



## POLICY BRIEF

# Draft National Education Policy: An Overhaul of the Indian Education System

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### **About the Organisation:**

LexQuest Foundation (LQF) is an independent, non-profit, research and action organisation, established in 2014, in New Delhi. We are striving to create, advocate and implement effective solutions for a diverse range of development issues.

To endorse participative governance, we engage with a broad spectrum of stakeholders, from various sections of the society, to ensure that policy-making remains a democratic process. We utilize pragmatic and futuristic research to disseminate actionable knowledge to decision-makers, experts and the general public.

Our key activities include capacity and skill-building workshops, policy advisory programs, public outreach, and stakeholder consultations. We collaborate with the government, other organizations and individuals for impactful policy formulation and execution.

By employing sustainable and equitable solutions through our multidisciplinary, intersectional initiatives and programs, we are constantly working towards creating empowered communities.



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## **Background**

As part of its welfare functions, the Indian State bears the responsibility of providing quality education to all its citizens. In its original enactment, the **Constitution of India had included education as part of the State List, however, the 42nd Constitutional Amendment in 1976 brought education within the Concurrent List**, thus enabling the Central Government to legislate on matters related to it. Subsequently, **education was made a Fundamental Right under Article 21 of the Constitution by the 86th Constitutional Amendment Act in 2002, followed by the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2002.**

Since Independence, the Indian government has taken a variety of measures to address the problem of illiteracy in the country. For this purpose, the first **National Policy on Education was prepared in 1968, based on the recommendations of the Kothari Commission (1964-66)**. This policy called for compulsory education for all children up to the age of 14, along with better training for teachers and a focus on learning regional languages through a 'three-language formula'. It also called for increased spending on education to six percent of the GDP.

A new education policy was later introduced in 1986 by the government of Rajiv Gandhi. This policy called for a **special emphasis on removal of disparities and equalization of educational opportunities for women, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes**. It further advocated a 'child-centered approach' to education and **expansion of the Open University system with the Indira Gandhi National Open University**. This policy was modified in 1992 by the PV Narasimha Rao government.

However, there have been significant changes in the world and the country since the last time the education policy was modified. Hence a need was felt to do so now, such that the educational requirements of the present scenario could best be tackled. A committee was set up in **June 2017 under the chairmanship of Dr. Krishnaswamy Kasturirangan to formulate the draft of a new National Education Policy**, which was subsequently submitted by the Committee to the Central Government on 31st May 2019. This proposed education policy is built on the **foundational principles of accessibility, equity, quality, affordability and accountability in the education**



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system. It has suggested a wide variety of major reforms at all levels of education concerning curriculum, pedagogy, technological interventions and structural reforms.

### School Education

The Committee noted the problem of access and deficiencies in the quality of early childhood care and education programs in the country. These problems were related to the unsatisfactory curriculum that failed to meet the developmental needs of the children, lack of qualified and trained teachers, and inadequate pedagogy. It recognized the fact that existent policy neglected the educational aspects of early childhood which were provided either through anganwadis or private pre-schools. Thus, it recommended the development of a two-part curriculum for early childhood care and education which will include guidelines for parents and teachers regarding children up to three years old, and an educational framework for three to eight-year-old children. This is to be implemented through the improvement of the existing [Anganwadi System](#). Further, the Draft National Education Policy has proposed the expansion of the ambit of the Right to Education Act which currently provides for free and compulsory education to all children between the ages of 6 and 14. This Draft Policy calls for extension of free and compulsory education under this Act, such that it includes early childhood education as well as secondary school education for children aged between 3 and 18 years. This is because it is claimed that 85% of brain development in children happens before the age of 6. It is therefore necessary to encourage experiential and creative learning through play from three years onwards. This Draft Policy has envisaged the accomplishment of universal pre-primary education by 2025.

A no-detention policy is recommended till class eight, and schools are required to provide all students with age-appropriate learning in each class. The separation of learning in terms of curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular areas is also recommended to be removed in favor of bringing all activities like arts, sports, yoga, community service and so on, within the curricular domain. Further, it calls for a reduction of the curriculum content in each subject to its essential core so that there is space for holistic discussion and analysis instead of rote learning of facts and figures. There was an acknowledgment by the Committee of the fact that the current



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**Board examination structure causes excessive stress among students, encourages only rote learning on a few concentrated subjects and does not test substantive understanding and grasp of concepts in a holistic manner.** Therefore, to evaluate students' learning throughout their schooling experience, the Draft Policy recommended **State Census Board Examinations in classes three, five and eight.** It also recommended **restructuring of Board Examinations in a way that they test core concepts and higher-order thinking skills of students in a range of subjects.** The students may decide their subjects as well as the semester in which they choose to take the board exams which would effectively replace in-school final examinations.

The Committee recognized the fact that the existence of multiple small schools with a small number of children made it logistically difficult for the deployment of adequate resources in the form of teachers, infrastructure and material resources in each school. Thus, the Policy has **recommended the creation of school complexes which would consist of one secondary school and all the public schools in its neighborhood that offer education from pre-primary till class eight.** Further, they would also include **anganwadis, vocational education institutions, and an adult education center.** Such complexes would ensure the sharing of infrastructure and trained teachers, and provide integrated education to children through all the stages from pre-primary to secondary.

The Committee also sought to deal with the problems of teacher shortage, lack of adequate training for teachers and deployment of teachers for non-teaching purposes. It recommended the **prohibition of teachers' involvement in non-teaching activities** like vaccination campaigns during school hours. Additionally, it said that **each teacher should be deployed within a particular school complex for a period of at least five to seven years.** To solve the issue of **inadequate teacher training, the Policy recommends the replacement of the existing B.Ed program with an integrated four year B.Ed. program which will consist of quality content, pedagogy, and practical training.** Sub-standard teacher education institutions are to be shut down and **all teacher education programs are recommended to be moved to large multidisciplinary universities and colleges.** Further, teachers will have to complete a **minimum of 50 hours of compulsory continuous professional development training every year to stay updated.**



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The creation of independent State School Regulatory Authorities for every State is recommended, to prescribe basic uniform standards and rules for public and private schools. Additionally, a Department of Education of the State would be created for policy formulation and the purposes of monitoring and supervision of schools.

### Higher Education

The Draft National Education Policy aims to double the Gross Enrollment Ratio in higher education in the country from about 25% to 50% by 2035. Therefore it has made recommendations to improve the higher education system in the country. One such recommendation is the creation of the National Higher Education Regulatory Authority (NHERA) as an independent body that would replace all existing individual regulatory bodies in higher education institutes. This was recommended as the Committee noted the negative impact of multiple regulators with overlapping jurisdiction which erode the autonomy of higher educational institutions. Further, it also recommends the separation of the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) from the University Grants Commission (UGC) into an autonomous and independent body which would function as the top-level accreditor and issue licenses to different accreditation institutions who will assess higher educational institutions every five to seven years.

As per the Policy, the higher education institutes should also be restructured into three types namely- research universities, teaching universities and colleges focused solely on undergraduate-level teaching. It is envisaged that these institutions will all gradually attain full academic, administrative and financial autonomy.

The Policy has further recommended the creation of a National Research Foundation (NRF) with four major divisions namely science, technology, social science, and arts and humanities for building the capacity for quality research in the country. This was deemed necessary in light of the fall in total investment on research and innovation in the country, along with the fact that India lags behind many nations in this domain. The Policy calls for 20,000 crore rupees in annual grants for this Foundation.

It was noted that faculty motivation was low in higher educational institutions due to lack of a clear career progression model, along with heavy teaching requirements and



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low autonomy in designing the course curriculum. These issues were dealt with through recommendations like the **establishment of a Continuous Professional Development program, enforcement of a student to teacher ratio of not more than 30:1 and greater autonomy for these institutions in matters of curriculum, pedagogy and resource allocation.**

### Governance in Education

To improve the existing system of governance of education, the creation of a National Education Commission or Rashtriya Shiksha Aayog headed by the Prime Minister of India was recommended. This body is meant to be the **apex body responsible for formulating, implementing and evaluating the national vision regarding education** in the country. It will **oversee the functioning of key bodies** including the NCERT, NHERA, and NRF. The Policy further recommends **renaming the Ministry of Human Resource and Development as the Ministry of Education**. Considering the closely intertwined functions and mandate of the Ministry of Education and the National Education Commission, experts have expressed concerns regarding possible clashes between the two authorities.

To achieve these changes and their goals, this Draft Policy **reasserts the necessity of spending 6% of the GDP as public investment in education just as its predecessors in 1968 and 1986 had done**. Currently, the total expenditure on education in the country is around 3% of the GDP. The feasibility of doubling public expenditure on education within a limited timeframe in the current context of the economic slowdown is a major issue of concern.

### Use of Technology

The **role of technology in improving classroom learning, professional development of teachers, as well as improving access to education for children in remote areas has been recognized by the Draft Policy**. Therefore it has first and foremost called for the electrification of all educational institutions in the country as that is a prerequisite for technological interventions.



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## **Vocational and Adult Education**

To provide vocational education and training to the maximum population, the Policy recommended integration of vocational education programs in all educational institutions at the secondary as well as higher education levels. The target of the Policy is to **provide vocational education to up to 50% of the total enrollment in higher education institutions by 2025**. For this purpose, a National Committee for the Integration of Vocational Education is to be set up, along with a separate fund for the integration of vocational education with educational institutions.o

To achieve its goal of providing foundational literacy and numeracy to all, an **autonomous Central Institute of Adult Education is proposed**. For this, the NCERT will develop a **National Curriculum Framework focusing on foundational literacy and numeracy, critical life skills and vocational skills development, and basic education**. These centers are to be included in the school complexes. Initiatives to eliminate gaps in education based on gender, class, caste or regional differences are also recommended.

## **Language Issue in Education**

Considering the difficulties faced by many students in comprehension of course material due to language barriers, the Draft Policy recommended that teaching be conducted in the students' mother tongue until the class five or eight if possible. It further recommended the adoption of a **three-language formula as per which all Hindi-speaking States must adopt the study of one other modern Indian language besides Hindi and English in their States, while non-Hindi speaking States must adopt the study of Hindi along with their regional language and English**. However, following the massive protests against this policy suggestion, it was later withdrawn. The Policy further calls for setting up a National Institute for Pali, Persian, and Prakrit with high-quality faculty.





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## **Recommendations**

This Draft National Education Policy is a very important document that lists several educational reforms and practices that will lead to important changes if implemented appropriately. Hence, discussion and analysis of this Policy are imperative. The following are a list of recommendations to maximize the positive implications of this National Education Policy:

- The Policy recommends a uniform standardized top-down administrative system of monitoring and surveillance for educational institutions. However, to ensure commitment to democratic principles within these institutions, **spaces for debate, dissent and critical questioning have to be maintained and nurtured to avoid strengthening of hierarchies and differences.**

Higher Education Institutions have over time evolved democratic mechanisms and internal councils for the formulation, implementation, evaluation of policies and other institutional matters. **These councils and mechanisms need to be strengthened instead of being jettisoned in favor of a linear top-down administrative approach.**

Genuine autonomy for Higher Education Institutions should also be ensured by the **provision of mechanisms that facilitate discussions among students, faculty, and administrators regarding financial support and fund disbursement.**

- To safeguard the interests of disadvantaged social categories in terms of gender, caste, class, religion, disability or regions, there is a **necessity to infuse inclusivity in all aspects of the Policy including curricula, syllabi, and textbooks.** A simplistic mechanical approach to inclusivity is bound to be ineffectual. A transformation in attitudes of teachers, students, staff and administrative officials is also essential. Further, a commitment to the reservation policy for students, teachers, and other employees of educational institutions in the spirit of affirmative action to uplift marginalized groups is also required.



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- Technological solutions to learning and evaluation of students as envisaged in the Policy should be **preceded by efforts to ensure complete connectivity and technological access in all institutions of education**. Further, **capacity building exercises for teachers are essential to make sure that technological interventions can function at their full capacity and produce a positive impact on learning**.
- Besides encouraging research in existing disciplines, **sustained research in upcoming fields and disciplines should also be endorsed**. Along with this, social sciences disciplines like history, political science and sociology should not be marginalized, and **fields of critical importance like Women's Studies, Dalit Studies, Development Studies, and Cultural Studies should be given greater encouragement**.
- Finally, the Policy recommends wide-ranging structural changes to the educational framework of the country which are well-intentioned and necessary in many respects, however, considering the **limited resources at hand there needs to be a careful implementation of all provisions** that warrant maximum efficiency. In the **initial years particularly, there is a necessity for careful prioritization of resource use in the most crucial areas of education**.

On the whole, the Draft National Education Policy contains a number of well-conceived suggestions which, if implemented, would introduce drastic changes to the Indian education system. Whether these changes would lead to commensurate improvement in the education sector in the country remains to be seen.



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## References

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