



“The Church’s concerns on National Education Policy 2020”

3rd National Online Consultation,

Organised by CBCI Office for Education and Culture, New Delhi

18th September, 2020

The third National Consultation on National Education Policy 2020 was to discuss the concerns of the Church on this new policy. The meeting was held on 18th September at 11 am and was presided over by Most Rev. Thomas D’Souza, Archbishop of Kolkata, Apostolic Administrator of Krishnagar and Chairperson of the CBCI Office for Education and Culture. We had 40 persons taking part in this special consultation on NEP 2020 which included eight Bishops, the Regional Secretaries of Dioceses, National Secretaries of a few Congregations, Secretaries of AINACS and Xavier Board, and a few Principals. Most Rev. Andrews Thazhath, Archbishop of Thrissur and Member Bishop of CBCI OEC also participated and wished us well.

The Chairperson led us into prayer and after a brief welcome by the National Secretary for the CBCI Office for Education and Culture, the Chairperson gave his introductory talk. He congratulated the Secretaries for carrying out education ministry even during the trying period of COVID 19 with much determination. He was appreciative of the various initiatives taken by the National Office in the last few months and especially during his brief ailment. He said that there are many debates and discussions going on about NEP 2020

OFFICE FOR EDUCATION & CULTURE
CBCI - DELHI

Archbishop Thomas D'Souza
Chairperson
CBCI Office for Education & Culture

Archbishop John Moolchira
Member
CBCI Office for Education & Culture

Archbishop Andrews Thazhath
Member
CBCI Office for Education & Culture

Theme : “The Church’s Concerns on National Education Policy 2020”

3rd National Consultation

18
SEPTEMBER

11:00 AM - 12:30 PM

Launching of
CBCI EDU BASE
Catholic Educational Database

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Organised by:
CBCI Office for Education & Culture
CBCI Centre, 1 Ashok Place, New Delhi 110001



and emphasized on the importance of the National Education Policy which affects all of us. He brought to attention the 24 points of concerns that were sent by the National Secretary of CBCI OEC. He raised many points about the inadequacy of the policy and the various concerns it has raised for the poor, marginalised and for the minorities. He brought the reality of lack of infrastructure and qualified teachers. Quoting Gurcharan Das (TOI dated 18 Sept 2020), he mentioned about India's language conundrum and wondered how NEP 2020 can be implemented and sought the members cooperation in persuading the State Governments in including us to in its implementation committees and panels.

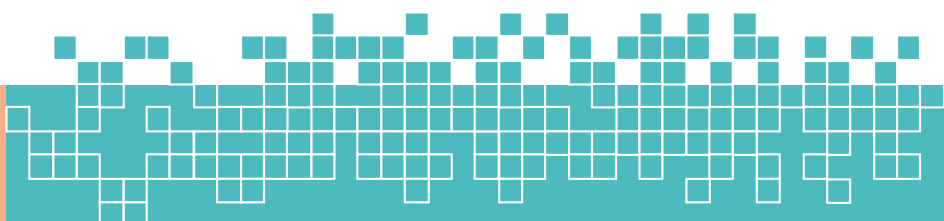
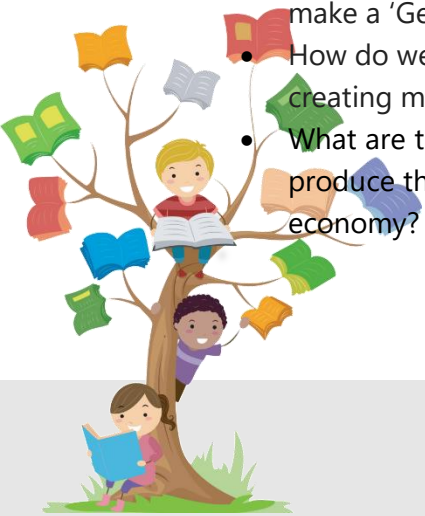
Fr. Maria Charles, National Secretary for CBCI Office for Education and Culture presented a 24 point concern about the Church's concerns on NEP 2020 which he had earlier circulated to the Bishops and the Regional Secretaries (which is given in the annex). Some of the concerns about the new National Education Policy that he raised are:



- An important policy like the National Education Policy needs to be approved by the Parliament to make it into an Act but will they implement with just an ordinance?
- The word Secularism has been left out in this policy (which was included in the 1976 constitutional preamble amendment) leading to wonder if Government does not respect this unique identity of Indian State.
- It also blurs the boundaries of core Constitutional values of equality, fraternity and justice by perpetuating unequal opportunities
- From 1968 the then National Policy of Education (NPE) promised to arrive at 6% expenditure on education from our GDP. 52 years later, the New NEP 2020, says the same thing that they will strive to spend 6% of the GDP. The average spending for education in the last six years has been less than 3% of GDP.
- Segregation of the poor and affluent class of students will play into the hands of neo-liberal economy to make majority of the students into low-income employees. The Policy does not even acknowledge this segregation of students.



- Instead of bringing about a systemic change, the new NEP 2020 will worsen the existing educational challenges and may cause irreversible damage to our future generation.
- Right-wing agenda in content and in appointment of implementation committees
- The word Minority and minority rights do not appear anywhere in the policy
- When they speak about training of qualified teachers, no mention is made of more than 1.1 million teachers who are already in the system, if they would be qualified.
- Danger to the federal system of India as Education is being taken out of State involvement and decision-making and bringing education under its control.
- Will Catholic Institutions be controlled and our campus taken over by Govt by the so-called 'cluster of schools' concept and making available all our resources and infrastructure for students from other schools?
- Overt privatisation of Education leading to high fees from students and low salary to teachers
- Deprivation of basic amenities to Govt-run schools and colleges
- multiple doors opened for hidden agenda
- Focus on local language/mother tongue but will Private schools follow or is it only for Govt run/aided schools creating uneven playing field at the higher education level
- Centralisation, Commercialisation and communalization will make higher education elusive for the under-privileged.
- Can our Catholic Educators be part of the committees which will implement the NEP 2020 at the national and state level?
- Will 'Para-teachers' and 'guest teachers' in Government run schools, anganwadis centres and in private schools who often are unqualified and untrained continue teaching the children from poor background?
- Will the appointment of trained volunteers from both the local community and beyond, social workers, counsellors and community involvement" in the school system affect our Catholic Educational Institutions as well?
- Will there be consolidation of schools? How will local school complexes work for us? Will it affect our Governance?
- Should our Dioceses and Congregations be prepared to implement the policy and make a 'Get-Ready List" to be ready early to withstand probable obstacles?
- How do we pledge to educate the poor and the marginalised in spite of the policy creating more segregation and more privatisation of schools and colleges?
- What are the outcomes we want schooling to generate, and are they adequate to produce the qualities for individuals to contribute meaningfully to society and the economy?



He asked the members to freely express their views regarding the concerns we have as Church regarding the new National Education Policy 2020. There were a few concerns which were raised:

- This policy drives towards the fulfilment of SDG goals and not the Right to Education
- The idea of India will change
- Education may become a tool in the hands of fundamental forces
- India's religious diversity must be protected
- Internship from 6th std in rural area is a challenge and on the whole, it will lead to increase in school drop-out.
- There has been a discrepancy in the policy from its first approved form (on 29th July 2020) from the Union Cabinet (60 pages) to the second version of the policy released on 6th August 2020 with 64 pages. Not just the content and index pages but also many organization and commission names had been included and a few changes had been made.

The Way Forward!

When the participants were asked about how the Church must move forward regarding coping with the National Education Policy, it was expressed that the Government is very unlikely to withdraw the policy and they are already looking forward to implementing it even before tabling it in the Parliament.

- The proof of the pudding is in the eating. We shall know more about the policy's intent only when it is implemented.
- When the RTE came, we opposed it because it went against minority rights but now we are praising it as it is inclusive.
- We need to continue to write to the Government and NCERT and involve ourselves in the process of implementing the policy
- We need to approach the Members of Parliament and seek their support in bring constitutional rights and secularism and also the rights of the poor and minorities
- We also need to be influential and work along with political parties and the members of RSS and BJP leaders to bring about a healthy change.
- We need to join with other forces of like-minded groups with in and outside the Church to create more awareness among the people.



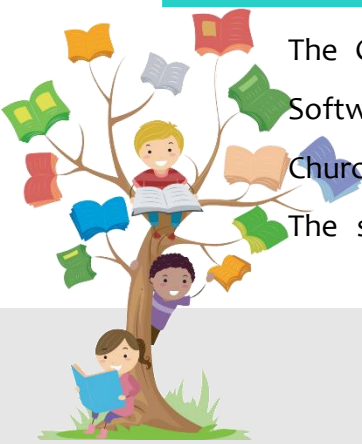
- At the national level, we need to create a committee which will make a roadmap about the way forward and keep a close watch over how the implementation will unfold.
- We need to find ways of working with NCERT in making the National Curriculum Framework and find out if we can be included.
- We need to be prepared to make more demands with the Government.
- Many of the policy statements will be non-starters in most State Government for the coming years as the effect of COVID 19 has left many States financially dry.
- There are some States which are sympathetic towards the cause of the Church in serving the poor and we need to approach the Government to support our causes.
- Each State can select a Five member committee of lay persons who can take the issues of the Church to the Government.
- We need to create awareness in the Tribal area and keep local leaders aware of various issues concerning the Church's causes.
- We must form committees at the diocesan/State level to discuss about what type of suggestions we need to give to the Government.
- As the time for giving suggestions to the Government is over, it is time that we ask NCERT to include our suggestions on National Curriculum Framework implementation as the first timeline leading up to two years has begun.
- Special zones like North East where we have more influence can enter into various committees and influence the Government to take the right steps.

The Church works along with Governments to educate the citizens. We have been pioneers of modern Indian education and we have taken education to the most remote parts of the country. The Church also has a prophetic role. We need to speak for what is just and right and stand against inequality, injustice and indoctrination. We cannot leave education in the hands of market-driven forces and fundamentalists. The Church must express its concerns and strive towards working for the common good and the upliftment of the poor and the marginalised.

Launch of CBCI EDU BASE

The CBCI Office for Education and Culture together with BoscoSoft – a Software company run by the Salesians of Don Bosco in the service of the Church have developed a portal for creating Catholic Educational Data Base.

The software was explained to the participants especially the Regional



Secretaries by Fr. Dr. Gregory Thaddeus SDB. The Chairperson thanked both the national secretary and BoscoSoft in creating this software which will help collect data from every Catholic Educational Institution and analyse it at the diocesan, regional and national level and launched it. This will be at the service of the Church as it will give accurate details of our educational service from Pre-Primary to University and Research Institutes. The data will be collected from schools, technical institutes and institutes of Higher Education. There will be a meeting soon with both Regional and Diocesan Secretaries of Education to explain to them the process of data collection.

FABC CONSULTATION

- The Chairperson reminded the group about the FABC Survey of educational issues done at the level of Asia. The National Secretary explained about the process of doing the survey with google form and has received a huge response. Now this will be collated and sent to the FABC Office before the deadline.
- The meeting came to conclusion with a prayer by the national secretary and the blessing by the Chairperson Most Rev. Thomas D'Souza.

Report prepared by
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