी ने कहा कि यह विडंबना है कि जहां दुनिया वैज्ञानिक नजरिए को बढ़ावा दे रही है, वहीं हम कर्मकांड

- वक्ता बोले, नई नीति में मिथक आधारित विषयों की ओर बढ़ रहे हैं हम
- देहरादून में भारत ज्ञान विज्ञान समिति की दो दिनी कार्यशाला में हुआ मंथन

और मिथक आधारित विषयों की ओर बढ़ रहे हैं। उन्होंने उच्च शिक्षा में सार्वजनिक भागीदारी को निम्न करने की सोच पर चिंता जाहिर की। राज्य अध्यक्ष विजय भट्ट ने कहा कि यदि आम जनता शिक्षा नीति की खामियों पर विचार नहीं करेगी तो आने वाले समय में आमजन उच्च शिक्षा से भी

वंचित हो जाएगा। राज्य सचिव एसएस रावत ने कहा कि इस नीति में लुभावने शब्द और सोच अंकित करके ही शिक्षा व्यवस्था में सुधार नहीं होगा। समता मंच की समन्वयक डॉ. उमा भट्ट ने कहा कि यह नीति कहीं भी यह स्पष्ट नहीं करती कि नियमित शिक्षक भर्ती होंगे। नीति निजी शिक्षा को बढ़ावा देने और कॉरपोरेट को शिक्षा क्षेत्र में संसाधन उपलब्ध कराकर अपनी जिम्मेदारी से मुंह मोड़ रही है। इस दौरान दिनेश धीमान, मनोहर चमोली, मोहन चौहान, सतीश जोशी, कमलेश खंतवाल, मुकेश बहुगुणा, धर्मेन्द्र सिंह रावत, धर्म चौहान, इंद्रेश नौटियाल, सतीश धौलाखंडी, मोना, मोनिका मौजद रहे।



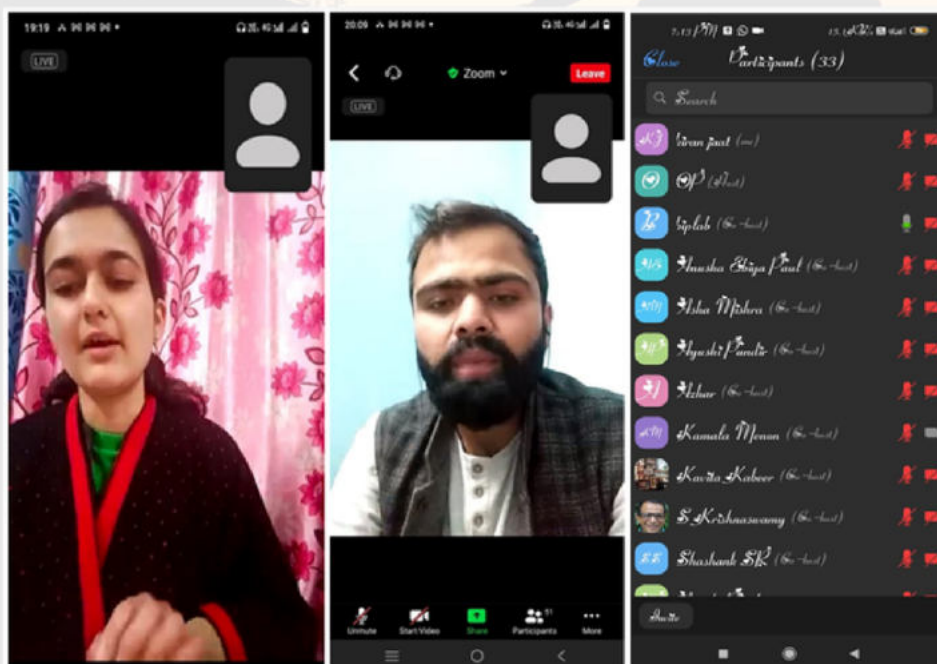
YOUTH PROGRAMME

Youth desk organised 3 webinars on impact of NEP on youths on January 13, 25 and February 8. Young voices across the country took part in it. In the 3 panel discussions focus was on the impact of NEP on Youth. The speakers were youths from across the country. All the speakers in one voice raised their concern on the increase in the Undergraduate course duration to 4 years as it increased cost. Further the reduction in the focus on the main course and the futility of the add on courses like Fit India, Ayurveda, Sanskrit were noted with concern. Another peculiar situation was that the courses of vocational skills were being taught by those trained in pure sciences or social sciences. The process of saffronisation of education is unfolding very quickly. The courses and curriculum changes are being brought about.

Another concern was the value of the certificate; diploma or degree course in the employment market demands. Another issue was the lack of any vision on the course relevance for women, those with special needs, and communities who have first generation learners as also the scheduled castes and tribes. Another issue raised was the closure of colleges in the process of rationalisation.

On the issue of research it was noted that the removal of the M.Phil programme did not strengthen the research worker, and now with insufficient funds and support the dependence of institutions on government grants the nature of research is becoming biased towards unscientific and irrational issues.

Parents from all walks of life need to be aware of the impact of NEP at both the school and university level and create an alternative approach to educational reform and demand its implementation. Farmers, Industrial workers, and the entire student community needed to galvanize, understand and create this new approach. The demand for State supported education for all is the most important at this juncture of our development in order to be self-reliant and a knowledge leader. Access to education with minimum stress of selection examination, and high cost of private education and tuition. Include student opinion, and elected representation in the governing bodies of schools, colleges and university so as to be able to have a negotiated and relevant education programme.



NORTHERN REGION SCRIPT WRITING WORKSHOP ON NEP 2020

JAIPUR – JANUARY 31 – FEBRUARY 3



KALA JATHAS IN JHARKHAND, MP AND BIHAR: A REPORT

Through Kala Jathas, cultural activists from Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Bihar, Haryana, and Odisha organised more than 500 performances across the country over a period of more than a month in various towns and villages on their way to Delhi to continue their Jathas till NEP is rejected!

Jharkhand:

Bharat Gyan Vigyaan Samiti Jharkhand has been undertaking several initiatives under the "Save Education, Save the Nation campaign". The first initiative undertaken in the campaign was a tour of the state by Kala Jatha teams. Kala Jatha refers to art groups which spread social messages among the masses through their performances. For the preparation of Kala Jatha, meetings of the office bearers of the District Committee of Gyan Vigyan Samiti Jharkhand and the State Executive Committee were organized. The residential training of 25 participants for Kala Jatha was organized from March 26 to March 31, 2023 by the district unit of Gyan Vigyan Samiti, Giridih at Jaago Foundation. The participants were from Giridih, Latehar, Deoghar and Bokaro. D.M. Al Godiya, Giridih, Mantu Turi, Koderma, Subhadra Bokaro and Murlidhar from Bihar joined as trainers. Bholanath Ram worked as an administrator during the training. After the training, two Kala Jatha were formed: Sidhu Kanu and Birsa Munda.

On April 1, 2023, Dr. Kashinath Chatterjee, General Secretary, BGVS flagged off both the Jathas. Sidhu Kanu Jatha while touring various places of Giridih, Deoghar, Godda, Sahibganj, Pakur, Dumka, Jamtara, Dhanbad, Ramgarh and Bokaro districts interacted with the people on the flaws of the New Education Policy 2020 through the medium of song and drama.



The Jatha concluded on 10th April at Petarwar in Bokaro. About 50,000 people attended the programs of this Jatha. This group performed programs at Sidhu Kanu's Samadhi Sthal Bhognadih and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar's Karmabhoomi Karmatand. Birsa Munda Jatha toured and presented programs at various places in Giridih, Koderma, Chatra, Palamu, Garhwa, Latehar, Ranchi and Khunti districts.

The Jatha concluded on 09 April at Ulihatu, Khunti, the birth place of Birsa Munda. About 100,000 people participated in the programs of this Jatha and covered a distance of about 1200 kms. During the programmes, people were also given pamphlets regarding the New Education Policy 2020. The managers of Sidhu Kanu and Birsa Munda Jatha were Bikash Kumar Thakur and Ravi Singh respectively.

The people of the district where the Jatha was traveling made arrangements for food for the Jatha. At various places people encouraged the group by giving them gamcha, pens and books. The exploited, deprived class people and women in the village were also helping by coming. It was very surprising and this proves that if we are working for the country then people themselves come forward for cooperation. Many youths, elders, panchayat members, teachers participated in welcoming the Kala Jatha.



KALAJATHA IN MP:

A month long Kajatha consisting of street theatres, campaign songs, and 'door-to-door samvad' was organized from 29 March – 30 April, 2023 throughout the 28 districts of Madhya Pradesh to create awareness among people on NEP 2020 and implementation of RtE Act 2009. The Kalajatha successfully reached around 2,00, 000 people, while teams performed 112 shows in remotest areas. A 10 days residential Kalajatha production workshop was held in Bhopal prior to the Yatra movement as parts of its preparation:

Script Development Workshop (March 2023) :

2 play scripts, 11 awareness songs, 2 posters, Leaflets and campaign slogans on NEP 2020 were developed for Kalajatha production.

Artist Training Workshop (29 March – 09 April 2023) :

12 youth artists aged 17-35 were trained (of which three were female) in direction of Mr. Haleem, BGVS activist and Theatre Artist.

Kalajatha Movement (10 -30 April 2023) :

2 plays ("Shiksha ki Machine", "Bache Kaha Hai?") and 11 awareness songs were performed in various shows in each district. 5-7 shows a day was performed to reach maximum numbers of peoples in every district.

Plays and several awareness songs were performed in each show followed by an open discussion to exchange views on the issues of children's right to education and effect of NEP 2020 implementation in the state. Closure and Mergers of Schools, increasing numbers of Dropout/Out of school children after Covid-19, Online Education, Lack of teachers etc. were the key issues discussed at large. Pamphlets and stickers were distributed to people after the show while small group discussions were conducted with the villagers to address local issues. Press conferences and meetings with like-minded academicians, civil society representatives, and activist were also organised pre/post jatha performances in each district to engage and support the campaign.



The Kalajatha travelled 17 districts in West central parts of Madhya Pradesh and reached Bhopal on 19th April 2023, where a state level convention cum culmination program was organised in Gandhi Bhawan, Bhopal. Jatha Artists were welcomed by organising Committee, Madhya Pradesh. While they shared their experiences of Jatha with the participants. Asha Mishra (Secretary, AIPSN), S R Azad (Treasurer, AIPSN), Manoj Nigam (Eklavya), Ajay Tiwari (State President, SFI) and Ms. Aruna ji, Educationist address the program. Representatives of Janvadi Lekhak Sangh, Progressive Writers Association, AIDWA, SFI, DYFI, MPVS, MPBGVS, IPTA, Lokjatan, CITU etc. gave welcomed address and greetings to Kalajatha for the endeavour. Pawan Pawar, Secretary MPBGVS moderate the sessions while Subhash Sharma of MPVD presented vote of thanks for the program.

Kalajatha further moved toward Northern part of state to Reach Delhi on 27th April.

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दैनिक विनय उजाला
आशीष जायसवाल

तुल्यकार • 14 अप्रैल 2023, इंदौर

संक्षिप्त समाचार

गीत और नाटकों के माध्यम से नई शिक्षा नीति में सुधार की मांग

स्वातंत्र्यांग विभ्र। शिक्षा नीति से होने वाले नुकसान को लेकर अखिल भारतीय जन विज्ञान नेटवर्क के तत्वावधान में गुरुवार को कला जत्था जामनगर, जियागांव, गनोरा पहुंचा। यहां गीत और नाटकों के माध्यम से नई शिक्षा नीति में सुधार करने की बात की गई। संस्था के आशीष जायसवाल ने बताया कि कोरोना के दौर में शास्त्राबंदी सहित विभिन्न कारणों से शास्त्र से बाहर बच्चों की शास्त्रा वापसी, क्लोजर/मार्जर जैसी नीतियों के नाम पर बच्चों की शिक्षा से जबरन बेदखली और नई शिक्षा नीति - 2020 के चलते शिक्षा का निजीकरण आदि मुद्दों पर जन जागरूकता के उद्देश्य से यह आयोजन किया गया। जिसमें गरीब-बच्चों के शोषण और कारपोरेट घरानों के फायदे के लिए बनती एकतरफा नीतियों पर नाटक और गीत के माध्यम से आमजन से संवाद किया गया। 10 अप्रैल को भोपाल से रवाना हुआ यह जत्था प्रदेश के 27 जिलों में जनसंवाद करते हुए 28 अप्रैल को दिल्ली पहुंचेगा। 28-29 को दिल्ली के जंतर मंतर सहित अनेक स्थानों पर प्रदर्शन के पश्चात 30 अप्रैल को सूरजित भवन में आयोजित राष्ट्रीय शिक्षा सभा में इसका समापन होगा। जहां देश भर से 800 से अधिक जमीनी कार्यकर्ता, शिक्षाविद, विभिन्न राज्यों के कलाजत्था आदि शामिल होंगे। देश की शिक्षा व्यवस्था में वैकल्पिक नीति क्या हो और वर्तमान सरकार के समक्ष जन विज्ञान आंदोलन की मांगें क्या हैं, इन विंदुओं पर भी राष्ट्रीय असेंबली में चर्चा की जाएगी। असेंबली के बाद राज्यों में जन आंदोलन का अगला चरण शुरू किया जाएगा। स्थानीय सहयोग : मनीष जुर्जर (उपाध्यक्ष, जनपद पंचायत), नारायण पैवार, इंदूरपाल जाजडा, संदीप मायावर आदि।



शिक्षा बचाओ, देश बचाओ अभियान के तहत कला जत्थे का इन्दौर शहर में आयोजन

कला जत्था में 14 अप्रैल को कला जत्था (जामनगर, जियागांव, गनोरा) के लोग शिक्षा बचाओ अभियान के तहत कला जत्था जामनगर, जियागांव, गनोरा पहुंचा। यहां गीत और नाटकों के माध्यम से नई शिक्षा नीति में सुधार करने की बात की गई। संस्था के आशीष जायसवाल ने बताया कि कोरोना के दौर में शास्त्राबंदी सहित विभिन्न कारणों से शास्त्र से बाहर बच्चों की शास्त्रा वापसी, क्लोजर/मार्जर जैसी नीतियों के नाम पर बच्चों की शिक्षा से जबरन बेदखली और नई शिक्षा नीति - 2020 के चलते शिक्षा का निजीकरण आदि मुद्दों पर जन जागरूकता के उद्देश्य से यह आयोजन किया गया। जिसमें गरीब-बच्चों के शोषण और कारपोरेट घरानों के फायदे के लिए बनती एकतरफा नीतियों पर नाटक और गीत के माध्यम से आमजन से संवाद किया गया। 10 अप्रैल को भोपाल से रवाना हुआ यह जत्था प्रदेश के 27 जिलों में जनसंवाद करते हुए 28 अप्रैल को दिल्ली पहुंचेगा। 28-29 को दिल्ली के जंतर मंतर सहित अनेक स्थानों पर प्रदर्शन के पश्चात 30 अप्रैल को सूरजित भवन में आयोजित राष्ट्रीय शिक्षा सभा में इसका समापन होगा। जहां देश भर से 800 से अधिक जमीनी कार्यकर्ता, शिक्षाविद, विभिन्न राज्यों के कलाजत्था आदि शामिल होंगे। देश की शिक्षा व्यवस्था में वैकल्पिक नीति क्या हो और वर्तमान सरकार के समक्ष जन विज्ञान आंदोलन की मांगें क्या हैं, इन विंदुओं पर भी राष्ट्रीय असेंबली में चर्चा की जाएगी। असेंबली के बाद राज्यों में जन आंदोलन का अगला चरण शुरू किया जाएगा। स्थानीय सहयोग : मनीष जुर्जर (उपाध्यक्ष, जनपद पंचायत), नारायण पैवार, इंदूरपाल जाजडा, संदीप मायावर आदि।

KALAJATHAS IN BIHAR: SOME PICS

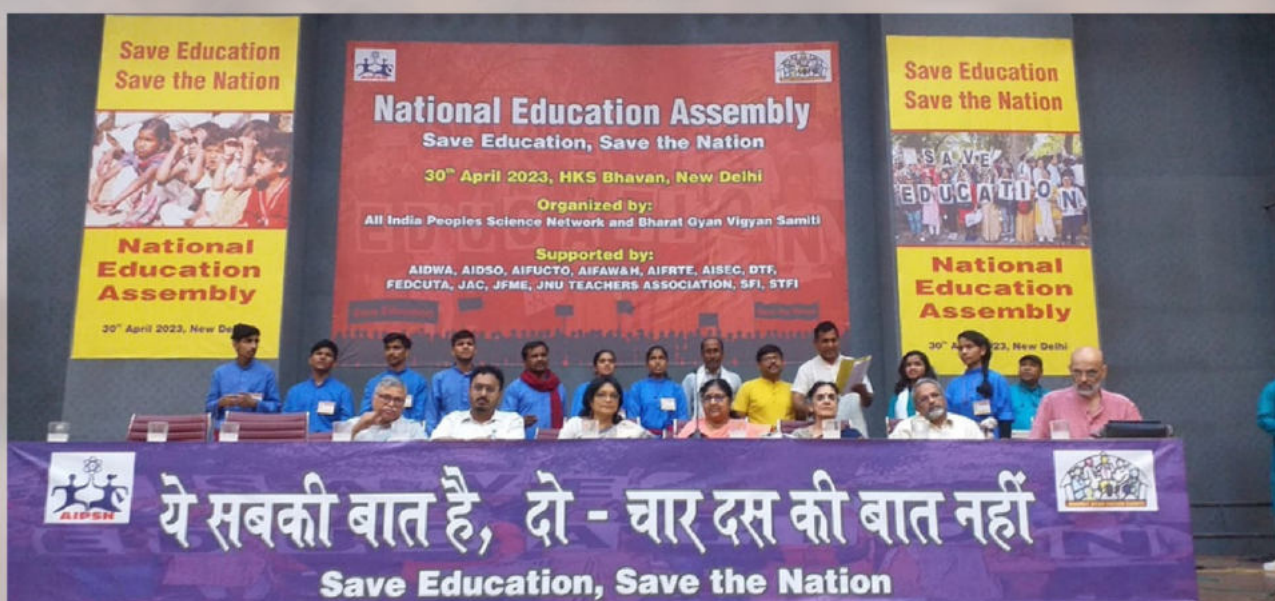


NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSEMBLY

(See also aipsn.net website on National Education Assembly for other language translations)

The National Education Assembly that concluded at HKS Bhavan, New Delhi put forward 31 major demands in front of the government. The Assembly, organised by the All India Peoples Science Network and Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samiti and supported by 15 national level education sector organisations, called for not to further weaken the already weaker education system in the country by way of imposing communalised and commercialised agenda of the current government that is also disrespecting the federal democratic constitutional principles of India. The 31 demands ranged from strengthening the early childhood education, school education, higher education, professional education, literacy, and continuing education in the country, and to withdraw several anti-people reforms that were brought forward as part of the recently launched National Education Policy (NEP). The Assembly unanimously sought rolling back of the NEP that excluded several marginalised sections of the society from the mainstream of education and is paving way to create an unacceptable layer of disparity across the society.

Inaugurating the Assembly in the morning, Dr. R. Bindu, Minister of Higher Education, Government of Kerala said that the NEP is serving our students as fodder to the global capital. She added that, with the system of multiple exits and entries, it was ensuring that students will get limited/minimal skills so that they can serve as cheap labour for global capital. Describing the pro-people education initiatives by the government of Kerala, she said that her ministry is trying to create an education system which meets the needs of the state, especially the marginalised and oppressed sections.



Speaking during the Assembly, Prof Sukhdev Thorat, former Chair of the University Grants Commission said that the first thing we need to remember about NEP is that, in comparison to education policies before it, it has not made its recommendations based on any comprehensive and empirical study, but it copied from the education systems of countries like USA and Germany. He further added that the values of NEP were taken from one particular religion- such as by replacing Darwin's theory with Gita. This, according to him, was clearly communalisation of education by the centre, which will further brahmanise the value of education. While any education policy should be quality oriented and focus on equal access to all the corners of the society, the NEP has the full potential to put a check on massification of education, he added.

Anita Rampal, former Dean of the Delhi University shared that the Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra state governments have signed MoUs with corporate agencies like the Byju's, for reforming School curriculum, wherein large funds have been allocated for buying tablets for students from 8th std. According to her, public funds are hence being outsourced to "non-state and commercial actors" who aimed at privatisation and profiteering of education at large.



Dr N Verghese, former Vice-chancellor of the National University of Educational Planning and Administration, said that there is a need to distinguish between the internationalisation of Indian higher education and the internationalisation of Higher Education in India. He added that institutional consolidation whether at school or higher education level is against the idea of inclusion that has been an important feature of our education and the essence of our Constitution.

Felicitating the assembly, People's leader of Kashmir Valley Momammed Yousuf Tarigami said that the country is going through one of its darkest times it has ever witnessed. He added that the struggles for education throughout the country is motivating and guiding people of the Kashmir valley as well. According to him, imposing employability as the goal has compromised the value of the entire education system. Putting the onus of the employability on students has further deteriorated this while this was the responsibility of the state and institutions.

People from several states belonging to academic institutions and grassroots organisations discussed the experiences of the rolling out of the NEP so far. First person accounts of various problematic moves underlined the concerns raised by various experts. The assembly held two parallel sessions to gather such important experiences from various states. One session discussed school education and adult education, while the other discussed higher and professional education.

During the valedictory, declaration of the assembly and charter of demands to the government was presented and discussed. Representatives of all the fifteen organisations such as the All India Peoples Science Network, Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samiti, All India Democratic Women's Association, All India Democratic Students Organisation, All India Federation of University and College Teachers Organisations, All India Federation of Anganwadi Workers and Helpers, All India Forum for Right to Education, All India Save Education Committee, Delhi Teachers Front, Federation of Central University Teachers Associations, Joint Action Council, Joint Forum for Movement on Education, JNU Teachers Association, Students Federation of India and School Teachers Federation of India addressed the assembly and discussed the declaration and charter of demands.



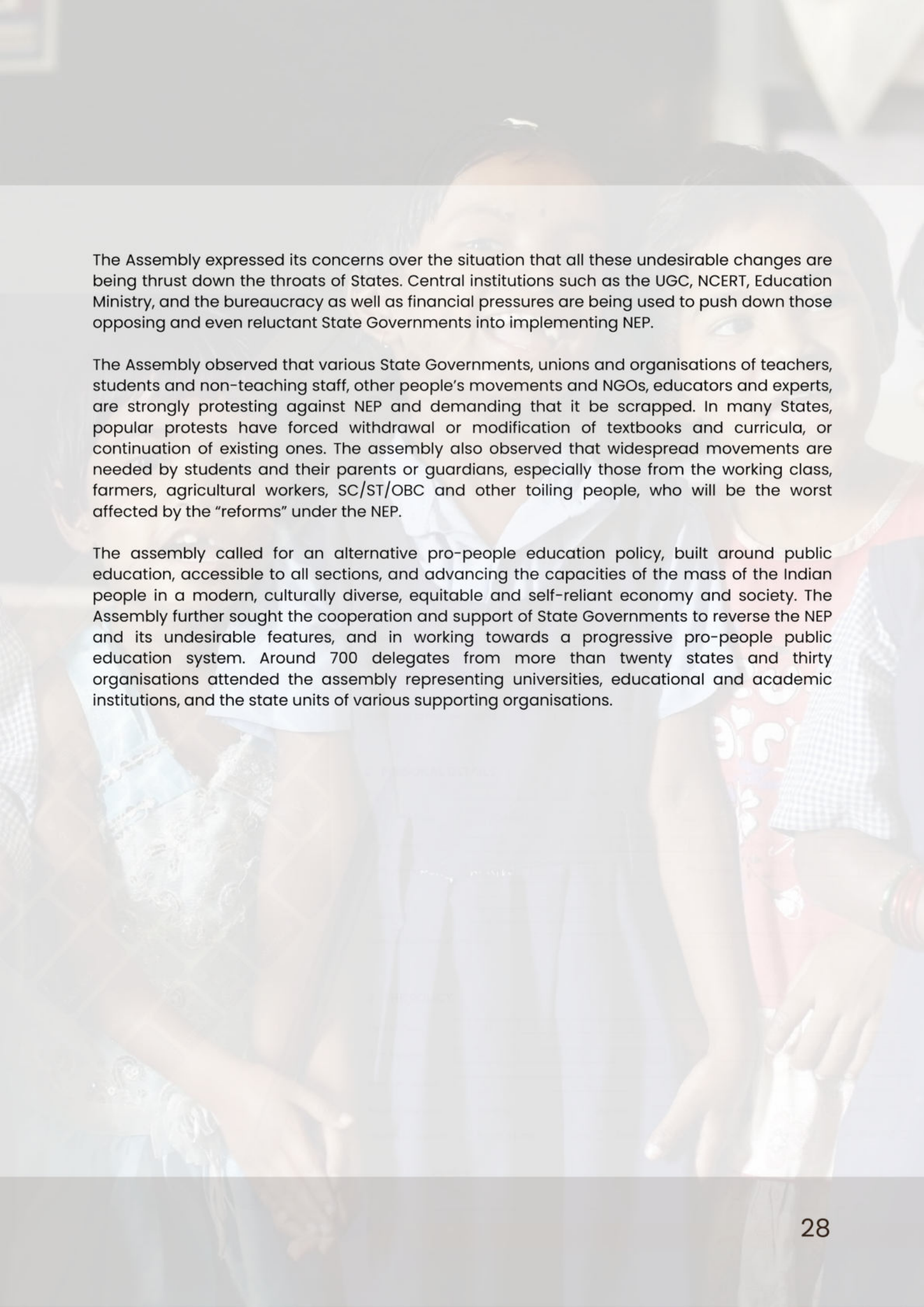
The Assembly declaration touched upon several gaps in the current NEP and on the importance of its rolling back and the need of a modern and equitable education system, with adequate financial allocations to enable universal quality school education and higher education oriented to the needs of the knowledge age.

The declaration identified that many provisions in the NEP are in clear violation of the Right to Education Act 2009 (RtE) which assured free and compulsory education for all children in the 6-14 years age group. It observed that the implementation of NEP is rapidly pushing the country's education system in retrograde directions with serious consequences not only for education, but also for equitable development and progress, and for the future of India's children and youth. It noted that thousands of schools have been closed or merged all over the country in the name of rationalisation of infrastructure.

Accelerated handing over public run institutions to private is another major outcome of the NEP. The enormous and undue emphasis on distance, online, informal, home and volunteer-based education, especially in school years, under NEP was identified as a key problem, allowing the government's intent to further retreat from its responsibility to provide quality education, especially of girls and disadvantaged sections. Rushed irrational changes in the curriculum is another threat that is posed by the NEP which is communalised understanding of student about science and society.

Higher education being opened up to even more commercialization and privatisation under NEP was brought up as another key concern. Undue growth of the private and for profit sector in higher education, as a result of the commercialisation and serious under-investment by the Government, was seen as a serious threat and rejected by the assembly declaration. Colleges being encouraged to become "autonomous" self-financing degree-awarding institutions, was also noted with serious concerns, where even public universities and colleges have started offering short-term courses with high fees of several lakhs annually, out of the reach of poorer students. Introducing a 4 year bachelor's degree without seeing any evidence for the benefit of such a course, was also seen as a worrying trend initiated by the NEP. Foreign universities are being invited to set up campuses in India with full autonomy on admissions, fees, faculty recruitment including foreign faculty, and no obligation for reservation has been identified by the declaration as another threat that will lead to an internal brain drain.

Doing away with university affiliation for rural colleges will further impact the access to higher education for less privileged, as observed by the declaration. The Assembly noted that under the NEP, the research funding has also been over-centralized with a reliance on private funding which has never been forthcoming.



The Assembly expressed its concerns over the situation that all these undesirable changes are being thrust down the throats of States. Central institutions such as the UGC, NCERT, Education Ministry, and the bureaucracy as well as financial pressures are being used to push down those opposing and even reluctant State Governments into implementing NEP.

The Assembly observed that various State Governments, unions and organisations of teachers, students and non-teaching staff, other people's movements and NGOs, educators and experts, are strongly protesting against NEP and demanding that it be scrapped. In many States, popular protests have forced withdrawal or modification of textbooks and curricula, or continuation of existing ones. The assembly also observed that widespread movements are needed by students and their parents or guardians, especially those from the working class, farmers, agricultural workers, SC/ST/OBC and other toiling people, who will be the worst affected by the "reforms" under the NEP.

The assembly called for an alternative pro-people education policy, built around public education, accessible to all sections, and advancing the capacities of the mass of the Indian people in a modern, culturally diverse, equitable and self-reliant economy and society. The Assembly further sought the cooperation and support of State Governments to reverse the NEP and its undesirable features, and in working towards a progressive pro-people public education system. Around 700 delegates from more than twenty states and thirty organisations attended the assembly representing universities, educational and academic institutions, and the state units of various supporting organisations.

NEP: IS A VEHICLE FOR COMMUNALISING AND COMMODIFYING EDUCATION

R Bindu, Minister, Higher Education, Government of Kerala

(Transcript of talk given at the National Education Assembly)

First of all on behalf of the left and democratic government of Kerala, let me extend warm greetings to all participants of this National Assembly on Education. As you all know, today we have assembled here to discuss the far reaching consequences of the National educational policy and other measures taken in the educational field by the present NDA government at the centre. We have assembled here to register our protest against such retrograde measures and to build up resistance and defense against attempts to rob the democratic rights prevailed in the educational sector in India.

In order to understand the possible dangers implicit in the NEP, at first we have to locate it or contextualize it in the present sociopolitical situation in India. What are the specificities of contemporary sociopolitical climate in our country today. We have fallen prey to both political fascism and religious bigotry. The secular fabric of the nation is being torn ruthlessly. There is the systematic distortion of history. There is the systematic distortion of representation of certain sections in society. There is the systematic erasure of the subaltern sections, classes, castes, and gender altogether from what is counted as social and cultural history of India. Those who are relegated to the margins i.e., the minorities, the Dalits, women, and transgenders are further pushed to the periphery.

Through creating an atmosphere of animosity, through politics of hatred or politics of intolerance and unleashing violent onslaughts on these marginalized sections, the politics of exclusion is getting strengthened. Communal polarization gets intensified through the very acts and approaches of the rulers of India. The central government has proved themselves as anti-Minorities, anti-Women, anti-Dalits, and anti-People. The process of othering and the erasure of the other has become rampant.



Certain sections are othered and alienated through constricted versions of nationalism. I would like to draw your attention to the recent episode of erasing the references to Mughal dynasty from the history texts of NCERT. The reference to Darwin and his theory of evolution also seems to have vanished. The intellectual centres of nation are hijacked through clever maneuvering. The key positions of these intellectual centres like JNU are given to the supporters of Hindutva fundamentalism. It is in this context that we should go through the proposals of the NEP 2020. The NEP 2020 as an educational document has certain serious gaps, silences, contradictions and absences in it. NEP with its profusely verbal acrobatics appears to address all the concerns of modern education, but covertly smuggles in the specific agenda of the ruling party through the fissures and gaps in the ideological structure. This document keeps complete silence on the constitutional values like secularism. It never mentions the need for reservations; reservations for the socially and economically backward sections.

In the present Indian context, these silences should be seen as criminal. In the present regressive atmosphere, this can be a silent ascent for othering or alienating certain sections. A close and comprehensive scrutiny of the NEP document reveals many such contradictions. In the present socio-political situations where communal forces join hands with global capitalism and corporate forces, we can clearly see this document as a vehicle for communalizing and commercializing education.

The document will surely contribute to the intensification of the process of commodification of education. The provisions of the document will surely accelerate the processes of commercialization, communalization and elitism. NEP 2020 urges to impose centralization, denouncing the federal principles of the country. NEP has not been subjected to any legislative or social scrutiny; it has bypassed the parliamentary procedure; through a travesty of social audit, it has invited public opinion through UGC and disregarded the replies.

NEP 2020 comes after 34-year old national policy on education 1986. Rajiv Gandhi's challenges to education, a policy perspective. An educational policy should scrutinize the impacts, merits and demerits of the previous policy documents. But NEP never makes an attempt to study the impact of the previous policy documents. Most of the time, it revels in a remote past in the glories of an ancient India. What was the situation in that so called golden period?

The society was highly hierarchical, pyramidal and unjust. The majority was kept in darkness through the denial of education. It was a place where *Ekalavyas* has to cut their thumb if they pursue studies. It was the age which proclaimed that *shoodras* and women if they venture to study Vedas, molten lead should be poured in their ears. That society with rotten feudal values was full of atrocities, perpetrated against the backward and weaker sections. The present NEP through its enthusiasm to glorify that ancient India is trying to go back to the pyramidal and highly hierarchical social structure.

The elimination of the socially and economically weaker sections from the field of education. The NEP calls for the complete dismantling of the affiliating system of colleges. The ending of the affiliating system will be detrimental for the students from the rural areas especially the tribal students from the hilly and coastal areas. Regional availability of educational facilities is important in the case of access. Despite the claims of the NEP, it has failed to identify and address the socioeconomic challenges faced by India's educational progress. While the cost of quality education continues to rise particularly with the advent of self-financing educational institutions, an increasing number of students is forced to drop out even before completing a minimum level of education.

The NEP involves a paradigm shift in education system that is highly retrograde. This shift is from a conception of education as a means of nation building to one that prepares students to become mere fodder for neoliberal capitalism. And for this they are given a dash of cultural chauvinism. The word Indianness is being repeated in the document many times, but the definition of Indianness is too narrow and constricted. The repeated assertions of Indianness paves the way for the very narrow concept of the nation in the present situation.

The variety, plurality and diversity of our nation is the wealth of India, but unfortunately instead of seeing this multiplicity and cultural polyphony as an asset, the NEP dismisses it as fragmentation. For the NEP the cultural diversity of India is a burden of the nation. The removal of the lofty goal of nation building suggested by the NEP will be severely damaging for the nation.

The first removal is that of inclusiveness. The field of education will be confined to a socially and economically privileged elite. There is no mention about funding in the field of higher education.

UGC has already been reduced to UEC – a mere facilitator for the private self-financing establishment. The NEP visualizes an education that conforms to the interest of a corporate Hindutva alliance. Nowhere in the document is there any mention of reservations for the Dalits, OBCs or other deprived groups. Its total silence on reservations suggests an unwillingness to continue with the socially and economically disadvantaged groups. We have already seen what the central government have done with the scholarships for the socially and economically backward sections. A further reason for considering NEP to be exclusionary is that it envisaged significant privatization of education which will clearly make it more expensive. Which will be well beyond the pockets of the socially and economically deprived.

NEP envisages an education system that is full of doors that lead the students out: its major impetus appears to be exclusion rather than inclusion. Students can go out and walk in at different stages enjoying apparent freedom: but in reality, the system relegates the socially disadvantaged groups- the women, the working class, the historically oppressed caste groups- into the ghettos of education. Exploiting the need for employment, the education system ousts the student into the global job market with bare minimum skills that will ultimately benefit the corporate employer.

NEP has major ideological underpinnings: on the one hand, it purports to bring in commercialisation of education: students are commodities packaged and presented for global consumption by corporates; NEP's insistence on value addition speaks about humans like products that can be molded and sold, each new skill adding value to the individual in a competitive market.

On the other hand, it uses the thinly veiled commercialism to smuggle the more dangerous communalism in; through augmented centralisation and undermining of federal values, a central system will control the content and transaction. Those excluded can at best be vocationally trained in some skills, but they would not get a comprehensive education. The vision is that a few depending on the needs of neoliberal capitalism will acquire an education that will enable them to fill executive and official positions in the corporate world.

The others will be thrown out from the prospects of education with some given skills. And they will join that vast and growing segment of the work force among who the limited number of available jobs are rationed out. Those who receive and are destined for proper jobs will have a curriculum that imitates those of metropolitan universities. This detaches education completely from Indian situation.

A faint, stylized illustration of a classroom scene serves as the background. It shows several students sitting at desks, some looking at books or papers. In the foreground, a bowl of white rice sits on a surface. The overall tone is light and educational.

To camouflage this imitateness, the NEP suggests imbuing students with what is essentially a Hindutva type chauvinism. The curriculum is supposed to harp on the glorious of ancient India where horrible practice like untouchability existed. This ascent on breeding conformism among students and teachers permeates the NEP. Neglect of the federalist principles and centralization are encouraged by the NEP. From the preprimary level (Anganavadis) to PhD everything will be controlled, regulated and supervised by RSA (Rashtriya Shiksha Aayog), a centralized agency headed by the Prime Minister.

The NEP terms it as light but tight regulations. The aim is to redefine India as a homogenous, monolithic category, sabotaging its heterogenous identity. The topics of research will be dictated by a centralized agency – national research foundation. The topic of research and the research problem should be resulted from the inquisitive mind of the researcher. It should not be thrust upon from an external agency. Homogenization or unified syllabus will obliterate differences. Such an approach will dismiss the local and specific cultural nuances of different societies in India. All Universities should have the right to continue with their specific organic nature – their own cultural and social specificities.

The states should have a say, a space in playing their role in the field of education as it has a far reaching effect in the rebuilding of society. The NEP proposes multiple exits in the four-year degree course. Actually a student gets no substantial education within one year. According to NEP, the students will be getting a certificate after one year and a diploma after two years. This model of multiple exit is dangerous for students belonging to the socially or economically weaker sections because they will be the dropouts. They will be thrown out of the institutions after 1 or 2 years with a certificate or diploma in their hands with no sufficient value. The complete dismantling of the affiliating system will surely end up with the exclusion of the weaker and marginalized sections from the higher education system.

Affiliation system may have its own demons to contend with, but to put an end to it is the proverbial act of throwing away the baby with the bathwater. Kerala's achievements in access to higher education owes to the affiliation system: Higher education moved into the villages and its ordinary students instead of concentrating in the metropolises where it may primarily service a privileged class of students. That it has affected the quality of higher education may be a valid argument. But its solution does not lie in ending the system, but in improving its quality through other means.

Another is the attempt to convert every college into an autonomous institution. Though academic autonomy is desirable, the kind of autonomy that the private managements require is financial and administrative autonomy, which will exclude the poor and the underprivileged from the portals of higher learning. Rampant privatisation of education, along with its blatant commercialism will undermine and eliminate the high ideals of higher education to convert it into a structurally adjusted neocolonial economy.

Women and SC/STs will be expelled at first because they are the last to enter the field of education. By all means, the present NEP is a threat to the federal principles upheld by India since the days of independence for the last 75 years. Over centralization, elitism and commercialization will be the hallmarks of Indian education if the NEP comes into practice.

In Kerala, we are trying to build up an alternative model, a people's alternative. We have transformed several government schools into world class institutions. Institutions with physical infrastructure of international standards. We have made tremendous improvement in the academic quality also. For this we have combined government support with the local and institutional level developmental committees involving all the benefactors of the school. At present, we are giving emphasis and priority to the higher education sector, by setting new innovation and incubation environment in higher education institutions. We are trying to build a new knowledge society and for this we are concentrating on the process of knowledge translation. Translating theoretical research outcomes into practical application. Research centres, Universities, and higher education institutions will produce knowledge which will be converted as products and processes which will be useful for larger society outside the campus. Kerala's experiment is to resist NEP with a higher education model that suits the specific needs of the state and its people.





Our search for an alternative began with the appointment of three commissions: A Reforms Commission with Prof. Syam B. Menon as chairman to suggest a viable alternative system, An Examination Reforms Commission with Prof Aravinda Kumar as Chairman to expedite reforms in digital reorientation of the examination system, A Law Reforms Commission with Dr N.K. Jayakumar as chairman to redraft the university laws in tune with the modern times.

At the outset, Kerala intends to build a people-centric knowledge society. This model of knowledge society is different from the model projected by the developed, capitalist society. Our model intends to take engagement with knowledge production and research to a larger society.

Instead, Kerala intends to play up the strength of its education system which is public funded and therefore universally accessible.

- Our main focus now is to develop a Knowledge Economy that centres on producing new knowledge through research
- We are establishing autonomous inter-University Centres of Excellence aimed at state of the art research facility in our universities
- We have started a scheme to give 500 post doctoral fellowships to pursue studies in areas that will help the growth of the state
- We have funded new laboratories and research centres in all our Universities
- The new knowledge that research creates will be translated into socially useful products and processes through translational research laboratories, This will contribute a lot to the betterment of living standards of people.
- The new ideas will be incubated and the researchers themselves will be encouraged to use them as startup ideas for production in the startup facilities that are coming up alongside our educational institutions.
- Mini industrial units, industry on campus projects and a programme called SHE which is focused on girl students will turn our students into entrepreneurs who create and give employment rather than become job seekers in the global corporate market.
- To help this system we are planning to revamp the curriculum. Though we are planning to facilitate a four year honors programme, the mainstay of the structure will remain the three year programme. We do not intend to allow our students to exit before the third year. Students will be given enough freedom to choose from a basket of courses that will give them knowledge in their chosen discipline, will impart sufficient skills, will give them abilities that will make them perform better in the contemporary world
- Syam Menon Commission has designed a 4 year pattern with Foundation components major and minor courses and a Capstone level of experiential learning in the fourth year.
- We have appointed a curriculum committee to draft a model curriculum and hold discussions with all stakeholders and the public before finalizing the nuances. It is envisaged as a democratic process with extensive discussions and consultation at different levels before final decisions are taken.

- We also intend to utilise the digital revolution to make academic administration fast and easily accessible. We have decided to design and implement a digital platform called Kerala Resource for Educational Administration and Planning (K-REAP) which will replant Higher Education firmly onto a digital platform
- Syam Menon Commission has also recommended to the government to declare two charters of rights: A Charter Rights for Students and a Charter of Rights for Teachers to ensure their dignity and freedom. The government is now engaged in drafting these charters which will be announced soon. Democratic rights of students will be restored along with their presence and participation in all statutory bodies in higher education.
- Kerala's aim is to empower higher education to enliven our economy and thus improve the quality of life in the state.
- This is not a mere technological transformation, but a humanitarian mission which brings together sciences, arts, humanities and languages together to be forces of economic production.
- We gave rupees 1 crore to start our first mini industrial unit to an art school, the RLV College of Music and Fine Arts for a plant to make art objects out of waste material.
- We are trying our level best to build up a new knowledge society, an inclusive society where secular values and scientific temper will be promoted so as to secure the harmonious co-existence of different sections. It will foster egalitarian attitudes bringing about equal and better opportunities for women, transgenders, differently-abled, the SCs and STs and other backward sections. Our aim is to build up "Samabhavanayudae Nava Keralam" a new Kerala with a perfect egalitarian perspective.

I am not elaborating further. It is time for me to wind up. Let us put up jointed struggles to defend democratic principles and rights of students and teachers. Let us defend the secular traditions of our nation with utmost commitment and a scope of unity obviously unity coloured by its rich diversity, plurality and polyphones.

With these words I conclude and I declare this National Assembly on education as inaugurated.



NATIONAL CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK 2023: SERIOUS DISTORTIONS AND RESTRUCTURING

ANITA RAMPAL

We are told that by the third anniversary of the National Education Policy 2020, the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) for School Education will be ready to be released. In May this year a Draft NCF 2023 was made available. At over 625 pages it looks daunting for most readers trying to make sense of it.

NCF 2023: Not what a National Curriculum Framework is meant to be

NCF 2023 is not what a 'national curriculum framework' is meant to be – as a guiding document, for NCERT and the state nodal institutions to develop their own curricula, syllabi and textbooks. Indeed as NCF 2005 (with 125 pages) had pointed out, the term 'National Curriculum Framework' can be wrongly understood as an instrument for imposing uniformity. It explained that a national framework as suggested by earlier policies, was only a 'framework' to support a system of education implemented in different states, to be capable of responding to India's diverse geographical and cultural milieus, while ensuring the core constitutional values, with a focus on relevance, flexibility and academic quality.

On the contrary, NCF 2023 lays out an extremely detailed plan, through a micromanaged design for the entire spectrum of school stages – with details of the subject areas. Spelling out a syllabus outline with sample lesson plans, it delineates learning standards, curricular goals and expected outcomes. Even suggested time allocations for a school are spelt out, 'an assembly for 25 minutes with 05 minutes to reach the classroom'. This is not all; it declares that nine more volumes will follow, with greater details on specific matters, "to enable the implementation of the NCF, and its use by practitioners, from curriculum and textbook developers, to teachers and assessors". These forthcoming volumes will be on each of the Curricular Areas – namely, Languages, Math, Science, Social Science, Humanities, Arts and Music, Sports, and Vocational Education, and a volume on School Culture and Processes.

This overly elaborate centralised curriculum design is precisely what NCF 2005 had warned against, of an instrument for imposing uniformity, contrary to the concurrent nature of education in the country's federal structure, and the role of states in ensuring cultural diversity and equity. It is now worrying to know that after NCF 2023 there will be no syllabus, and textbooks will directly get produced. The social sciences content indicates distortions and changes.

States must take their constitutional role seriously and develop their own syllabi. Much time has already been spent on state position papers which the centre had got them to make, along with State Curriculum Frameworks. Curricula, syllabi and textbooks need to be rooted in their specific sociocultural milieu, to allow children to construct knowledge.

Restructuring Schooling: Dumbing down the primary curriculum

There are serious problems with the proposed overall restructuring of the school system. At present the period of 12 years in school is structured into the Primary school (Grades 1-5 in most states, but in a few states it is Grades 1-4) followed by the Middle school (Grades 6-8, or 5-7). Taken together these constitute the Elementary school (Grades 1-8; for children of age 6-14 years) which is under the Right to Education Act (RTE).

However, without any detailed analysis or justification, and with no systemic preparation, NEP 2020 suggested a restructuring of the school into a 5+3+3+4 design of four stages, as follows:

- (a) *Foundational Stage* (for age 3-8 years; 3 years of Anganwadi/pre-school + 2 years of primary school Grades 1-2),
- (b) *Preparatory Stage* (for age 8-11 years; Grades 3-5),
- (c) *Middle Stage* (for age 11-14 years; Grades 6-8),
- (d) *Secondary Stage* (for ages 14-18 years; Grades 9-12 in two phases: 9-10 followed by 11-12).

According to NCF 2023, the “logic of dividing schooling into the four stages is based on our current understanding of child development and the growth of concepts in different curricular areas”. But this is ironic, as its statements on conceptual development of children are problematic and questionable. There is a deliberate ‘dumbing down’ of the curriculum in the primary years, now split into the contested stage called “Foundational” and the stage that comes after it, misleadingly called “Preparatory” (preparatory for what?).

The singular focus on “Foundational Literacy and Numeracy” (FLN) in the critical years of children’s development (age 3-11 years), in place of the established field of Early Language and Mathematics, marks a detrimental shift in their schooling. Further, depriving children in primary school (Grades 3-5) of the crucial area of Environmental Studies (EVS) goes against theories of child development. The principles for the learning of language and mathematics proposed by NCF are regressive, as can be seen from Chapter 2 of the NCF2023. It begins with a “Stage 0” for pre-reading, where the child is assumed to be a blank slate or ‘tabula rasa’ – at stage zero! This is not how modern education theories view children.

NCF indicates a poor understanding of children’s reading limited by a simplistic notion of phonics, and assumes that at Stage 1 children only focus on decoding, “making connections between oral sounds and the visual symbolic form of the written system”. In fact, this is a major problem in how our schools teach language, being preoccupied with the alphabet. At Stage 2, called “ungluing from print” it claims that children become ‘fluent’ in decoding, converting textual symbols to sounds, and being released from this burden their focus can shift to understanding the *meaning* in the text. This deliberate delaying of ‘meaning’ does not help children to read – in fact, research in early and emergent literacy says the converse – meaning-making is central to their earliest engagement with print, and they do not necessarily move across these mechanically defined stages. After the Right to Education Act (RTE) was implemented, the Ministry of Education had set up a Reading Cell at NCERT which worked in this area and published materials for teachers. However presently the national institution seems to have been sidelined, with many even wondering where the NCF and textbooks are actually being scripted.

Why no Environmental Studies (EVS) – no science or social science in primary school?

In a most disconcerting move, NCF 2023 has pushed out EVS from being one of three main areas of learning at primary school. It coins a new inconsequential name – ‘World Around Us’ – sounding more like a book title, than a regular school subject recognised in the literature of education. It seems to give unsubstantiated reasons for dumping the crucial subject, saying that teachers are not able to teach it because of it being interdisciplinary. This is in stark contradiction to its own position, where it repeatedly promotes multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary courses. According to the NCF 2023, teachers do not have specific expertise to teach World Around Us. It says they have a degree either in Science or Social Science, but generally social science teachers teach it, owing to a shortage of science teachers. It goes on to claim that the activities indicated in the current syllabus of EVS are generally done in isolation and that “their continuity with learning is missing”.

Continuing with its motivated logic to discredit the place of EVS in the primary curriculum, it places the onus on teachers, who it says, can manage content about the natural environment, but are unable to “drive discussions” about the social environment. “A major issue is that societal practices and observations are often the opposite of what is taught and discussed in schools – this defeats the basic purpose of this subject.” If teachers are not reflective, these practices may contradict what is in the textbook. These questionable arguments raise serious concerns about how the NCF views the role of the social sciences, which indeed are meant to reflect on and question societal practices. Does it imply that textbooks which follow the constitutional commitment to equity, justice and secularism, and question contrary social practices, are to be dumped? Or that such subjects must not be promoted in school? Indeed, how does the NCF view the transformative role of education, and teachers?

After dumping EVS as a major subject at the Preparatory Stage (Grades 3–5), NCF 2023 places a mutated version, last in the sequence of five curricular areas, namely – Language, Mathematics, Arts Education, Physical Education and World Around Us (WAU). It clearly indicates that this area will not be given the importance as accorded to Language and Mathematics. It claims that the nature of knowledge in World Around Us is concrete, not abstract, and related to the real world. It is developed through exploration, discovery, dialogue, visits, excursions, observations, creating artefacts, stories, poems, folklore, etc. This seems to make a case for not having similar textbooks and space in the time-table. We already see that Delhi Municipal Corporation has not given any periods in primary school this year for EVS or WAU, but only to FLN – Foundational Literacy and Numeracy. We can see a confluence of motivated interests and forces that have culminated in this dumbing down. Indeed the Global Monitoring Report (2021–22) mentions Pratham for its ‘cost- and education-effective models’ and its major influence in getting a reference to FLN in NEP 2020.

Another issue of concern in NCF 2023 is the categorisation of activities, as in the kitchen garden, clay modelling, or conducting a dialogue with shopkeepers, as building “pre-vocational capacities”. Knowledge and processes essential to the learning of science or social science are now being denoted as ‘pre-vocational’. Why is it important to bring notions of vocational capacities at this early age? Learning from artisans or shopkeepers is important for all children. The Gandhian system of Naye Taleem held productive work as a way of democratising education, to remove the stigma of vocation tied to caste, not to prepare children for a vocation.

EVS Syllabus 2006

India has followed a progressive policy of beginning with EVS in Grades 3–5 of primary school, which integrates science, social science and environmental education. The 2006 syllabus did not proceed with lists of ‘topics’ from different ‘subjects’ but instead used ‘themes’ that allow for a connected and interrelated understanding to develop. We evolved a new format that begins with key questions, in a language close to that of children that age, to trigger their thinking in new directions. This format was meant to help textbook writers, teachers and parents to appreciate the immense possibilities and the depth of children’s understanding, not to dilute expectations and curricula. Along with questions we also gave suggested resources and activities. We take a look at some examples from the earlier EVS Syllabus 2006.

For example see Table 1 given in the Syllabus– has some excerpts related to Food in syllabus. The examples given in Table 1 are excerpts from key questions that relate to ‘food’ from the NCERT EVS syllabus (Grades 3–5). These are meant to sensitize children (and teachers) to the idea that what some of us assume to be ‘food’ may not be so for all; that food is a deeply cultural notion. A conscious attempt was also made to shift from the anthropocentric perspective that assumes the dominance of humans; that, for instance, states that cows and sheep are meant to ‘give’ us milk or wool. Instead the questions were posed to ask what we ‘take’ from them.

It is clear from these excerpts that children are treated as being capable, curious, confident and observant explorers; the study of EVS is meant to support their engagement with ideas and processes of science and social science. NCF 2023 therefore urgently needs to be revised with this critical curricular goal in focus.

The New Secondary Stage

The existing school pattern divides students in Higher Secondary school, Grades 11–12, into three streams – science, arts/humanities, and commerce. However, NCF 2023 proposes to completely change this, claiming that the new design will enable breadth in Grades 9–10 through a broad spectrum of courses across streams, and depth in Grades 11–12 in certain areas according to students’ choice.

The new ‘Secondary Stage’ (Grades 9–12) is proposed to be divided into two phases:

1. In Grades 9 –10, there will be eight broad Curricular Areas – Humanities (that includes languages), Social Science, Science, Mathematics & Computing, Vocational Education, Physical Education, Arts, and Interdisciplinary Areas.

To complete Grade 10, students will need to complete two Essential Courses from each of the eight Curricular Areas i.e., a total of 16 Essential Courses. In Grades 9–10 there will be an annual examination, with the final certification based on the cumulative result of each of the examinations.

2. In Grades 11–12, students have to choose Disciplines (e.g., History, Physics, Language) from at least three Curricular Areas. For each Discipline they choose, they have to complete four choice– based courses in that Discipline. This phase of the Secondary Stage is divided into semesters and each choice–based course will be for one semester (presumably for six months). To complete Grade 12, students must complete 16 choice–based courses.

Table 2: Secondary Stage Curricular Areas and Disciplines (NCF 2023)**Curricular Areas Disciplines (four courses within each discipline)**

1	Humanities	Languages, Literature, Philosophy
2	Social Science	History, Geography, Political Science, Psychology, Economics, Sociology
3	Science	Physics, Chemistry, Biology
4	Mathematics & Computing	Mathematics, Computer Science, Business Mathematics
5	Arts	Music, Dance, Theatre, Sculpture, Painting, Film-appreciation, Script writing, Set design
6	Vocational Education	Aligned to the National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF)
7	Sports	Courses on specific sports/games/yoga
8	Interdisciplinary Areas	Commerce, Sustainability and Climate Change, Health (Public, community health), Media and Journalism, Family and Community Sciences (current form of Home Science), Knowledge of India/Indian Knowledge, Traditions and Practices/Indian Knowledge Systems, Legal studies. List may be enhanced continually.

The NCF states that students have a ‘choice’ in selecting specific areas and disciplines (see Table 2), which they will decide based on their interests and future plans. However, this issue of ‘choice’ is most misleading – even in the existing streams the majority of students cannot choose – it depends entirely on which streams their school offers, and how teachers perceive their abilities along with their marks in school tests and the Grade 10 Board examinations.

The Catch and the Conundrum of Choice

Serious problems show up at the point where NCF mentions ‘implications for Secondary Schools’. For all students to complete Grade 10, all Secondary Schools will need to offer Essential Courses in all the Curricular Areas. NCF acknowledges that many schools might not be in a position to offer the entire range of disciplines at Grade 11 and 12.

In order to allow students to have “a reasonable choice”, NCF proposes that Secondary Schools, to begin with, must offer at least one Curricular Area from each of the following categories:

- Category 1: Humanities or Social Science or Science or Mathematics and Computing
- Category 2: Inter-disciplinary Areas
- Category 3: Arts or Sports or Courses on specific sports/games/yoga.

Here lies the catch, where the pedestal of 'choice', of so-called varying breadth and depth at the Secondary Stage, falls flat. This minimalist clause above, will allow schools to function with an extremely narrow and problematic curricular spectrum. For example, schools could offer the following Curricular Areas in the three categories:

1. Humanities: any of these Disciplines – Languages, and Literature
2. Inter-disciplinary Areas: any of these Disciplines – Knowledge of India, or Indian Knowledge Systems, Family and Community Sciences (new form of Home Science)
3. Sports: Disciplinary Courses on any game, or yoga.

This inventive structure seems to open its doors to low-cost private institutions offering permutations of questionable quality, and also those that come under the rubric of Indian Knowledge System (IKS) favoured by the ruling dispensation. In fact the National Credits Framework (NcrF) released by the University Grants Commission has included Indian Knowledge System and now added a list of *vidyas* or theoretical disciplines, and *kalas* or applied sciences and vocational crafts that will be counted to earn credits during school education.

The NCF accords legitimacy to a structure of courses of carefully differentiated status, to sort students from disadvantaged backgrounds into constricted curricular silos. The notion of flexible 'interdisciplinary learning' and the rhetoric of 'choice', popularly imagined as available in elite IB school curricula, allows NCF 2023 to judiciously administer a feel-good dose of wishful credence to the middle classes.

Delhi Government which pats itself for an 'Education Revolution' uses discriminatory ways of sorting students and pushing them out to the Open School System, to flaunt its Board results. As far as 'choice' goes, a reply to a Right to Information question had shown that in Delhi less than one third schools offer science at Grades 11-12, as there are no laboratories for each of the science subjects, no adequate facilities or teachers, and students do not get 50-55 percent marks in Grade 10 to be eligible for science. Policies and frameworks may present promises on paper, but what is of urgent concern is the indifferent quality of education and the paper certificates it offers to the precariat, even in 'smart cities' and well resourced urban environments.

Without rigorous appraisal of our existing school systems, with studies on the preparedness of the present teacher education system, one wonders how such a major shift has been propounded. For instance, several years after the introduction of integrated 'general science' for Grades 9-10, teacher educators do not feel confident to teach the pedagogy for this course, claiming they have studied either biology, chemistry or physics. Textbooks too contain chapters from either of these disciplines, since developing creative 'interdisciplinary' pedagogic material is not as simple as it is claimed.

How far are these new policies and school structures mandated to address the 'choices' and aspirations of all our students, especially the disadvantaged thrown out early, sacrificed to the glossy facade of 'excellence'? Worryingly, our education system is on a precarious roll, brazenly abandoning concerns of quality and equity, opening doors to commercial 'content creators', with courses that increasingly tend to closely align with the precarity of the gig economy.

Anita Rampal was Professor and Dean, Faculty of Education, Delhi University; she was also Chairperson of the NCERT Textbook Committees at Primary Stage as part of NCF 2005; currently she is a Member of the Core Committee on Curriculum Revision, Government of Kerala.

STATEMENT ON NATIONAL RESEARCH FOUNDATION BILL 2023

(See the [AIPSN website](#) page on [National Research Foundation Bill 2023](#) for campaign, press release, press mentions and other language translations)

(Note: On Aug 7 Parliament passed the Anusandhan National Research Foundation (NRF) Bill, 2023 with the Rajya Sabha adopting the Bill by a voice vote)

Statement

The National Research Foundation (NRF) Bill, 2023 seeks to replace the Science and Engineering Board (SERB) Act, 2008 by establishing an entity that will not be a fully publicly funded, dependent on corporates, philanthropic bodies and international foundations for funds, centralized in decision making via the Prime Minister as ex-officio President and the Union Ministers of S&T and Education as ex-officio Vice-Presidents and controlling the directions of academic research across disciplines and domains of application. The original rationale of NRF was to redirect the flow of funds to the state universities to strengthen them as academic institutions.

The “National Research Foundation Bill 2023” shall be re-examined. Remit this bill to the Department Related Parliamentary Standing Committee on S&T, Environment and Forests for a comprehensive assessment. The Committee should invite the development authorities, line departments of the union government and state governments and the representatives of organisations working with the scientific community to submit their views on the Bill. The National Research Foundation (NRF) Bill, 2023, recently only approved by the Cabinet for introduction in Parliament, has initiated a wide-ranging discussion on the challenges facing the Indian scientific community. India’s recent history of policymaking and legislations created by the Union Government on science and technology has been marked by remarkable announcements with results far below the expectations raised through the stated legislative and policy objectives.

In terms of the percentage of GDP, India’s spending on research and development is among the lowest in the world. In 2022, India only spent 0.65% of GDP on R&D. The average world expenditure on R&D is 1.8%. Those who have the dream of making India a developed nation need to note that developed nations such as the United States (2.9%), China (2.2%) and Israel (4.9%) spend far higher. Among the BRICS nations India is at the bottom. For more than two decades now, the stated objective of the policies announced has been to allocate at least two per cent of the national GDP on R&D. During the last two decades, not only was the target of 2% forgotten by the successive governments, the expenditure on research and development (R&D) was allowed to go down, from 0.8% at the start of the 2000s to about 0.65% now. India’s GERD at \$43 per capita is one of the lowest in the world. India’s BRICS and ASEAN counterparts like Russia (285), Brazil (173), and Malaysia (293) fare much better.

The current status of human resources availability to do R&D is far more troublesome. In 2020, India has just 262 researchers per million inhabitants. China employs ten times more researchers per million inhabitants. Germany employs 6995 researchers per million. In 2020, the Republic of Korea topped the list with 8714 researchers per million population in the world followed by Israel (8342), Sweden (7930), Denmark (7692), Finland (7527) and Singapore (7287) during 2020.

The share of GERD in GDP declined from 0.40% (2013) to 0.37% (2018) in the government sector, and from 0.27% (2013) to 0.24% (2018) in the business enterprise sector. Although R&D expenditure increased nominally in the higher education sector (GERD as a percentage of GDP rose from .04% in 2013 to .05% in 2018, but full time equivalent (FTE) researchers in the higher education sector declined from 39.96% in 2015 to 36.48% in 2018. Researchers employed in the government sector declined from 30.32% in 2015 to 23.13% in 2018. India has nearly 40,000 institutions of higher education and over 1200 of these are full-fledged universities. Only 1% of these engage in active research. The state universities need to recruit teachers and researchers on permanent posts to strengthen the climate for research and innovation.

The NRF will not allow block grants and offer only funds for fixed time research staff. Among the stated objectives of the NRF, the NRF Bill, 2023 wishes to enhance the funding support to state universities for research in a bigger way than ever before. Presently the state universities account for a mere 3% of research expenditure. IITs have been the major recipients of Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB) funding. The PM in the chair won't be able to change the outcome. It can be changed with the participation of state governments. Rashtriya Uchhatar Siksha Abhiyan (RUSA) introduced the state higher education councils to correct the state of health of the state universities.



The NRF has no possibility of involving either the state higher education councils or the line ministries of the Union Government. The PM chairing the governing board cannot ensure joint planning with either the state governments or the line ministries of the Union government. The NRF is centralising decision making on research. Corporates and elite institutions will have an edge. This will ultimately undermine the possibility of harnessing the energy of multiple sources of initiatives. Joint planning is a more effective way of realizing diversity and plurality of missions in the world threatened by climate change and inequality. The NRF Bill, 2023 seeks to replace the Science and Engineering Board (SERB) Act, 2008. Like the SERB Act, 2008 the NRF too has been armed with multiple objectives. It wishes to develop funding programmes which connect with needs of our society and identify key scientific questions, both basic science and application that have societal value. It has also claimed to support conceptually new directions, even when risky.

Given the lack of culture of collaboration, societal problems-oriented research is going to be a significant challenge for the universities. As a result, most of the research being carried out in Indian higher education institutions has been of disciplinary orientation rather than of multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary orientation. Translational research is a challenging task. Innovation is not research. It is more than science and technology. It is connected with the challenge of linking science and technology with the needs of society.

The NRF will be partly funded by the government and largely by the private sector and philanthropic funding sources. The funding structure will seek the establishment of a stronger intellectual property mechanism of the Bayh-Dole kind which has been resisted by the academic institutions. The executive decisions of the NRF will be guided by a steering committee composed of 15-25 distinguished researchers and professionals. The decision making structure for the NRF has only one distinct difference from the SERB, which is that the Prime Minister will chair the Governing Body.

The NRF needs to bring together the states, line ministry, public sector and private sector through a mechanism capable of promoting joint planning between these important actors without whom the NRF will be again a failure like the SERB. Adequate investment in R&D is a precondition to India becoming self-reliant in technology and be a future global technology leader. Without a robust indigenous R&D environment, India will not be able to attract investment, both domestic and overseas, that will enable the country to take the lead in cutting-edge technologies which can be put to use in strategic fields including overall socioeconomic development. The NRF Bill 2023 suggests that the government is reluctant to provide budgetary support for research. In the allocation of Rs 50,000 crores for R&D through the NRF, 70% will be financed by the private sector, and only 30% funded by budgetary resources.

The National Research Foundation (NRF) Bill 2023 needs a thorough open scrutiny by the scientific community. It should be sent to the Department Related Standing Committee for S&T, Environment and Forests. The committee should invite the state governments, state universities, state higher education councils, state S&T councils, line ministries, development authorities, and the CEOs of CPSEs and state sector PSUs to make their submissions on the NRF bill, 2023.

RESPONSE TO UGC COURSE NAMES NOMENCLATURE CHANGE

(AIPSN responded to the UGC Circular regarding Specification of Degrees and Nomenclature change. The response was sent to UGC and is given below)

Response from AIPSN on the recommendation made by the Expert Committee to Review the Notification on the Specification of Degrees and Suggest New Degree Nomenclature(s) placed in public domain for feedback.

1. AIPSN states that UGC recommendation on the specification of degrees and new nomenclature based on NEP-2020 is very hasty as various states have yet to implement NEP-2020. The hasty decision is nothing but promoting commercialization of higher education as many of the private universities started implementing NEP wherein states have yet to implement. It will create a great divide among students. It will help the private universities to mint money by this new generic name.

2. Four year degree with multiple entry and multiple exit and multidisciplinary courses at a stroke is not possible in a country like India where higher education enrolment is around 23% as per NEP. It is also found that many students leave their degree course at the end of third year (Delhi Experience)

3. Since many of the state universities have not evolved a curriculum framework for the four year degree it is not advisable to introduce new nomenclature which will definitely meet a failure like CBCS and OBE.

4. Four year degree course is possible when there is a minimum presence of a PG degree. But many of the colleges particularly rural colleges do not have PG courses and hence promoting four degree courses may lead to closure which will lead to denial of Higher Education and definitely dismiss the goal of 50% GER by 2030

5. On UGC recommendation on No. 2. A student may be considered for the award of a qualification (like a certificate/diploma/degree) once the required number of credits have been earned, irrespective of the minimum duration of the programme.

Awarding qualifications based solely on the accumulation of credits, regardless of the minimum duration of the program, will devalue the educational experience and the learning process itself. While the credit-based approach offers flexibility, it is crucial to strike a balance between earning credits and maintaining the integrity and quality of the educational experience. Emphasizing both credit accumulation and the minimum duration of a program can ensure that students receive a well-rounded education that prepares them for their chosen fields and fosters genuine intellectual growth. A program's rigorous curriculum and structure can be important factors in ensuring that students have adequate time to engage with the material, engage in discussions, and develop a deeper understanding of the subject matter. Focusing solely on earning credits will encourage students to prioritize quantity over quality in their academic pursuits. Instead of delving deep into subjects and acquiring a comprehensive understanding, students will be inclined to take the quickest and easiest routes to accumulate the necessary credits, potentially compromising their overall educational development.

This credit-based approach may lead to students acquiring the required number of credits without fully mastering the subject matter. A rushed approach to earning credits could undermine the depth of knowledge and critical thinking skills necessary for true expertise in a particular field. It will also discourage students from taking advantage of additional learning opportunities, such as participating in research projects, internships, or other experiential learning activities. Engaging with complex concepts, grappling with challenging coursework, and having time for reflection and integration of knowledge are essential components of a robust educational experience. A sole focus on credits will hinder students' ability to develop critical thinking, analytical reasoning, and creativity. The credit-based approach may be perceived as prioritizing bureaucratic processes over the actual educational value of a program. This could erode the public's trust in the educational system and devalue the qualifications earned, as it may be seen as a mere numerical game rather than a reflection of academic rigor and achievement. This elitism of nomenclature of degrees earned will eventually lead to unemployment and increased economic divide.

6. When BS, MS generic names are usually awarded to technical courses like engineering, medical etc., now suggested to non technical courses is not advisable. It will help the institutions to harvest money in the name of a generic name.

7. IISER (Mumbai), IISc (Bangalore) are capable of running four year and multiple disciplinary courses and awarding such degrees. Will these degrees awarded by rural colleges without such infrastructure have such quality?

8. When B.Phil and M.Phil are continuing in other countries removing M.Phil degree studies is not advisable.

9. However, simply change in nomenclature of Degrees to be awarded won't give the desired result unless finely tuned with course contents, requisite infrastructure, physical as well as academic, and improved teaching- learning process. For this paradigm shift in structural and pedagogical aspects are essential parts of change in the education system and all these demand broader discourse in the public domain which can be ensured by using different mediums of public discourse.

10. AIPSN insists at the outset that we have to assure infrastructure, curriculum framework and necessary fund and benchmark for starting four year degree and multidisciplinary courses and then only we may think of nomenclature of degrees. Otherwise the quality of degrees in the new nomenclature is nothing but hypocritical and permitting the private players to commercialize education.

11. These changes will affect severely the first generation students and lead to increase of dropout from higher education amongst them



MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

Assam Science Society, Assam
Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samiti (BGVS), Bihar
Gyan Vigyan Samiti, Himachal Pradesh
Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samuday, Maharashtra
Gyan Vigyan Samiti, Haryana
Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samiti (BGVS), Karnataka
Jan Vigyan Vedika (JVV), Andhra Pradesh
Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samiti (BGVS), Odisha
Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samiti (BGVS), Punjab
Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samiti (BGVS), Rajasthan
Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samiti (BGVS), Tripura
Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samiti (BGVS), Uttar Pradesh
Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samiti (BGVS), Uttarakhand
Centre for Technology and Development (CTD), Delhi
Delhi Science Forum (DSF), Delhi
Eklavya, Madhya Pradesh
Federation of Medical Representatives Associations of India (FMRAI)
Forum of Scientists, Engineers and Technologists (FOSET)
Gyan Vigyan Samiti, Assam
Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samiti (BGVS), Jharkhand
Navnirmitti, Maharashtra
Jan Vigyan Vedika (JVV), Telengana
Karnataka Rajya Vijnana Parishat (KRVP), Karnataka
Kerala Shastra Sahitya Parishad (KSSP), Kerala
Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samiti (BGVS), Madhya Pradesh
Madhya Pradesh Vigyan Sabha (MPVS), Madhya Pradesh
Paschimbanga Vigyan Mancha (PBVM), Bengal
Pondicherry Science Forum (PSF), Pondicherry
Science for Society, Jharkhand
Society for Technology and Development (STD), Himachal Pradesh
Tamil Nadu Science Forum, Tamil Nadu
Bangiya Saksharata Prasar Samity, Bengal
Chhattisgarh Vigyan Sabha, Chhattisgarh
Ellora Vigyan Manch, Assam
Haryana Vigyan Manch, Haryana
Himachal Vigyan Manch, Himachal Pradesh
Jan Bigyan O Prajukti, Odisha
National Confederation of Officers Associations of Central Public Sector Undertakings (NCOACPSU)
Jan Samwad Samiti Uttarakhand
Bijnan Mancha, Tripura

Contact Us:

AIPSN Central Secretariat, E – 8/46, Akashganga colony, Arera Colony, Bhopal – 462039
Ph: 9425302012 | Website: <https://aipsn.net>
Email: aipsnpeoplescience@gmail.com



National Education Assembly: Charter of Demands

- Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) should not be part of the formal education system.
- Existing ECCE Policy 2013 should be strengthened and a new Right to ECCE Act enacted
- Pre-school/ or nursery classes should not be set up in government schools
- Closure/merger of government Schools under NEP should be stopped immediately.
- Privatization and handing over of government schools to private or philanthropic management, should be stopped. Instead, all government schools should be upgraded with good infra-structure, adequate teaching and non-teaching staff, and good teacher-student ratio.
- The system of Ashram schools in remote tribal areas, and in areas with large minority populations, should be strengthened, along with appointment of adequate number of teachers.
- Centralization of curricula, syllabus, and examinations should be stopped. Imposition of centralized National Curriculum Framework (NCF) should be stopped and, NCF should be provided as a guideline for States to form their own curricula.
- The system of centralized examinations, especially national exams after Classes 3, 5, 8, 10 should be withdrawn.
- Breakfast and Mid-day Meals should be provided to all students from pre-primary to 10+2 and allowances for the same should be enhanced.
- "Rationalization" of NCERT Text Books be withdrawn and the earlier Text Books restored.
- RtE should be implemented in its true spirit and its scope expanded up to 12th standard.
- Dismantling of the system of affiliated HEI institutions, whether public or private, should be stopped.
- The proposed National Research Foundation (NRF) should be used to strengthen the programmes of teaching and research within State Universities and affiliated colleges.
- A special education cess is recommended levied on large corporate profits and high net-worth individuals (HNI)
- The CUET and NEET examinations should be scrapped along with the National Testing Agency which unnecessarily centralizes all kinds of examinations.
- The system of multiple entry and exit points with Certifications or Diplomas from 4-year under-graduate courses be abandoned. Exit should be allowed only after the full 3 years are completed.
- Widening of the gender gap in higher education should be arrested urgently. All schemes on girls/women's education, should be restored immediately with a significant enhancement of this funding
- Equal treatment of LGBTQIA+ persons at all stages and levels of education should be ensured among students, teachers and non-teaching staff
- Ph.D. should not be mandatory for University/College teachers at the entry level.
- Strict and proper implementation of the constitutionally mandated reservation policy for SC/ST/OBC/PWD in HEIs across each and every Course should be ensured.

This is an abridged version of the Charter, for details, please go through the below link.
<https://aipsn.net/2023/04/28/national-education-assembly/>