

All India Muslim Majli-s-Mushawarat

Inputs Towards Improving National Education Policy 2016

In response to the public appeal of Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, inviting suggestions on its document "Some Inputs for Draft National Education Policy 2016", All India Muslim Majlis-e-Mushawarat, an umbrella body of Indian Muslims, submits as follows.

1. Change in the title: We appreciate change in the title from 'New Education Policy' to 'National Education Policy 2016' underlining the evolution, development and continuum of the National Education Policy since 1968 and removing the impression that something 'new' is in the offing.

2. Preamble:

- a. The Preamble of the document appears disjointed and would be regarded as biased in its presentation of the historical background of education in India. It begins with the Vedic period up to Nalanda University (which is often cited as a last great seat of Vedic leaning) and summarily ends with the period of Indian renaissance and freedom struggle. In between, the Buddhist (including the great contribution of Nalanda University as Mahavihar), the Muslim and the British eras have been totally skipped. This fits in the scheme of the radical demand that only 'Hindu period of history' should be taught in India. There is no reference to Buddha Viharas in the promotion of education in the past. It is a well known fact that education has been an exclusive monopoly of some sections during the Vedic period and it was only during the time of Buddhist dominance and then during early Sultanate period that it was made universal by opening educational institutions for common men. Similarly, the modern education in India owes much to the British times, including the prevalence of tertiary system, establishment of many universities and schools, English as lingua franca, a number of enactments on education and the like. Hence, we suggest incorporating these facts in the preamble to make it complete, thorough and objective.
- b. Except the passing quote of Mahatma Gandhi, the Preamble gives the impression, as the other sections of the document as well, that the policy change gives emphasis on "application of knowledge", "skill development" and "vocational education" rather than on acquiring knowledge and its generation. Thus, the 'new' policy seems getting closer to the thinking of Lord Macaulay whose education policy was driven by the need of producing workers for the British Imperialism. Nowadays, no one is talking about 'knowledge commission' 'knowledge society' and the like. A balance is required in emphases on knowledge generation and knowledge application.
- c. It has been mentioned in the Preamble that "The National Education Policy, 2016 provides a framework for the development of education in India over the coming few years." The phrase "coming few years" gives the impression that the government is focusing just on some immediate needs rather than on the long term needs of the nation.

3. Key Challenges in Education Sector

- a. The statement "The perceived failure of the schools in the government system to provide education of good quality has triggered entry of a large number of private schools, many of which lack required infrastructure, learning environment, and competent teachers" is vague

- as it is not clear which category of institutions lacks in infrastructure etc, the public or the private? This remark is highly critical of the noteworthy contribution of private educational institutions in the country which somewhat compensated in the deteriorating quality of public system.
- b. In the statement “This necessitates that the youth in the country are equipped with the **skills and knowledge** to enter the workforce through education and training”, due to obvious reason, knowledge should come first and then skills.
 - c. In the chapter, Key Challenges in Education Sector, the needs of Muslim children along with the SC and ST have been recognized for greater and focused attention”, but the document is devoid of any material remedy for this, even it fails to mention them along with the other educationally backward sections elsewhere in the document.
 - d. In the statement “Students from the general category and OBC category performed better than the SC and ST students” the category of **educationally backward minorities**, such as Muslims and Neo-Buddhists should also be added.

4. Policy Frame

- a. The suggestion to shift the location of Anganwadis (4.1.4), as means of pre-schools, near proper schools seems inappropriate, as it will only increase in difficulties of tenderly children to join distantly located pre-schools. Anganwadis are almost in their reach. At an age of 4-5 years, children will face a serious logistic issue which may be deterrence for them to join the conceived pre-schools.
- b. The proposal of examining “the extension of Clause 12 (1) (c) of the RTE Act to government-aided minority institutions (religious and linguistic) in view of larger national commitments towards the economically weaker sections” (vide 4.4.2) will be unacceptable to the minorities being interference in their right to run educational institutions of their choice as per Article 30 of the Constitution of India. If the government really feels “the larger national obligations to meet the rights of economic weaker sections” it should rather consider increasing the number of aided schools and provide facilities of mid-day meals, etc through minority institutions for better fulfilling this obligation.
- c. The Policy Frame (4.5.2) emphasizes “Renewal of curricula and pedagogy to move from rote learning to facilitate understanding and encourage a spirit of enquiry.” For this, the best model in the world can be seen in the Scandinavian countries like Finland and Denmark. But, the proposed education policy hardly has any input from experiences of those nations; rather in some matters it goes contrary to that; for instance, the age of beginning of schooling is being lowered by adding pre-schooling.
- d. Under “Inclusive Education and Student Support” (4.6), only tribal children have been covered whereas those of other educationally backward sections such as SCs, Muslims and Neo-Buddhists have been left out.
- e. Under Literacy and Lifelong Learning (4.7), there is a need to frame policy to address the **most illiterate pockets** in the country to rollback illiteracy.
- f. In the section ‘Language and Culture in Education’ the existence of “heterogeneous culture” has been recognized but its policy implications have not been dealt with. The phrase should rather be “heterogeneous cultures”.
- g. In para 4.11.1, the statement “All states and UTs, if they so desire, may provide education in schools, up to Class V, in mother tongue, local or regional language as the medium of instruction” almost ignores Urdu as a mother tongue spoken by 50 million people, as it is neither a local or regional language but a language spoken by a linguistic minority spread in

- many parts of the country. Therefore, the para should be suitably corrected to remove the confusion.
- h. In Section 4.12, Yoga has been included which is still a controversial subject and many religious sections in the country are opposed due to its religious implications and even the Rajasthan High Court has rendered it optional. Yoga can be presented as choice rather than a forced measure.
 - i. In the Section 4.13 on “School Assessment and Governance” no cognizance has been taken on some recent court decisions as a measure for improving quality of school education, which makes it compulsory for the government servants to educate their children in government schools. Moreover, the concept of Common Schools, as recommended by Kothari Commission as an essential measure for nation building, should be included in the policy frame.

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