

CAN THE NEP AID ACCESS TO UNIVERSAL EDUCATION?

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Education and related issues

The new [National Education Policy](#) (NEP), approved by the Union Cabinet last week, seeks to align itself with the Sustainable Development Goal of ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education for all in the next 20 years. The policy has brought into its ambit children in the age group of 3 to 18 years. Leena Chandran Wadia (a senior consultant in the Kasturirangan Committee) and Anita Rampal (a former Dean, Faculty of Education, at Delhi University) share their thoughts in a discussion moderated by **D. Suresh Kumar**. Excerpts:

Leena Chandran Wadia: I think we have to be ready because every year that we lose, we lose some children. You know, at the time that their brain is developing fast and they can learn a lot, we must help them learn as much as possible. So that is a deadline we must try to meet.

Can the NEP aid access to universal education? | The Hindu Parley podcast

Anita Rampal: Since April 1, 2010, we have a Right to Education Act making it a fundamental right of every child aged between 6 and 14 years to get free and compulsory education, in a neighbourhood school. This has been a fundamental right for the last 10 years. So there is no question of having a target of another 10 years. What this policy is doing is, it is very quietly, very problematically, going back on a fundamental right of a child, enacted by law.

Leena Chandran Wadia: So I saw that too. And I am a little surprised... but the document does say that it wants to achieve universalisation of education. So, we have to wait and see until the implementation plan comes on how they propose to deliver on what they claim they want to do, which is universalise education between 3 and 18 years... this move to actually bring children into sort of formal education fold at age three, had a timeline because there are lots of practical issues with the anganwadis and preschools. But it doesn't take away from the rights embodied in the RTE Act, which begins at age 6, which we felt was too late.

Anita Rampal: It [NEP] is clearly trying to abandon that [RTE] Act. It says it is not going to have a regular schooling with well-qualified teachers. This policy is saying we will be allowing open schooling. This clubbing of three years of ECCE with Grade 1 and 2 of primary school and then calling this a 'foundational literacy and numeracy mission', it is so worrying because we know that an anganwadi [worker] is not professionally trained to be a teacher. Can we believe it that a national policy says children will become tutors for others in their classes? It is very clear that it is really trying to abandon its responsibility of even providing a good, professional teacher for the earliest years.

National Education Policy 2020 | [KV's unlikely to change medium of instruction](#)

Leena Chandran Wadia: I would like to underline that all existing resources should be pressed into service to ensure that every child gets quality early childhood care. The anganwadi workers score a lot because they are actually, sort of, replacing the parents of the children. And so that is alright as a way to begin teaching the children... The NEP committee members were completely clear that the policy's focus has to be that government education is of very high quality. This is the only way we will make sure every child, no matter where they are in, are given education. It is very unlikely that the private sector is going to open schools in remote areas with less than 10 children. The only hope is to strengthen the government education system. But, of course, we

are not going to stand in the way of private education. In the last 25 years, we have had nearly 50% private school education and nearly 70% of enrollment in higher education in private hands. The concern is there are too many players who are not of good quality. We have to find a way to weed them out. Everywhere in the world, it is usually philanthropy, private sector that participates in education. What we have in India is a lot of people under the umbrella of not for profit really working for profit... [To] filter them out, we have made some suggestions.

National Education Policy 2020 | [States will decide on medium of instruction, says Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank](#)

Anita Rampal: Kothari Commission spoke about a 'school complex' to have a collaborative synergy between high or higher secondary schools, which normally are better resourced, and the smaller neighbourhood and primary schools, which actually then become feeder schools for the high school. That word is being used now in a completely different sense. Here we know the background... 14,000 schools in one State have been closed under the name of consolidation, saying that small schools are sub-optimal.

So, schools which actually provide access in the proximity of the child, within the community; those have been closed or merged. NEP says we should have larger institutions, right up to higher education, have a college which has 2,500 students. So it is trying to make an economic argument of viability. This is playing with the child's right. How can you expect that this will be considered as access?

Editorial | [A long road: On National Education Policy 2020](#)

Leena Chandran Wadia: This is a pedagogical alignment, where we would like to assess students at Grade 3, 5 and 8 to make sure that they have attained the outcomes designed for them. This is an attempt to refocus attention on learning outcomes at different stages. In fact, we think there is also provision to make sure that the biggest dropouts that start to happen from beyond Grade 5 are halted.

National Education Policy 2020 | [Leave no child behind, bridge digital divide](#)

Leena Chandran Wadia: State governments have actually decided that teaching will happen in the regional language, which is, for instance, Kannada in Karnataka, ignoring that there are large swathes of areas on the borders of Maharashtra, where children speak Marathi; on the Andhra Pradesh border, where children speak Telugu, etc. It should be possible for a school in a certain community to teach students in the dominant language. But there is another problem as State governments transfer teachers. You hire somebody from Bengaluru and post them at the Maharashtra border and the children are listening to Kannada, which is a foreign language. So, when they don't attain foundational literacy and numeracy, it is because they are also struggling with the language. The whole idea is to try to get State governments to allow local schools to teach in their own language by hiring local teachers. How far we will succeed remains to be seen, because education is [also] a State subject. As for the common school curriculum, the discussion about different boards was there [in the NEP committee]. There is an exodus towards CBSE boards in many States but that is partially because the State boards are quite weak. This policy has tried to strengthen SCERTs so that they can attend to children's need to be educated within their own context and culture. We need to open up that opportunity so that children can relate to their real life through their education. That is the reason we have let the various boards be.

National Education Policy 2020 | [4-year UG courses in; M.Phil. out](#)

Anita Rampal: The notion of vocational education as something which is only preparing you for vocations should not be pushed early in school. From the first Radhakrishnan Commission right down, our [Education] Commissions have said let's not have different statuses for different kinds of programmes and instead give students a chance to study together. Our vocational education has no education in it. It is skill-based and based on hierarchy between knowledge for some and skill for the others depending on this constructed version of what is 'ability'. This needs to be really questioned, because we already have many hierarchies within our system. This clubbing together of Grades 9, 10, 11 and 12 is extremely worrying and problematic because it says that you will be given vocational courses. Instead of sorting children out, give them a choice to be together and support them right through that. There will be a lot of dropping out, pushing them away into vocational courses or open school.

National Education Policy 2020 | [Breakfast for school children besides mid-day meals](#)

Leena Chandran Wadia: This was debated a lot. The policy is very clear about where we would like to go. So many things are being dismantled, so many new attitudes and mindsets need to be built. The interim is going to be very difficult and most parents are anxious about the handful of so-called good opportunities that they have a perception for, like IITs. And so there are insane levels of competition. We felt it is better that only the people who want to try for JEE, for example, need to study for that entrance exam. The rest in school can be liberated to experiment with so many other of their interests. Also, higher education institutions are going to have some autonomy in deciding who they admit, which again, makes parents nervous. So, if at least some percentage of scores can be used for admission through the NTA then there will be a sense that there is at least an attempt to provide a partial level-playing field till such time that some trust is built in the system. Instead of trying to examine every child through an exit exam in Grades 10 and 12, it is better to introduce an entrance exam.

National Education Policy 2020 | [Rigorous consultations done before framing new policy, says Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank](#)

Anita Rampal: I totally agree... disadvantage just doesn't come from the air. It is historical, it is social. That is the way identities have been shaped with declarations of exclusion. Clubbing everyone under 'SEDG', shying away from saying 'Dalit' or 'minority' will not really get us to even acknowledge what the issue is. This is sort of glossing over it. We have to understand what 'caste' is. And what does it mean when we say that a child is from the Muslim community? How does a child fare within the system? How do the others look at this child? What are the backgrounds of this child? Trying to understand the diverse social realities, disadvantages and exclusion is key.

Anita Rampal, is a former Dean, Faculty of Education at Delhi University; Leena Chandran Wadia was a senior consultant in the Kasturirangan Committee

You have reached your limit for free articles this month.

To get full access, please subscribe.

Already have an account ? [Sign in](#)

Start your 14 days trial now. [Sign Up](#)

Find mobile-friendly version of articles from the day's newspaper in one easy-to-read list.

Move smoothly between articles as our pages load instantly.

Enjoy reading as many articles as you wish without any limitations.

A one-stop-shop for seeing the latest updates, and managing your preferences.

A select list of articles that match your interests and tastes.

We brief you on the latest and most important developments, three times a day.

*Our Digital Subscription plans do not currently include the e-paper ,crossword, iPhone, iPad mobile applications and print. Our plans enhance your reading experience.

Dear reader,

We have been keeping you up-to-date with information on the developments in India and the world that have a bearing on our health and wellbeing, our lives and livelihoods, during these difficult times. To enable wide dissemination of news that is in public interest, we have increased the number of articles that can be read free, and extended free trial periods. However, we have a request for those who can afford to subscribe: please do. As we fight disinformation and misinformation, and keep apace with the happenings, we need to commit greater resources to news gathering operations. We promise to deliver quality journalism that stays away from vested interest and political propaganda.

Dear subscriber,

Thank you!

Your support for our journalism is invaluable. It's a support for truth and fairness in journalism. It has helped us keep apace with events and happenings.

The Hindu has always stood for journalism that is in the public interest. At this difficult time, it becomes even more important that we have access to information that has a bearing on our health and well-being, our lives, and livelihoods. As a subscriber, you are not only a beneficiary of our work but also its enabler.

We also reiterate here the promise that our team of reporters, copy editors, fact-checkers, designers, and photographers will deliver quality journalism that stays away from vested interest and political propaganda.

Suresh Nambath

Please enter a valid email address.

Subscribe to The Hindu now and get unlimited access.

Already have an account? [Sign In](#)

Start your 14 days trial now [Sign Up](#)

You can support quality journalism by turning off ad blocker or purchase a subscription for unlimited access to The Hindu.

[Sign up for a 30 day free trial.](#)

END

Downloaded from **crackIAS.com**

© **Zuccess App** by crackIAS.com

crackIAS.com