<u>**FULL REPORT**</u>

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Ministry of Education
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THEMATIC SESSION 2 – Access to Quality Education and Governance in School Education

Introduction:

Access to quality eduction and effective governance are foundational pillars of the progress of any country. India, as one of the most populous countries in the world, faces critical challenges in providing access to quality education and effective governance to all. Access and governance are strongly interlinked. India's education landscape is diverse, with disparities existing across states and UTs, rural-urban areas, and socio-economic backgrounds. While there has been a significant increase in enrollment rates in schools across the stages. challenges persist in providing quality education. Issues such as a lack of quality ECCE programmes, shortage of trained teachers, inadequate infrastructure, outdated curricula, focus on English as a medium of instruction and regional disparities, have been recognised by the NEP 2020 as hinderance in ensuring quality and effectiveness of the school governance system.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which was introduced by the Governemnt of India to overhaul the education system, plays a crucial role in addressing these issues. As per this policy access and governance are critical for the socio-economic development and overall well-being of the nation. Providing universal access to quality education is the key to India's continued ascent, and leadership on the global stage in terms of economic growth, social justice and equality, scientific advancement, national integration, and cultural preservation. Universal high-quality education is the best way forward for developing and maximizing our country's rich talents and resources for the good of the individual, the society, the country, and the world. India will have the highest population of young people in the world over the next decade, and our ability to provide high-quality educational opportunities to them will determine the future of our country.

The NEP 2020 focuses on foundational learning, promotion of experiential learning, multilingual education, integration of technology into teaching -learning, assessment and also school governance. Proposed shift from 10+2 to the new curricular and pedagogical structure-5+3+3+4 in NEP 2020 is a transformative step in redefining the education system in India. By providing access to quality education from early childhood through secondary education (across foundational, preparatory, middle, and secondary stages), the policy aims to ensure equitable opportunities for all children through multiple pedagogies including play-based and discovery-based pedagogy to improve learning outcomes and promote holistic development. The policy emphasises upon universal provisioning of quality early childhood development, care, and education, it is stated that ECCE must thus be achieved as soon as possible, and no later than 2030, to ensure that all students entering Grade 1 are school ready. A significant aspect of NEP 2020 is ensuring equitable access to education for all sections of society,

including marginalized communities, children with disabilities, and those living in remote areas. The policy aims to bridge the digital divide and promote digital literacy to ensure access to online resources and education in the era of technology. It envisions integration of vocational education to enhance employability.

Multilingualism is an inherent part of India's cultural fabric and represents its rich linguistic diversity. While it presents certain challenges, the nation is committed to preserving and promoting this linguistic diversity. The NEP 2020's focus on early education in mother tongue, and development bilingual textbooks and making available children' literature in multiple languages are steps in the right direction to ensure high-quality education. By recognizing and celebrating the significance of multilingualism, India can continue to harness the strength of its diverse languages and cultures for national progress and harmony.

Quality education heavily relies on well-trained and motivated teachers. The NEP 2020 emphasizes the importance of continuous professional development for teachers, encouraging them to adopt innovative teaching practices and stay updated with evolving pedagogical methods. NEP 2020 recognizes the need to align education with the demands of the job market and economy. It emphasizes the integration of vocational education into the mainstream curriculum, allowing students to develop practical skills alongside academic knowledge. This approach is aimed at enhancing employability and reducing unemployment rates.

Effective governance plays a vital role in improving the quality of education. This Policy proposes the revision and revamping of all aspects of the education structure, including its regulation and governance, to create a new system that is aligned with the aspirational goals of 21st century education, including SDG4, while building upon India's traditions and value systems. It recognizes the importance of rationalizing schools to optimize resources, improve quality, and enhance the overall efficiency of the education system. By focusing on equitable access, community participation, and efficient resource allocation, the policy aims to create a more robust and inclusive educational environment that caters to the diverse needs of Indian students. It focuses on creating School Complexes, School Management Committees (SMCs), and strengthening the role of local communities in school administration. The NEP 2020 states that State/UT Governments may adopt innovative formats for effective school governance, such as school complex, rationalization of schools, resource sharing and community building without in any way reducing accessibility.

There are many initiatives undertaken at the National and State level to address the challenges of quality education and governance. To name a few, NIPUN Bharat Mission to strengthen foundational literacy and numeracy, National Initiative for School Heads' and Teaches' Holistic Advancement, development of National Curriculum Framework for the Foundational Stage, promotion of Toy-based pedagogy, Vidya Sameeksha Kendra,PM e-Vidya, etc., have the potential to impact positively on the access and governance in the school education.

During the two-day Akhil Bhartiya Shiksha Samagam 2023, thematic session No. 2 was organized on **Access to Quality Education and Governance in School Education** with the following objectives:

Objectives of the Session-

    a. Understanding the issues related to access to quality education and governance with special focus on:
        i. ECCE
        ii. Teacher Professional Development
        iii. Outdated Curricula

    iv.   Quality learning-teaching material (in print and e-form)
     v.   Inclusion
    vi.   Multilingual education
  b. Getting acquaintance about new and innovative methods to provide quality education in schools?
  c. Sharing strategies including use of ICT to strengthen governance in school education?

Conduct of the Session

Shri Sanjay Kumar, Secretary, D/o SE&L., chaired this session. The panellists were Prof. Sunil Maheswari, (IIMA); Snorre Westgaard (CEO Humana People To People) and Shri Naveen Jain, (Secretary, Education, Rajasthan). The moderator was Prof. Ranjana Arora, NCERT.

This session provided the forum for participants, academic administrators, students, faculty members from Universities, policy makers, representing all categories of school education an opportunity to discuss and deliberate upon issues related to the theme as well as initiatives in school education.

Discussion

Each speaker highlighted a few challenges that need to be addressed to achieve quality education.

Shri Sanjay Kumar, Secretary, D/o SE&L, who chaired the session stated that Access to school education, by and large, has been achieved but quality in education still has some challenges to be overcome. There is a challenge to cope up with the falling standards of learning outcomes. The primary focus in this direction needs to be on infrastructural facilities in schools and availability of teachers in schools. He further expressed that in India we need to focus on three major issues.
 ➢ How to arrest dropout rate
 ➢ Finance of school education
 ➢ Governance of school education.

Hence, efforts need to be in the direction of these three aspects to improve the status of education system.

Prof. Sunil Maheswari, (IIMA), highlighted the variation in access to schools by children, and the student teacher ratio. He further discussed on lack of awareness about various Government schemes as one of the hurdles. He added that, to cope up with the problem of infrastructural facilities budget allocation to education sector needs to be enhanced as envisioned by NEP 2020 (approximately 6% of the total budget). Attracting the best applicants for teaching profession also is a challenge.

Mr. Snorre Westgaard (CEO Humana People To People) stated that equitable access to education is an extremely ambitious goal in the vast education system of India. The major challenge is providing quality education to all. An important concern is to make children learn how to process information into knowledge and understanding. Through examples of his work in Maharashtra and Haryana, he further highlighted how the systemic changes in learning system can deliver better Learning Outcomes.

Shri Naveen Jain, Education Secretary, Rajasthan informed that in Rajasthan, only 55% of children enrol in Government schools. This needs efforts to be improved. He deliberated on some threats in achieving quality education in Rajasthan such as poor student teacher ratio, 'pass books' culture (rote-memorization of important points for exams) coaching centres, too many guidelines to schools and demotivation of administrators.

The issues that came up for discussion were:

Need for Effective School Leadership

A crucial factor in ensuring access to quality education is the pivotal role of leadership within schools. Placing effective and visionary principals at the helm of schools can significantly contribute to the successful implementation of the perspective outlined in the National Education Policy (NEP) 2002.

Advocating for a Common School System

To uphold and enhance the quality of school education comprehensively, it is imperative to establish a common school system. This system would harmonize various crucial components of education, such as curriculum design, pedagogical practices, assessment methodologies, and governance structures. By standardizing these elements across educational institutions, we can create a consistent and equitable platform that ensures each child's learning journey is enriched and well-rounded.

Mitigating Drop-Out Rates and Ensuring Inclusive Education

Addressing the issue of drop-out rates, particularly after the 5th, 8th, and 10th grades, necessitates a multi-faceted approach rooted in effective governance. Schools need to provide an enabling environment that encourages retention, and one important facet of this is enabling children to learn in their mother tongue. Moreover, the untapped potential of digital education can play a transformative role in captivating students' interest and enhancing their learning experience, thereby reducing attrition rates.

The Way Forward

In the light of insightful discussions among distinguished panellists, a comprehensive exploration of challenges, potential approaches, and viable solutions within the unique local context of country's vast diversity took place. These deliberations facilitated a clear trajectory for future action across different types of institutions.

Government Institutions

- Overhauling the recruitment process for school principals and teachers, infusing it with reform.

- Establishing an effective mechanism to ensure the delivery of quality education to every child, even in remote and challenging geographical areas.

- Charting a strategic roadmap for functional school complexes, optimizing their role in education.

- Compiling a repository of exemplary governance practices from different states and Union Territories, fostering sharing and customized implementation.

- Enhancing the monitoring system to gauge and improve educational outcomes.

- Streamlining teacher capacity-building programs through a cohesive mechanism.

- Providing high-quality learning and teaching materials in multiple languages.

- Facilitating interactive webinars to foster the exchange of ideas, concerns, and solutions among stakeholders.

- Integrating all anganwadis into the school education framework.

- Empowering local communities to play a stronger role in school administration.

- Establishing mother schools or school complexes as resource-sharing hubs.

- Implementing a mobile education system

Academic Institutions

- Rationalizing teacher training processes for more effective professional development.

- Encouraging teachers to become change agents and advocate for improved pedagogical practices.

- Facilitating connectivity between teachers, stakeholders, and administrators through webinars and other platforms.

- Exploring the integration of artificial intelligence for advanced assessment methods.

Private Institutions

- Developing and disseminating e-content to enrich educational resources.

- Providing phone-based career counselling services to guide students toward their future paths.

- Leveraging technology for virtual school visits, akin to the "Shala Sambalan" initiative in Rajasthan, to offer comprehensive school information.

Conclusion

Ensuring access to quality education and fostering effective governance are fundamental pillars of school education. To achieve these goals, it is imperative to channel increased efforts towards vital areas such as ensuring adequate infrastructure, recruiting quality teachers and principals, shifting classroom pedagogies away from mere rote memorization, harnessing the full potential of educational technology to improve children's access to schooling, and utilizing it for more robust assessment and governance. Additionally, fostering community engagement and support is pivotal in promoting both the quality of education and effective governance.

SUMMARY AT A GLANCE

Name	Responsibility	Topics of Discussion/ Key Points
Shri Sanjay Kumar, Secretary, D/o SE&L.	Chair	➤ Access in school education has largely been achieved. ➤ Quality in education still has some challenges to overcome. ➤ Governance is less talked about in educational discourse. ➤ Finance of school administration needs to be focussed on.
Prof. Sunil Maheswari, (IIMA)	Panellist	➤ Some possible ways to address the challenges faced in achieving quality education. 1. Mobile system of education 2. More share for education in Budget 3. Improvement in selection process for school leadership positions 4. Mother school and nearby schools (School complex) for sharing of resources. 5. Rationalization of teacher training 6. Teachers to become agents of change and raise issues related to pedagogy in appropriate forum. 7. Teachers and other stakeholders need to be connected to administrators through webinars or other forums for exchange of ideas, issues and concerns
Mr. Snorre Westgaard (CEO Humana People To People)	Panellist	➤ The challenge is to provide quality education to all ➤ Children must be taught how to process information into knowledge and understanding. ➤ In Maharashtra, Mission Education has been undertaken in one of the low-performing districts. ➤ In Haryana, 1 lakh Out of School Children have been bridged to mainstream education. ➤ Systemic changes in learning system for delivering better Learning Outcomes
Shri Naveen Jain, Education Secretary, Rajasthan	Panellist	➤ In Rajasthan, only 55% of children enrol in Government schools: this needs to change. ➤ Some threats to achieving quality education are from 'pass books' (rote-memorization of important points for exams) coaching centres, too many guidelines to schools and demotivation. ➤ In Rajasthan, initiatives such as integration of anganwadis into primary section, phone-based counselling for future careers, and Rationalization of teacher training have been undertaken.