**National Education Policy 2020:**

**The response of CBCI Office for Education and Culture**

***Based on the inputs given in the Planning Committee of CBCI Office for Education and Culture***

**15 October 2020**

The Government approved the long-awaited National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 of India on 29th July 2020. It is in line with achieving United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4: Quality Education for all by 2030. Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education and promoting lifelong opportunities for All is indeed a goal to be achieved by India by moving towards 100% Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) by 2030. It is built on the foundational pillars of Access, Equity, Quality, Affordability and Accountability and aims at making ‘India a global knowledge superpower’.

**HIGHLIGHTS OF THE NEP 2020**

Many of the proposals in NEP 2020 sound well-drawn, progressive and innovative. The Policy aims at holistic development of children and has expressed concerns for the school dropout and those out of school. The policy wants to reduce curriculum content to enhance essential learning and critical thinking. The flexibility of courses, multilingual options and the curricular integration of essential subjects, skills and capacities are laudable. It speaks about Indian knowledge systems and wants to make a relevant curriculum and cultural exchange programmes. The Policy promises that students will be taught at a young age the importance of ‘doing what is right’ and will be given a logical framework for making ethical decisions. It speaks about teaching traditional Indian values and Constitutional values such as tolerance, diversity, pluralism, righteous conduct, gender sensitivity, patience, forgiveness, empathy, compassion, justice, liberty, equality and fraternity.

The NEP 2020 promises to transform assessment for student development. It wants the progress card to be holistic, 360 degrees, multidimensional report that reflects in great detail the progress as well as the uniqueness of each learner in the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains. It will include, the policy says, self-assessment and peer assessment and it will be project-based, inquiry-based learning along with teacher assessment. It wants to eliminate the need for undertaking coaching classes. An entire chapter has been allotted for the recruitment and training of teachers. A new and comprehensive National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education will be formulated.

However, a more in-depth look at the provisions of the policy reveals that this policy has many flaws in perceiving Indian reality.

The language used to describe the principles and goals of Education is undoubtedly beautiful, but the solutions proposed to carry out the same are fraught with many challenges to the existing Education structures.

**SOME CONCERNS ON THE NEP 2020**

1. Most of the proposed interventions appear well-meaning. They have set a panoramic vision for Education sector in India. But because they are based on a shallow understanding of the ground realities of Education in an unequal caste-ridden Indian society, they could suffer severe infirmities in execution. Several innovations proposed by NEP 2020 could exacerbate existing educational challenges and perpetuate inequality.
2. The Supreme Court, in its 13-judge Constitutional Bench in 1973 held that the ‘Federal character of the Constitution is the basic structure’ There are apprehensions about NEP 2020 undermining the Federal Character of India by promoting centralisation of all decision-making from the curriculum design of ‘ECCE and Primary Education to Higher Education (including Professional Education)’ through a spectrum of new central agencies and mechanisms to be constituted.
3. The growth of private unaided schools in India has grown from 3.4% in 1978, to 34.8% in 2017. According to the U-DISE 2019, nearly 50% of all students in India are enrolled today in the 4.5 lakh privately managed schools across the country. NEP 2020 in paragraph 3.6 says that to make it easier for Government and non-governmental philanthropic organisations to build schools…and to allow alternative models of education the requirements for schools will be made less restrictive. Promoting excessive privatisation of Education will result only in uncontrolled exploitation and profiteering. Education will be viewed as a commodity rather than a service. Free and state-funded Education with incentives should be mandatory in welfare and democratic country like India.
4. Focus on local language and mother tongue, keeping aside English from the lower grade of the school is going to deprive the lower strata of society from access to Higher Education. While the choice of teaching in mother tongue is healthy for the child, in the multi-lingual context of India, teaching in mother tongue may be demanded only from aided schools and Government Schools, and the private schools may be left to decide on their own. In this uneven system of Education, the poor are not able to clear the highly competitive exams at the higher education level.
5. Reservation has no place in the NEP, in violation of Article 16, and as such it is denial of all gains made through the struggles for social justice, and equity and this will deny Education to the vast majority of the underprivileged.
6. Any right-thinking citizen will acknowledge the valuable contribution of minorities towards Education in our country. Though Catholics constitute only 1.6% of the total population of India, they run more than 30,000 educational institutions primarily in the rural areas serving the poor and the neglected. Christians pioneering modern Education in India has not been acknowledged in NEP 2020. Moreover, NEP 2020 makes absolutely no mention of minority rights.
7. NEP 2020 depicts the rich heritage of ‘ancient and eternal Indian knowledge and thought’ as a guiding light for this policy. Yes, we need to learn Indian knowledge systems and traditions but it must be inclusive. The NEP accords adequate attention to Brahmanical hegemony but neglects or omits the teachings of Buddha and Mahavira and their challenge to social stratification and hierarchical social order. It sidelines the entire medieval period when Islamic traditions interacted with the Hindu traditions to create syncretic Sufism and infused new dynamism in India’s pursuit of knowledge in different fields. The epistemic contribution of tribal people is also not recognised. The NEP 2020 seems to downplay the spirit of Right To Education (RTE) 2009. NEP 2020 offers no continuation of the RTE or does not call for amending the Act to include children from 3-6 and 14-18 age group thereby denying statutory status to both ECCE and secondary and senior secondary, and it does not reiterate the free Education provided to the poor and the marginalised. The concept of ‘Free education’ stands replaced by ‘affordability’ and this could allow private institutions to increase fees.

As per the School Report Cards, NUEPA 2017-18, There are roughly 100,000 single-teacher schools across the country. NEP 3.2 promises to ‘provide effective and sufficient infrastructure so that all students have access to safe and engaging school education…’. As per 3.1, the number of out of school children in the age group of 6 to 17 years is 3.2 crores in India. Added to that, to bring children from the age of 3 to the schools, the Government will have to build many thousands of schools and employ a million more teachers. Without the adequate infrastructure and qualified teachers, there is very little justification for the structural changes (5+3+3+4 at school and four-year UG with multiple exits and integrated B.Ed. at higher Education), which will cause disruption.

1. The constitutionally legitimised terms of Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), Other Backward Classes (OBCs) and religious and linguistic minorities are substituted by ‘socio-economically disadvantaged groups (SDGs)’ or ‘under-represented groups’, thereby undermining the historic oppression and exploitation. The insistence of a common entrance exam for all higher education courses will hinder the poor from pursuing Higher Education. Only the rich and the affluent who can have recourse to exorbitant fee-charging coaching centres to prepare for entrance tests and will have opportunities for Higher Education.
2. NEP 2020 mandates the National Research Foundation to control all researches in HEIs all over the country, and this will inevitably lead to the regimentation of thought and knowledge production and promote red tape and favouritism in research. Every Higher Education Institute needs to pay attention to setting up a research wing.
3. Starting from ECCE to senior secondary schools, the NEP proposes an informal role for “trained volunteers from both the local community and beyond, social workers, counsellors and community involvement” in the school system. The NEP has not explained who these people are and what their eligibility is for being invited to undertake informal tasks in anganwadis or schools?
4. How shall we address the possibility of high dropout rates due to the availability of several exit points both at the school and higher education levels? While the Policy aims at making students come back anytime to pursue their studies or write exams, this could even create a large population of school dropouts and the skilled but cheap labour force to be exploited by the cartel of industries.
5. The suggestions to have school complexes will lead to a situation where schools that have resources and facilities will be compelled to make those available for others. The programme, resources and infrastructure envisaged in the Policy are very expansive and these need an allocation of personnel and a lot of resources. Who will fund these initiatives? We are not very sure about what constitutes school complexes and its management committees and the role of the leader of these committees.
6. The proposed implementation of NEP 2020 from the academic year 2021-2022 is too early to arrive at any research-based, and scientific implantation guidelines as many of the suggestions appear to be quite ambitious. Attempts to implement new curriculum and assessment in the next academic year will be too premature to get the school, teachers and other stakeholders ready.

Many have the apprehension that NEP 2020 moves away from the basic fabric of the Constitution and social justice, and it is anti-poor and that it aims towards centralisation, commercialisation and communalisation of Education.

**SOME GUIDELINES FOR OUR EDUCATION COMMISSIONS AND INSTITUTIONS**

As persons, committed individually and collectively for the cause of the poor especially the Dalits, Tribal groups, migrants, women and so on, we resolve personally and collectively to respond in and through our institutions and ministries proactively to:

* Assert and affirm; practise and proclaim the rights and values enshrined in the Preamble as the objectives of the Constitution – sovereignty, socialism, secularism, democracy, republican character of the Indian State, justice, liberty, equality, fraternity, human dignity and unity and integrity of the Nation.
* Nourish and nurture; accept and respect; cherish and celebrate the multi and pluralistic nature of India in terms of culture, religion, languages, etc.
* Renew and rededicate ourselves for the empowerment of the underprivileged through quality education with zero tolerance to failures and dropouts and ensure the poor get to the mainstream in Education

By collaborating and networking with citizens and organisations committed to building up Constitutional values, we commit ourselves to:

**Adhering to and teaching Constitutional Rights and Values**

1. Ensure teaching and promotion of Fundamental rights so that all citizens participate in creating an inclusive, resilient and humane society, so they are not erased from the memories of future generations.
2. We must cultivate unity in diversity and prepare students to live amicably in a country with pluricultural and pluri-religious contexts.
3. We need to be vigilant and promote the rights of the poor and marginalised and the rights of the minorities.
4. We must communicate to students through various forums (assembly, noticeboards, debate, etc.) a holistic ‘idea of India’ and Indianness which includes several historical inventions and significant contributions in numerous fields down through the centuries. We need to teach about the social reforms wrought by several reformists and that the idea of India is not limited to a particular religion, group or period.
5. For the students at an early age, we can improve upon the texts suggested by NCERT and teach children constitutional values.

**Promoting value-driven Education**

1. The present NEP 2020 conforms the privatised and market-driven Education which has spread across India, with about 47% of our students in private schools. This conformism leads to adjusting with existing social evils and corroding value system. While privatisation of education has become inevitable in India, we must not fall prey to making an unjust profit and the whims and fancies of edu-tech companies. Bereft of human and social values, Education will be reduced to a mere commodity. We must look for ways to reform and build a value-based education system.
2. We must continue to care for our mother earth and teach children to care for the environment and strive for peace and justice. For this purpose, we need to set up clubs and associations which will take care of the campus environment and promote eco-concerns in the neighbourhood.

**Developing a critical outlook on NEP 2020**

1. Conscientise people about the NEP 2020 to help develop a critical opinion about what is right and what needs to be challenged.
2. Successful implementation of the policy calls for simplifying decision-making structures and prioritising fund allocation for the years to come. Our Educational Institutions can seek to play a proactive role for opportunities to revamp our education system.
3. The State Governments need to convene Special Sessions of the State Legislative Assembly to discuss NEP 2020 and reject its provisions which are not following federal structure, social justice and equity. Towards achieving this, Educational Institutions in each of our State need to urge the State Governments to take up the NEP 2020 for a State Level discussion. We need to draw up plans to meet with our elected representatives to apprise them and seek their help for maintaining equity and rights of the poor and minorities.
4. We need to prepare individuals who can be part of curriculum development at the State level, especially with blended learning by identifying persons who will help build models, to develop proper Learning Management System.

**Concern for the poor and marginalised**

1. Ensure commitment of mainstream education for the disadvantaged by accompanying them, especially Catholic students, so that they do not leave schools for non-formal or NIOS schooling abruptly.
2. We openly discuss that educational backwardness in India is not due to economic incapacity but due to social oppression and denial of opportunity and that society divided on caste is the root cause of social discrimination
3. As Education is becoming more and more expensive, creating scholarship support system by the Church for students in higher education levels is the need of the hour to help students from poor and marginalised communities to pursue higher studies.

**Developing Educational Charisms and Vision**

1. We need to develop a robust visionary Education System and pedagogy so that our institutions can be different from the business-minded Institutions which have goals related to their profit.
2. We need to study educational charisms within the Church to have a healthy and rich educational heritage. We can collect and pass on these policies (vision, mission and methodology) to help develop our institutions into more charismatic ones.
3. Our education commissions need to develop a vision for our students at different levels. These visions must be unique for each age group of students who are at ECCE, middle and secondary and higher education level.
4. Our Educational institutions must take initiatives to impart catechism and value education creatively to young people and also must reach out to their families to guide them to bring up the children well.

**Getting Ready for the implementation of NEP 2020**

1. There is an emphasis on Counsellors or well-trained social workers connected to schools to ensure that there are no dropouts. In this view, it is necessary to employ sufficient counsellors in our schools. Similarly, there are many things expected of our schools to be ready for implementation. Each State Unit can prepare the “Get Ready List” for our Schools, Technical institutes and Colleges to be prepared to implement the NEP 2020.
2. Transitioning to a system that expands its idea of outcomes from literacy and numeracy to a “breadth of skills” there are a more extensive set of skills that are needed in a changing world, including critical thinking, collaboration, and problem-solving. Our institutions need to discuss the learning outcomes we want schooling to generate and evaluate if they are adequate to produce the qualities for individuals to contribute meaningfully to society and the economy.
3. We need to pay much attention to how well we can blend technology in our education system. COVID 19 has taught us how abruptly we had to embrace technology to continue Education without disruption.

**Just wage and Training of Teachers**

1. We must prepare our teachers to adapt to the NEP 2020. Training of teachers, especially at the pre-primary level and preparing teacher training modules (ECCE) is particularly crucial at the Regional and Diocesan level.
2. All our Private schools must pay just wages to the teachers. Restoring the self-concept, self-respect and self-confidence of the teachers as well as their position and status in the society and in the immediate community they work with, is the first requirement. NEP provisions in 5.1 to 5.7 read along with 15.1 5o 15.11 is adequate policy support if anyone is willing to achieve this.
3. To deliver this NEP 2020 curriculum effectively, we need teachers who are trained in and understand the pedagogical needs. Many of the curricular changes require substantial mindset shifts on the part of teachers, as well as parents. To usher in changes, we need to organise regular training programmes.

**The Role of Education Commission**

1. Education commission in the Dioceses and Provinces need to plan for the training of personnel for school/higher education management and administration as many lack personnel to run our institutions.
2. The Education Commissions in the dioceses and Provinces should take responsibility for guiding and animating all the schools within their jurisdiction. The commission should become resource centres, especially concerning new and amended legal, financial and Education regulations and rules.
3. The Regional and Diocesan Education Directors, as well as the Provincial and Regional Education Directors of Religious of Congregations, should accompany their educational institutions under their charge by reassuring the heads of institutions and animating and empowering them to understand the need of the times and study and implement the NEP 2020. Following the guidelines issued by the CBCI as well as religious congregations, our Educational Institutions with supreme wisdom and strategy and not compromising the mission of the Church must ensure the policies and interests and educative charism of the Church or the congregation.

**Emphasis on Research**

1. NEP 2020 emphasises on research, and our Educational sectors can be leaders in research and innovation. It will be useful to create research and innovation centre at the regional and provincial level.

**Networking and Collaboration**

1. We have realised more than ever the need for Networking and collaboration within the Church. Our education sectors must work together for our rights and concerns at the diocesan, regional and national level as we notice that many of our institutions function as a stand-alone institution without association with other institutions.
2. Use critical thinking, not as an antidote to rote learning but to analyse events in our country so that the seeds of social transformation and new India are sowed in their teaching-learning experiences.

The Church needs to renew its commitment to Implementing the Catholic Education Policy India 2007 regarding dropout students both at school and higher education level.

Reading through NEP 2020, we find that there are many goals to be achieved and that a well-designed curriculum with innovative approaches and pedagogies can pave the way to attaining 21st-century skills in Education. This NEP 2020 has been drawn with an ambitious plan of achieving a global standard in Indian Education. But one needs to be constantly aware of India’s socio-economic reality. Majority of Indians live in poverty. India still has the highest number of illiterate people in the world. Death, due to malnutrition, is one of the highest in the world. Socially there are still many class divisions. How can we make Education equitable and affordable to the poor and the marginalised? These concerns ought to be addressed. We hope that beyond the immediate excitement that the announcement of the implementation of the NEP has generated, there will be opportunities to examine its long-term implications, and, if necessary, revisit it, before it is implemented.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Prepared by

**National Secretary,**

**The CBCI Office for Education and Culture**

New Delhi – 110 001

cbcieducation@gmail.com

www. cbcieducation.com

Twitter: @CBCI\_Education