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RGICS ISSUE BRIEF

(August 08, 2016)

**Draft New Education Policy 2016: Emerging
Issues of Concern**

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Draft New Education Policy 2016: Emerging Issues of Concern

Introduction:

Bringing a new education policy has been one of the priorities of the NDA government. More than a year ago, the then Union Minister of Human Resource and Development (MHRD) Mrs. Smriti Irani, had promised to change the education policy of the country. It was decided that the formulation of New Education Policy (NEP) would be opened up for public consultations. The MHRD claims that it has conducted thousands of consultation across the country along with large volume of online suggestions received from people in order to bring public voice in policy making. The government constituted a committee of five people headed by the former cabinet secretary Mr. T.S.R. Subramanian to consolidate policy suggestions and recommendations of people and suggest policy framework for the evolution of the New Education Policy. The committee submitted its report with policy recommendations on April 30, 2016. Two months after submission of the committee report, the MHRD drafted a policy document and released it to seek views and suggestion from citizen. The government has asked people to submit their views and suggestions until 15th August 2016. The structure of 43-page policy document seems to be a comprehensive policy document; however, the government has preferred to name it 'Some Inputs for Draft National Education Policy 2016'. The draft New Education Policy (NEP) released by the government has borrowed heavily from the report of T.S.R. Subramanian committee; however, it has no mention of the committee and process of formulating this document.

The draft NEP has acknowledged the met and unmet targets of previous education policies and states the intention to further strengthen the education system. It has promised to complete the unfinished tasks envisaged by previous policies and set some new targets to meet emerging demands in the education sector. The draft has touched various aspects of education system such as curriculum, teacher training, learning outcome, governance, financing and regulations. Depending on the section of the policy document, it was both appreciated and criticized by people and stakeholders. Commentators on the policy document appreciated it for objectively evaluating some of the problems in the education system. However, it has been largely criticized by people for not offering tangible solutions to the problem of education system rightly highlighted by it. Most of the comments are on specific sections of the policy and issues. This brief article is an attempt to highlight concerns emerging from the text of the draft NEP-2016. It is an effort to see the direction and intention of the new education policy, which is still in a draft format.

1- Overall Policy Objective:

Encouraging Skill Literacy and Discouraging Critical Thinking

Towards the end of the preamble of the NEP-2016, the document claims that the draft policy is inspired by following thoughts of Mahatma Gandhi:

“The real difficulty is that people have no idea of what education truly is. We assess the value of education in the same manner as we assess the value of land or of shares in the stock exchange market. We want to provide only such education as would enable the student to earn more. We hardly give any thought to the improvement of the character of the educated.”

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An enthusiastic beginning with this noble vision continues in its second chapter 'Key Challenges in Education Sector' where the document highlights major problems, which have affected quality-learning outcome of students. However, the third chapter of the document on 'vision, mission, goals and objective' disappoints where the revolutionary foundation of the document fails to translate into the vision of the new education policy. The document claims to be inspired by Mahatma Gandhi but in reality it goes completely against his idea of education. The document promises reforms in education system to ensure that students meet global and domestic market demands. Contrary to the essence of Mahatma Gandhi's vision of education, which strives to de-link education from market and encourages independent and critical thinking among students, the draft NEP stresses importance of market oriented education in its vision itself. The vision of the NEP reads as follows:

"The National Education Policy (NEP), 2016 envisions a credible and high-performing education system capable of ensuring inclusive quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all and producing students/graduates equipped with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that are required to lead a productive life, participate in the country's development process, respond to the requirements of the fast-changing, ever-globalising, knowledge-based economy and society."

This is reminiscent of the Ambani-Birla policy framework that was produced during the previous NDA regime in the year 2000. It was widely criticized by academics for its private sector and pro-market approach. The main thrust of the Ambani-Birla report was to create a educational system where the government had minimum role to play and the colleges and universities geared students towards a market oriented education- what was termed as knowledge economy- which would bring in revenue for the country. We see echoes of that framework here. Coming back to the current NEP-2016, the document in its mission statement describes learning outcome from the reformed education system. According to the document, the learning outcome of student includes knowledge, skill, attitude and values. All these learning outcomes have been further explained in the context of employment and economic relations. For example, the document has given importance to acquisition of values by the students as a learning outcome. It talks about two kinds of values, one, values learnt from "India's rich heritage, glorious past, great traditions and heterogeneous culture which are important for citizenship, peace, tolerance, secularism, national integration, social cohesion and mutual respect for all religions". Second, values that is required for global citizenship and sustainable development. However, there is no specific policy proposal for acquisition of these values by learners. Humanities and social science subjects are important in developing such values and encouraging critical thinking among students. However, the policy document has neglected both of these areas. Sushil Aaroon (2016) notes that "humanities and social sciences help develop empathy, to imagine the experience of another and come to terms with an interdependent, diverse world. And so if one is serious about fostering values that are vital for citizenship there needs to be an explicit push for engagement with the humanities and social sciences." Contrary to this, the policy document has no plan to invest in these subjects. Moreover, the method of curriculum planning is problematic as the centre intends to control it and also prepare common syllabus for all states. The NEP has proposed to have part of curriculum of social science subject uniform for all states. Controlling curriculum and content of the course can be seen as an effort to monopolize teaching-learning process and ignoring diversity of reality.

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In last two years, the government has interfered in curriculum and content of teaching in schools and universities to further its Hindutva ideology. There has been an increasing focus on glorifying myths and conveniently re-defining history by the centre and BJP ruled state governments. The NEP expects learners to acquire values from India's rich heritage, glorious past, great traditions and heterogeneous culture but it has been seen that various groups supported by the ruling BJP and RSS to further its Hindutva agenda have narrowly defined all of them excluding and distorting the role of non-hindu communities in the history of India and its nation building process. It has also been accused for suppressing dissent and independent thinking especially in institutions of higher education. Controlling syllabus of subjects such as social sciences could be seen as a formal policy decision to interfere in teaching-learning processes in educational institutions. A common curriculum prepared with such intention would only expect conforming of learning by the learners. Here again we see that a similar suggestion had come across in the Ambani-Birla report of year 2000.

The document in its other chapters goes into details of acquisition of other learning outcomes- employable knowledge, skills and attitude. The policy has given importance to reform in the education system for production of skilled labour. It strives to achieve this objective by ensuring quality vocational training to students. The draft policy indicates at a plan of heavy investment in technological and skill literacy to meet the market demand. On the other hand, there seems complete neglect for core objectives of education- critical and independent thinking. Dev Lahiri (2016) in his recent article published in Indian Express notes, "Yes, we do need our doctors, engineers and lawyers. But equally, if not more importantly, we need a society based on honesty, equity and justice. It is not enough to 'make in India'. We must 'make good people in India'¹. Similarly, Sushil Aaron argues that linking education policy directly with market and neglecting area, which develops critical thinking is anti-intellectualism². If the policy is implemented in this form, there is high chance that we stop producing thinkers, which would adversely affect our growing social, economical and political influence in the world.

2- Regulations in Education:

No Inclination to Reform Education Regulatory Mechanisms

The TSR Subramanian committee on New Education Policy constituted by the MHRD along with various other factors has held national level institutions (regulators) responsible for poor quality education in India. The report has highlighted problems in major education regulating bodies such as All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), University Grant Commission (UGC), National Council of Teacher Education (NCTE), Indira Gandhi Nation Open University (IGNOU), National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) and National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA). The committee in its report tried to link problems in educational regulatory mechanism and learning outcome of students. Excerpts from the report on the status of major education regulating bodies are as follows:

¹ <http://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/school-education-job-market-delink-indian-system-professions-column-2892085/>

² <http://www.hindustantimes.com/analysis/can-india-have-a-future-without-critical-thinkers/story-0fkofaGoli7Rtjtd1EJCcM.html>

Status of National Education Regulatory Institutions

AICTE: “In the past two decades, there has been proliferation of technical institutions, in response to manifold increase in demand for engineering and related courses. Many of these new institutions are deficient in infrastructure and do not have adequate qualified faculty many of these colleges charge high capitation fees and are often no different from degree shops. *the AICTE has largely failed to act as a Regulator to fulfill its mandated regulatory responsibilities*”

NCERT: NCERT has been unable to cope with the massive volume of changes around it. For example, successive national education policies have referred to transformation of the curriculum and pedagogy away from rote learning, to encourage greater involvement of the thinking faculties of the students in the learning process and promote a spirit of inquiry. The school curricula do not adequately reflect changes in this direction.”

UGC: “While UGC, over the years has issued a series of regulations for achieving better quality and efficient management of colleges and universities, it has not been able to ensure effective enforcement of those regulations. There are widespread irregularities in grant of approval of institutions and courses. There are serious concerns about the quality of education provided by a large number of colleges/universities; it is the responsibility of UGC to monitor standards of education in higher education institutions and UGC has not succeeded in ensuring this. The credibility of the UGC has been seriously dented by approvals given to a large number of sub-standard colleges and deemed universities.”

IGNOU: IGNOU has gained experience as a university but failed to become effective regulator of distance learning. This weakness of IGNOU resulted into “proliferation of long distance teaching shops, offering degrees or diplomas basically in exchange of money, with minimal assurance of quality or teaching-learning standards. There is need to designate or create a new national agency as the Regulator in this area.”

NIOS: “The NIOS is now departmentally managed, which is not the ideal management structure. As the entire field of distance education in the school sector is looked at, and as the management of the same reviewed, the issues of management/monitoring/oversight of NIOS need to be addressed appropriately.”

NUEPA: NUEPA has failed in examining fundamental educational issues in India. “very little serious examination of fundamental issues facing school/higher education in India undertaken by the University... In all probability, the fault lies not so much with NUEPA itself but has more to do with the nature of the appointments, when the senior staff are not challenged intellectually, required to produce material of direct relevance to policy formulation or to act as a think tank to support the Ministry in the process of making strategic interventions or even advocating a change of track based on research findings.”

NCTE: NCTE has failed to ensure quality teachers training in India as a regulator. “The quality of most other colleges offering B.Ed. programmes was far from satisfactory. State Governments and NCTE became partners in proliferation of such colleges which were nothing but degree shops.” There is large scale corruption in appointments, transfer, approval to affiliate and grant recognition of institutions, even going to the extent of manipulation of examination results.

Source: T.S.R. Subramanian Committee Report, 2016

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The committee pointed out one of the root causes of dismal educational outcome in the country by highlighting failure of these institutions; however, it does not recommend any tangible solution to improve them. The draft 'New Education Policy- 2016' released by the MHRD for public comment has acknowledged poor quality educational outcome of students but the document is silent on these regulating institutions. The policy does have a separate section on regulation in education but it does not recommend any specific policy initiative to correct malfunctioned existing regulating system.

The draft NEP-2016 has recognized importance of a review of major national institutions involved in regulation of school and higher education in India. In the case of higher education regulatory framework, the policy document reads, "With the passage of time and new developments in the higher education sector, there is a need to review the regulatory framework and make it more relevant to current and future needs of the higher education system." The stated purpose of the proposed review is to bring healthy balance between autonomy and accountability of these institutions. However, it has not proposed any single policy initiative to review or reform these institutions. Furthermore, it has proposed for setting up of few more institutions in addition to the existing one. The proposed new institutions are: 1) Mechanism for administering National Higher Education Fellowship Programme and 2) Central Educational Statistics Agency (CESA) for collection, processing and presenting nationwide education data.

The draft NEP-2016, however, has proposed specific policy initiative to improve and streamline activities of NCERT and NUEPA. In order to cope up with emerging challenges in education sector the policy proposes re-orientation of NCERT to address "issues of deteriorating quality of school education and periodic renewal of curricula and pedagogy to move from rote learning to facilitate understanding and encourage a spirit of enquiry." It also proposes to set up a National Teachers Education University and convert regional institute of education under NCERT into 'Teachers Education Universities' at the regional level. In the case of NUEPA the draft NEP plans to develop research agenda reflecting ground realities of education. The policy reads, "A clear reorientation of research agenda of National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA) will be undertaken to reflect actual issues on the ground."

The report of Subramanian Committee is not the only document, which has highlighted complete chaos and mess in regulation of school and higher education institutions. Various independent researches and review committees had also highlighted these concerns in the past. Prof. Rohit Dhankar from Azim Premji University in his recent article argues that schools are not be blamed alone for rote learning in India. According to him, malfunctioning of regulatory institutions are spreading rote from the top.³ Sushil Aaron in his article published in Hindustan Times has also argued that students are suffering because of high corruption and politics in the education system. The article reads, "Millions of students with a weak learning base make their way into colleges and encounter a higher education system that has been wrecked by political interference over the decades⁴." Apart from this under the UPA regime two reports were produced highlighting the issues facing the

³ <http://www.deccanherald.com/content/557128/a-rotting-system.html>

⁴ <http://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/rot-in-education-students-suffer-as-corruption-politics-plague-the-system/story-cNnB8ZoPgXpbVnrZjy0nIM.html>

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education system and also suggesting some remedies. These reports were the Reports to the Nation by the National Knowledge Commission (hereafter NKC, set up in 2005 by the prime minister), and the Report of the 'Committee to Advise on Renovation and Rejuvenation in Higher Education' (set up by the MHRD in 2008, also known as the Yash Pal report. One of the suggestions of the NCK report, as pointed out by Mary John and Nair, was that vocational education should be brought under the supervision of the MHRD and this would include skill training for workers in the informal sector. It also asked for increasing the number of universities from 350 to 1500 and limit the role of UGC, AICTE and MCI to setting standards for entry into the professional courses and disbursing funds. "Yashpal Committee's Report of 2010 (YCR) was entirely focused on higher education, and is acknowledged for its wide-ranging consultations across the country, with as many as one thousand VCs, principals of colleges and teachers. The NKCR and YCR have often been contrasted with each other, at times unfairly so. For example, the former has been accused of promoting the new 'knowledge economy' that is allegedly more 'neo-liberal' than the 'knowledge society' advocated by the latter. However, a close reading reveals that both reports shun references to 'knowledge economy', while 'knowledge society' is also used by the World Bank (World Bank 2002)." (John and Nair, http://www.india-seminar.com/2011/624/624_mary_&_janaki.htm)

3- Right to Education:

Yet another Plan to Dilute Rights Based Law

The draft 'New Education Policy – 2016' has proposed to review various provisions of 'The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009' (RTE). While some of the proposals aim to strengthen, some indicates fundamental changes in provisions of the RTE Act, 2009. Therefore, reactions of people, academicians and activists working in this sector are mixed. Major proposals of policy initiatives of the NEP-2016 concerning RTE Act is as follows:

Proposals to Strengthen Existing Provisions of RTE Act:

- 1- In addition to infrastructure norms specified in the RTE Act, norms for learning outcomes will be developed and applied uniformly to both private and government schools.
- 2- The State will endeavour to extend RTE up to an appropriate age so as to cover secondary level education.
- 3- The central and state governments will address gaps in policy framework regarding the implementation of School Management Committee (SMC) within the framework of RTE Act and provide broad implementation and monitoring guidelines.

Proposals to fundamentally change provisions of RTE Act:

1. Within the parameters prescribed by the RTE Act, States will have the flexibility to design and plan for the infrastructure keeping in view the local conditions. Local norms, appropriate for local conditions, will be evolved, if necessary through amendment in RTE Act, for 'alternate schools' which offer

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educational interventions for specific categories of very deprived and migrating children, and those living in difficult circumstances.

2. The issue of extension of Clause 12 (1) (c) of RTE Act to government-aided minority institutions (religious and linguistic) will be examined in view of larger national commitments towards the economically weaker sections.

The RTE Act has been regarded as a revolutionary milestone in our process of improving quality of education by enforcing minimum standards such as educational infrastructure, teachers' training and classroom interface. The policy proposals of NEP-2016 with regard to strengthening of the RTE Act can be seen as steps towards achieving the objectives of the Act. However, some of the activists in the education sector are apprehensive about the policy proposals in the NEP, which seeks fundamental changes in some of crucial provisions of the RTE.

The infrastructure norm for schools is a crucial proviso of the Act, it helps in delivery of quality educational services to children. Even after more than five years of its implementation, many government and private schools across the country do not have the required physical infrastructure. Moreover, an influential lobby of private schools under the banner of National Independent School Alliance (NISA) have been advocating for exempting them from this proviso of the RTE Act. Both RTE and NEP-2016 have described these schools as sub-standard educational institutions. The proposed policy initiative of the NEP-2016 to reconsider physical infrastructure norms for school is in agreement with the demand of sub-standard private schools, who do not want to invest in basic infrastructure. Relaxing this norm would adversely affect the reform process in the education system envisaged by the landmark RTE Act. Exempting schools from this crucial provision of the RTE would allow further proliferation of sub-standard private schools.

The other controversial policy proposal of draft NEP-2016 is related to extension of Clause 12 (1) (c) of the RTE act to government aided minority (religious and linguistic) institutions. This clause of the Act enforces reservation of minimum 25% seats for students from economically weaker section in neighborhood schools. It assures free and compulsory education for those children in these institutions. Some activists have argued that this policy provision is against the minority privilege given by the constitution to religious and linguistic minority in India.

The NDA government has been blaming rights based legislations such as labours laws, forest rights Act and land acquisition Act as major hurdle in economic growth. These legislations provides minimum rights to poorest of the poor in this country to resist exploitation by government and corporate in the name economic growth. The government in last two years has diluted all these pro-poor legislations to give free hand for private investors and corporate to expand their economic activities. This process has disempowered millions of poor people such as labourers, farmers, farm labourers and Scheduled Tribe. The proposal of diluting crucial provisions of the RTE act seems to be yet another attempt to dis-empower students and poor people.

4- Commercialization of Education:

Making Public Higher Education Un-affordable and In-accessible

The T.S.R. Subramanian committee in its report, boldly acknowledges the proliferation of private educational institutions providing low quality education services. The report further believes that most of these institutions are handing out educational certificates/degree in the exchange of money. This market of poor quality education by private institutions is flourishing with the help of corrupt and inefficient regulatory mechanisms. The committee report in particular highlighted mass production of unemployable students certified by this corrupt market of education. The draft NEP-2016 also raised issue of proliferation of private institutions with inadequate infrastructure, shortage of qualified faculty and poor learning environment. It acknowledges that the proliferation of such sub-standard educational institutions has contributed to the diminished credibility of the education system. Despite, recognizing this fact, the NEP is silent on bringing requisite reform in private unaided educational institutions. However, various new policy initiatives in the NEP-2016 would result into further commercialization of education. Some of such controversial proposals of the NEP-2016 are as follows:

- One of the policy initiatives of the draft NEP reads, *“Instead of setting up new institutions, which require huge investments, priority of the Government will be to expand the capacity of existing institutions.”* Accessibility to higher education is a big concern in India, the overall all enrollment in higher education is as low as 23%. Unless the Higher Educational Institutions are expanded million of young students would continue to be deprived especially from rural, tribal and other geographically difficult areas from accessing public higher education. The increasing demand for higher education and unavailability of public institutions would also create space for sub-standard private educational institutions to make money.
- The draft NEP has suggested various ways for mobilizing financial resources for higher education. The policy initiative of the NEP in this matter reads, *“HEIs funded by governments need to find ways of increasing their revenues through other sources, such as, alumni funding, endowment funding, tuition fee enhancement along with fee waiver for disadvantaged sections, and private investment.”* The draft NEP-2016 has also reiterated the promise of increasing public funding for education to 6% of GDP, however it seems that it will remain a promise on paper as it happened with previous education policies. This noble promise of the policy is doubtful, as policy document, itself is not serious about providing affordable public education. It wants to mobilize funds for higher education from the private sector (Alumni and endowment funding) and by increasing tuition fee. Both of these options would make public education expensive and hence unaffordable to millions of poor people in India.

5- Curriculum and Text Books: Discarding National Curriculum Framework-2005

The draft policy plans to renew curricula at all levels of education. It states that the current curricula in schools and higher education have a serious disconnect from curricular thrusts that are needed for “promoting the acquisition by students’ relevant skill required for decent work and better life in rapidly changing world.” The draft document envisages curricula in schools and higher education that effectively respond to the market needs. In other words, the focus is on production of skilled labourers for industries and corporations. The NEP indulges in double speak as it first defines education and application of knowledge in very narrow terms of skill attainment and yet also wants the students to be critical thinkers.. The document reads as follows:

“A key challenge in this context is expanding opportunities for acquiring relevant skills, including skills needed for work and entrepreneurship; skills and competencies that allow learners to be more creative and innovative, to think critically, to communicate effectively, to solve problems independently; and life skills that enable individuals to grow as responsible citizens and embrace cultural diversity, live and work together harmoniously, etc.”

Responding to above concerns, the policy suggests following major policy provisions:

- Curricular reforms will be carried out to meet the emerging aspirations and align to national goals of social cohesion, religious amity and national integration. Curriculum should be outcome-based and aim for overall development of students through imparting life-skills in an increasingly technology driven environment. All students will be taught both fundamental duties and rights so that they can become responsible citizens both within the country and in the world.
- For science, mathematics and English subjects, a common national curriculum will be designed. For other subjects, such as social sciences, a part of the curricula will be common across the country and the rest will be at the discretion of the states.
- From Class V onwards, digital literacy will be introduced in the curriculum in a graded manner. However, ICT as a subject can start from class VI. ICT curricula at all levels will be revised to make these application oriented.

The draft new education policy, 2016 seem to reverse the objective of widely consulted and effectively prepared the National Curriculum Framework-2005 (NCF). Unlike the narrowly defined objective of curriculum by the NEP, the NCF prescribes that learners should be provided with the opportunity to question, enquire, debate, reflect, explore, learn by doing as well as problem solving and critical thinking. A curriculum with such comprehensive objective results into scientific temper and independence of mind. The Union Minister of MHRD, Mr. Prakash Javdekar, recently acknowledged that the model textbooks developed by the NCERT, adhering to NCF-2005 aims at generating interest for inquiry among students at school level across all stages⁵. However, many state governments have not adopted the NCF. According to a study of NCERT in 2013, only

⁵ <http://164.100.47.190/loksabhaquestions/annex/9/AU1186.pdf>

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50% of states were adhering with the National Curriculum Framework⁶. Non-adherence of NCF and corrupt & inefficient textbook production in many states has led to distribution of sub-standard learning material to school children in many states. For example, a textbook on social science in Chhattisgarh describes increasing women's participation in workforce as a reason for increasing unemployment. Similarly, some academicians have found that textbooks introduced by Rajasthan government in this academic session have gross mistakes and mischievous propaganda. A textbook of Rajasthan contains anti-women sexist joke. It goes further and expects students to collect some more similar jokes as their homework⁷. Ignoring the highly appreciated National Curriculum Framework- 2005 by some of the state governments has led to production of low quality textbooks, which do not enhance the learning of students in any way. Reversing the curriculum goal of NCF by the NEP would further encourage state governments with vested interest to produce such sub-standard learning material. Moreover, extra emphasis on market-oriented curriculum would act as a barrier in nurturing of scientific temper and independence of mind. It would deviate us completely from the core objective of education.

6- No Detention Policy: Victimising Students

The draft NEP-2016 has raised concern related to poor quality learning outcome of students especially in schools. The National Achievement Surveys (NAS) covering Grades III, V, VIII and X suggests that learning level of a significant portion of students do not measure up to the expected learning levels. The survey shows that a substantial number of children both in private and government schools are not learning basic skill of reading, writing and arithmetic during their schooling. The policy document has identified following major factors contributing to unsatisfactory learning outcome in schools.

- Existence of a large proportion of schools that are not compliant to the prescribed norms and standards for a school
- Student and teacher absenteeism
- Serious gaps in teacher motivation and training resulting in deficiencies relating to teacher quality and performance
- Slow progress in regard to use of information and communication technologies in education
Sub-optimal personnel management, inadequate attention to monitoring and supervision of performance etc

According to the policy except student's absenteeism, all other factors responsible for poor learning outcome have nothing to do with students. It is a problem of regulation, management, monitoring and teachers training. Activists in the education sector also believe that students are not to be blamed for the poor learning outcome.

⁶ <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/delhi/National-Curriculum-Framework-adopted-by-50-states-only/articleshow/20072474.cms>

⁷ <http://satyagrah.scroll.in/article/101356/why-our-nationalist-educationists-are-so-lazy-careless-and-ignorant>

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Despite, a broad consensus on this issue, the draft policy suggests restoring of detention policy from upper primary stage. The suggested policy proposal is as follows:

The present provisions of no-detention policy will be amended, as it has seriously affected the academic performance of students. The no detention policy will be limited up to class V and the system of detention will be restored at the upper primary stage. Academically weak students will be identified, based on CCE conducted by schools, for providing remedial instructions.

Activists in education sector believe that detaining students from upper primary stage would result in massive increase in dropout. However, the policy does not have any provision to handle expected dropout due to this policy. In last one decade, India has made significant progress in decreasing dropout rate from school and enhancing retention of students in schools. This single policy proposal would reverse the entire progress that we made in last few years. The poor quality outcomes need to be corrected in a manner such that it does not lead to dropouts. The policy must focus on addressing factors (rightly highlighted by the NEP) that are responsible for unsatisfactory learning outcome.

7- Public Finance for Education: More Rhetoric Less Reality

The draft NEP-2016 has acknowledged that under funding of public education by successive governments has resulted into proliferation of sub-standards private schools. The document felt the need of adequate funding for public education system in the larger interest of social justice. The document reads, “There are evidences to show that countries which have heavily privatized education systems could not economically and socially progress and hence there is a value loss rather than gain.” To respond this challenge the draft policy suggests increasing financial support for public education system. The policy proposal in this regards reads as follows:

The government will take steps for reaching the long pending goal of raising the investment in education sector to at least 6% of GDP as a priority.

This policy promise of the draft NEP, needs to be understood in the context of history of budget allocation for education. The last budget of UPA-II government in 2013-14 spent 0.63% of GDP in education, the NDA government reduced this share year after year and current budget allocation for education is just 0.48% of the GDP. Even in the absolute allocation of fund, the NDA government has reduced budget of education substantially in last three years. The UPA government in 2013-14 spent Rs. 46,856 crore in school education and literacy. The NDA government decreased its allocation on school education and literacy to Rs. 45,722 in 2014-15 (RE) and Rs. 43,554 in 2016-17 (BE). The NEP-2016 has special focus on low quality learning outcome of students. But, it has been observed that the NDA government has cut back on various schemes which are responsible for improving quality of education in schools. For example, budget for Sarv Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) has decreased from Rs. 24,097 in 2014-15 to Rs. 22,500 in 2016-17 (BE), budget of teachers training has decreased from Rs. 1,158 in 2014-15 to Rs. 879 in 2016-17 (BE) and budget for mid day meal has

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decreased from Rs. 10,523 in 2014-15 to Rs. 9,700 in 2016-17(BE). The successive cut back on budget for public education by the current government does not match with the policy provision of substantially increasing it.

Conclusion:

Along with various good and bad aspects of the draft NEP-2016, it has clear plan to link education with market. Every learning outcome mentioned by the NEP have been explained in the context of market based economy and economic society. Narrowly explaining learning outcomes would hamper broader objective of the education, which envisages independent and critical thinking among learners. Furthermore, it also encourages and supports commercialization of education, which should be a public good. The proposed relaxation for private schools, complete silence on regulation of sub-standard private education institutions and inviting private players in financing of higher educational institutions would create a fertile ground for commercialization of education. Excessively depending on market of sub-standard educational institutions would not even serve its stated purpose of increasing employability of youth. It would only benefit few, who run these private institutions and make huge profit.

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