

National Education Policy 2020
An Agenda of Exclusion and Enslavement

RECLAIM

*Constitution, Social Justice
& Education*



All India Forum for Right to Education (AIFRTE)

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Let my country awake...

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;
Where knowledge is free;
Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow
domestic walls;
Where words come out from the depth of truth;
Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection;
Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the
dreary desert sand of dead habit;
Where the mind is led forward by thee into ever-widening thought
and action –
Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.

- Rabindranath Tagore

The original Bengali poem, “Chitto jetha bhayashunyo”, was published in 1910. Its English transliteration was included in the collection Gitanjali by Tagore.

INTRODUCTION

On 29th July 2020, in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic causing existentialist crisis for millions of people, suddenly the nation was told that the central cabinet, presided over by the Prime Minister, has given approval to the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. Notably, education is in the Concurrent List (List III) under Article 246 (Seventh Schedule) of the Constitution i.e. it is a subject that concerns both the centre and the State/UT governments equally. In this light, the rushed implementation of NEP 2020 without (a) even seeking the opinion of the Central Advisory Board on Education (CABE) – the highest body for policy scrutiny and approval wherein all the State/UT education ministers are duly represented; (b) debate and endorsement in the state/UT Vidhan Sabhas; and (c) scrutiny by the Department-Related Parliamentary Standing Committee followed by approval of the Parliament, is entirely undemocratic and in blatant violation of the federal structure enshrined in the Constitution, to say the least. The parliamentary approval of NEP 2020 is especially unavoidable since several of its policy provisions call for either amendments to the existing laws or enactment of new laws. Yet, no space for raising these issues was given in the parliament whose monsoon session was wound up in great hurry, under the pretext of Covid-19.

Yet, the government rushed for its implementation. A rushed series of online conferences, seminars and panel discussions were organized to eulogize the policy as a paradigm shift and a game-changer. The list of such sycophants included the official academia; the Vice-Chancellors; the Governors; the BJP Chief Ministers; the RSS leaders (who claimed that more than 80% of their demands have been accommodated in NEP 2020); and big corporate houses. It was assumed that the whole nation agrees and the only question was how to implement the policy.

The government has been making tall claims of consultations with people. However, these are absolutely unsubstantiated. Moreover, it is not important to just collect feedback unless the feedback is kept in the public

domain. Further, there must be an analysis of which set of suggestions or demands received from the people are acceptable or not acceptable; and on what grounds. What was the urgency of using such shortcut undemocratic and anti-Constitutional methods of its introduction and implementation? What are those agendas that the policy seeks to serve for which lockdown offered the best possibility? We take up these questions after examining different aspects of NEP 2020, issue by issue.

DANGEROUS DESIGN OF NEP 2020

Distorting India's Rich Historic Legacy

1. NEP 2020 uncritically mimics the long-discarded idea of the 'ancient golden age' propagated by the colonial Indologists, ignoring the deep-seated caste and gender discrimination. Further, its repeated and uncritical reference to the "rich heritage of ancient and eternal Indian knowledge and thought" reveals its Brahmanical prejudice, as it entirely ignores the non-Brahmanical rich contribution to knowledge and pedagogy of debate led by Gautam Buddha and Mahavira as well as by the philosophical work of Charvak in the ancient period. It side tracks the equally ancient and rich Tamil literature. It denies the relevance of the medieval period when the Islamic traditions interacted with the Hindu traditions to create syncretic Sufism leading to the Sufi-Bhakti and Sikh cultural movement and infusing fresh dynamism in several fields of knowledge like governance, commerce, architecture, engineering, literature, music and arts. Similarly, the contributions by the tribals of the central and eastern India as well as those of the north-eastern states to agriculture, forestry and management of the natural resources are not even recognized as part of the Indian heritage. The rich legacy of various movements in the field of social reform and education led by Kabir in Uttar Pradesh; Guru Nanak in Punjab; Savitribai-Jotiba Phule, Shahuji Maharaj and Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar in Maharashtra; Kandukuri Veersalingam and Gurajada Apparao in Andhra Pradesh; Iyothee Thass, Singaravelar and Periyar in Tamil Nadu; Iyonkali and Narayan Guru in Kerala; and Christian Missionaries during nineteenth and early twentieth century stand ignored. The aforesaid prejudiced perception of the otherwise rich Indian cultural legacy has led the policy makers to project the culture of a select dominant caste, a selected region and a selected period – the Hindutva Brahmanical, Manuwadi and Sanskritised culture – as the culture of the sprawling vast, plural and dynamically changing Indian sub-continent!

Undermining Constitution

Assault on India's Federal Structure

2. NEP 2020 blatantly violates the Constitution as it overrides the federal powers of the state/UT governments under Article 246 (Seventh Schedule) of the Constitution for taking financial, administrative, academic and curricular/pedagogic decisions about education – a subject in the Concurrent List (List III). It imposes centralized regulatory bodies, centralized eligibility, centralised admissions in state universities (NEP: Various Sections for HE), centralised parameters for evaluation and assessment through National Assessment Centre and even centrally coordinated tests at classes 3, 5 and 8 in elementary schools (NEP: 4.40 read with 4.41)! Such a mechanistic obsession with centralisation will end up eliminating the precious autonomy of institutions ranging from ECCE centres to university departments, much to the detriment of that humane teacher-student relationship which is so germane to democratic education. The aforesaid centralization of power is being undertaken in order to provide 'single window clearance' as per WTO-GATS dictates for expediting corporatization and globalization in education as well as the anti-constitution Hindu Rashtra agenda embedded in Brahmanical casteist and patriarchal hegemony along with religious fundamentalism.

Eliminating Secularism and Socialism

3. NEP 2020 deliberately excludes any reference to the lofty ideals of secularism and socialism – values enshrined in the Preamble as well as Part III and IV of the Constitution – which were advocated passionately during the freedom struggle. **This is in line with the Brahminical Hindutva ideology of the Sangh Parivar — it was against the constitution right from the time it was being drafted and demanded implementation of *Manusmriti*. Similarly, the idea of socialism is an anathema for the ruling dispensation that is keen to facilitate corporate plunder of common goods, social wealth and natural resources.**

Liquidating Social Justice Agenda

4. NEP 2020 withdraws the constitutional provision for reservation in admissions, recruitment and promotions and other duly legislated provisions of Social Justice, such as scholarships, fellowships, hostels, subsidies etc., available presently for the disadvantaged groups. The Social Justice agenda stands replaced in NEP 2020 by the ill-conceived notion of the so-called ‘merit’. What is considered as ‘merit’ in NEP 2020 is determined by and rooted in social privileges based on the notions of class, caste, race, gender, religion, birth place, language and ‘normal body’, inherited over generations. The replacement of Social Justice for SCs/STs/OBCs/Denotified Tribes and religious and linguistic minorities and also for the impoverished among the upper castes, as defined in the Constitution, by the socially privileged notion of ‘merit’ inherited over generations is against the Constitution.

Early Childhood Care & Education (ECCE) and Foundational Literacy and Numeracy

5. The NEP provision which has won much acclaim is the ECCE provision for the 3-8 year age group. Notably, ECCE for 3-6 year age group was included in all the previous policy documents and, since 1974, the ICDS (Integrated Child Development Scheme now popularly known as the Anganwadi programme), has been implemented all over the country. However, it basically remained a nutrition-health care programme, without making adequate provision for pre-primary education. Nor did the Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009 include the children in the 3-6 year age group. Hence, NEP’s addition of pre-primary education to create a Foundational Literacy and Numeracy programme has attracted public attention. Let us decode the intent and content of NEP’s proposal.
6. The ECCE proposal is totally bereft of any engagement with the idea and social reality of childhood. The policy focuses on a regimented conception of education reduced to “literacy and numeracy” (NEP: 1.2, 1.6 and 1.7) and geared to “outcomes” (NEP: 1.2) from early years itself. Such a flawed

and narrow conception of ECCE puts the onus on the children to be “school ready” (NEP: 1.1 and 2.5) instead of ensuring that schools are ready for all children. This top-down imposition of a learning-outcome centric model of mis-education on young children is to be further reinforced by a “Preparatory Class” (NEP: 1.6) before grade 1 and a “school preparation module” (NEP: 2.5) both of which are likely to increase performance-anxiety among children. The policy makes the seemingly progressive move to propose breakfast but justifies it not on grounds of the right to food, nutrition or happy childhood but on the ground of its instrumental value to leverage early hours for “productive ... study of cognitively more demanding subjects” (NEP: 2.9).

7. The proposal to shift anganwadis/pre-primary schools within primary schools (NEP: 1.4) will lead to uprooting the children below 5-6 years from their intimate neighbourhoods to the more formal institutional space of a distant school. The uncritical glorification of “rich local traditions of India developed over millennia in ECCE” (NEP: 1.3) not only ignores the possibilities of such elements being infused with anti-women and casteist language, imagery and values but also eulogises particular class-caste based norms.
8. The mis-educative and anti-child formulation of ECCE fits into the larger policy framework of marketisation and commercialisation of education. The formulation of a preparatory stage which encapsulates three years of pre-school and two years of grades 1-2, will certainly promote a further flourishing of the market of so-called ‘play-schools’. Already, we are witnessing a proliferation of start-ups to provide fully do-it-yourself plans for ‘edupreneurs’ hoping to invest in early education and ‘play-schools’. The fact that there is no reference of making it a legal and constitutional right reveals the real design behind the hype, which is to invite private capital to invest in and reap the rewards of an expanding and unregulated market. The conception of ECCE in this policy is more than likely to result in strengthening the hands of the private players and take away the unconditional right of children to gain age-appropriate and free admission into their neighbourhood state-funded school by requiring them to go through the said pre-primary courses and attain relevant certification!

9. Starting from ECCE to senior secondary schools, the NEP keeps proposing an informal role for ‘trained volunteers from both the local community and beyond, social workers, counsellors and community involvement’ in the school system. Who are these people and what is their eligibility for being invited to undertake informal tasks in anganwadis or schools? Obviously, the RSS cadre would be assigned the afore-mentioned informal roles who would be supported out of public funds. As per the RSS-allied education-related organizations, the most effective way of preparing Hindu Rashtra cadre would be to instil the Hindutva ideas and values (read myths, prejudices and superstitions) in the sub-conscious mind of the 3-6 year age group, thereby making them agency of the future generation’s thinking and social behaviour!

School Education: Inequality, Discrimination & Exclusion

Re-structuring of School Education

10. The NEP 2020 proposal to replace what the policy makers misconstrue as 10+2 structure of school education by a new structure of 5+3+3+4 is rather simplistic and ahistorical (NEP: pp. 6-7). Recommended by the Kothari Education Commission Report (1966) and incorporated in the National Education Policy (1968), the school education structure, over time has evolved into 8+2+2. Elementary Education of eight years (Class I to VIII) for the 6-14-year age group, being in consonance with the original Article 45 of the Constitution, now with the 86th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2002 read with the RTE Act, stands elevated as a Fundamental Right. This is followed by two years of Secondary Education (Class IX-X) and the next stage of Senior Secondary Education (Class XI-XII), each of these two stages resulting in formal certification for the next stage of education as well as employment.
11. In this background, the proposal for a new structure as 5+3+3+4 will weaken the Fundamental Right to ‘free and compulsory’ elementary

education of eight years as well as the legislative provisions of the RTE Act, 2009 through bifurcation and merging its first two years with the pre-primary years of ECCE. This amounts to reduction of the Fundamental Right from eight years of Elementary Education to six years (Class III-VIII), particularly when NEP 2020 has refused to seek extension of the RTE Act to either cover the children below six years of age or those above 14 years. The proposed structural change in school education opens up the entire ECCE, along with the first two years of school (Class I-II), to rampant commercialization. Further, this irrational and apparently impulsive measure of bifurcation of the elementary school is bound to lead to a range of policy-related problems impacting upon governance, teacher recruitment and financial provisioning of school education.

Vocational Education

12.NEP 2020 introduces Vocational Education from “pre-school to Grade 12” (NEP: 3.1). NEP 2020 claims that there would be “No hard separation between curricular and extra-curricular activities, between vocational and academic streams . . . in order to eliminate harmful hierarchies . . . different areas of learning (NEP: p. 5)” This claim is being made by a policy that mentions neither caste nor patriarchy as two defining manuwadi structural foundations of the Indian society. This deliberate omission is the very basis of the notion of Vocational Education that is being eulogized as “10-day bagless period sometime during Grades 6-8 where [the students] intern with local vocational experts such as carpenters, gardeners, potters, artists, etc. (NEP: 4.26).” The camouflaged agenda is revealed when euphemism of “fun course” is used to refer to “hands-on experience of . . . crafts, such as carpentry, electric work, metal work, gardening, pottery making ... as decided by ... local communities and as mapped by local skilling needs. (NEP: 4.26).” Who practices these crafts in our society? Such crafts are caste-based occupations practiced by SCs, STs, OBCs and by religious and linguistic minorities i.e. primarily the Muslims. If the “local communities” are allowed to decide the skilling needs of the locality, particularly in the rural areas, it would be the upper dominant castes who would be deciding

what would be the so-called “fun course” for students belonging to either the oppressed castes/classes or the upper castes/classes. If a girl in Grade 8 chooses to learn the metal trade or have hands-on experience in an auto-repair shop under the internship of the *Ustaad*, would this ever get the sanction of the “local community”?

13. A more serious concern is about the diversionary implications of the emphasis on vocational education in a multi-layered school system rooted in inequality and discrimination. Let us recall that NEP 2020 highlights Kothari Commission’s recommendation of School Complexes but decides not to even mention the Commission’s historic revolutionary recommendation of the ‘Common School System based on Neighbourhood Schools’ for all sections of society – from top corporate managers to ministers and bureaucrats to clerks, peons, factory workers and landless labour. In a multi-layered school system, by making vocational courses on par with the academic courses and giving students the so-called ‘choice’ of selecting either of these, the NEP 2020 essentially promotes exclusion. Therefore, the students, mostly ‘SEDGs’, studying in government schools would be encouraged to offer Vocational Options and intern with the local craftsmen. In contrast, the private schools would encourage their students i.e. non-SEDGs to focus on academic courses in order to score well in the Class X or Class XII exams and fulfil the aspirations of their upper class/caste parents for entering higher and professional education. Obviously, the government school students would steadily be diverted from the academic courses, with no option left before them except entering caste-based family occupations or join the low-wage skilled labour in the market. The much-hyped and frequently mentioned neo-liberal notions of ‘choice’ and ‘flexibility’ in the policy shall be the luxuries to be enjoyed by the students of the elite English-medium private schools. Clearly, the emphasis on Vocational Education in NEP 2020 is strategized to increase exclusion from Class III onwards to supply cheap labour for the investment being made in India by the international finance capital under Skill India Mission linked to Make in India programme!

14. In nutshell, NEP 2020 would be the first policy since independence to deny

formal class room-based education at school level under the pretext of either Vocational Education or, as we will see later, de-humanised online and digital courses denying access to more than 75-80% of the children and youth!

15. The message from vocational education is clear: By and large, the *Bahujan* children in government schools trained in a vocation even before they complete the age of fourteen years, will be excluded and remain as servile class/caste subservient to the ruling class/caste. In contrast, the students of the English-medium private schools will move ahead for higher education and high-wage earning placements either within India Inc. or in Silicon Valley or NASA to serve the global capital as high-wage earning but enslaved labour!

Dilution of the Fundamental Right to Education

16. NEP 2020 is anti-Constitutional also because it violates the fundamental right to equality (Article 14) and freedom from discrimination in education (Article 15-1) by making educational provisions that would downgrade the quality of education for almost 90% of our population belonging to the constitutionally valid category of ‘Socially and Educationally Backward Classes’ i.e *Bahujans* but misconstrued in this policy document as Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs). These provisions include (a) the School Complexes that are bound to steadily lead to further dilution followed by closure of remotely located schools, especially in tribal hamlets and Dalit localities in villages; (b) schools with diluted Pupil-Teacher Ratios (PTRs) due to deployment of the teachers in the School Complexes, not in schools; (c) reduction of infrastructural ‘inputs’ (facilities) in schools as per the Niti Ayog dictum of de-emphasising the provision of facilities; (d) one-way Online Education through E-vidya Programme and/or Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing (DIKSHA) that would exclude the majority of children along with the teachers lacking access to the devices and the internet; and (e) promoting

options in “non-formal education modes” of Open and Distance Learning (ODL) for the children of SEDGs who, being child labourers, “are not able to attend a physical school” at “A, B and C levels that are [presumed to be] equivalent to Grades 3, 5 and 8 of the formal school system (NEP: 3.5)” and similar other optional measures that would deprive the children of the oppressed classes/castes, named SEDGs in NEP 2020, of formal school education.

17. By not even mentioning ‘Free and Compulsory Education’ for children up to 14 years of age (including the children below 6 years of age), NEP 2020 takes away the gains of more than a century of people’s struggle during the freedom movement and beyond, duly reflected not only in the original Article 45 of the Constitution but also declared a Fundamental Right by the historic Supreme Court judgements (Mohini Jain 1992 & Unnikrishnan 1993) and further incorporated in the Constitution by the 86th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2002 and the RTE Act, 2009.

New Forms of Discriminations

18. NEP 2020 will exclude or ‘push-out’ 85% to 90% of the children and youth, particularly the *Bahujans*, from full-time formal education of equitable quality well before Class XII. This is because, under the pretext of “greater flexibility, student choice, and best-of-two attempts”, they would be relegated to substandard and retrogressive educational provisions such as vocational courses instead of academic courses from Class VI onwards and “all subjects and corresponding assessments . . . could be offered at two levels, with students doing some of their subjects [and exams] at the standard level and some at a higher level (NEP: 4.38).” No need to elaborate that the impoverished and disadvantaged students would be socially conditioned to ‘offer’ the courses/exams only at the ‘standard level’, thereby being denied the opportunity of Higher and Professional Education as they would not be keeping pace with the requirements of the centrally controlled NTA competitive exams. The NEP 2020, by dividing the children based upon their level of courses/exams, leaves no option for

- the *Bahujan* children and also the low-income groups among the upper castes but to become child labour or enter caste-based family occupations.
19. It must be noted that, unlike the previous three education policies of 1968, 1986 and 1986 as modified in 1992, there is no guarantee given in NEP 2020 of providing a minimum of five years of common course work in languages, mathematics, science and social science for all those who study from Class VI to Class X! This denial of minimum and equitable knowledge base for all students, irrespective of their socio-economic status, would not be ever justified by the neoliberal euphemisms of ‘greater flexibility, choice and options’. None of these euphemisms can divert the public attention from the core agenda of NEP 2020 i.e. denial of equitable access to knowledge leading to massive exclusion!
 20. NEP 2020 will also lead to massive exclusion of the disadvantaged masses (or *Bahujans*) from education because it further dilutes the ‘no-detention policy’ of the RTE Act by instituting conventional examinations externally co-ordinated by PARAKH¹ from Class III onwards. This return to conventional examination, euphemistically called assessment, – and that too externally coordinated – will increase the exclusion/ push-outs, thereby ending up in increased supply of cheap labour for the market.
 21. The proposal to establish PARAKH in NEP 2020 for centralizing all assessment parameters under the pretext of ‘co-ordination’ will have deleterious impact on the nature of curricular knowledge as well. It will give a further push to the adoption of single textbooks across the nation for each subject. Such a system of uniform assessment, curriculum and textbooks for a vast nation and plural society like India will be a readily available instrument in the hands of a fascist government for ideological indoctrination in the ideology of the ruling classes and castes. The centralization of curricular knowledge and assessment also promotes the coaching business, thereby excluding the impoverished classes/castes and

¹Centrally controlled mechanism in NEP 2020 for ‘Performance Assessment, Review and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic development’.

facilitating outsourcing of content preparation and testing to the corporate agencies.

Languages & Language Education

Farce of Mother Tongue as Medium of Education

22. It is universally acknowledged that adopting the mother-tongues situated in multilingual context as the medium of education would be more advantageous at every level of education, from ECCE to Higher Education, including Professional Education. Acknowledging the above position, NEP 2020 states, “As so many developed countries around the world have amply demonstrated, being well educated in one’s language . . . is not a detriment but indeed a huge benefit to educational, social and technological advancement (NEP: 4.15).”
23. However, this clarity is not reflected when the policy provides for the role of home language/mother tongue in education and knowledge acquisition/production. Look at the confusion, ambiguity and internal contradictions (NEP: 4.11). It states, “Wherever possible, the medium of instruction (we call it ‘education’, not ‘instruction’) until at least Grade 5, but preferably till Grade 8 and beyond, will be the home language/mother tongue/local language/regional language. Thereafter, the home/local language shall continue to be taught as a language wherever possible. This will be followed by both public and private schools.” What does it mean? The use of “home language/mother tongue/local language/regional language” as synonyms is dangerous, to say the least. How can regional language or the state language be allowed to replace the mother tongue of the child, even if the number of people speaking that mother tongue are rather few? Clearly, this anti-mother tongue retrogressive practice is the norm in the so-called Hindi-dominant (not speaking) states though a similar practice is followed in many non-Hindi-speaking states as well. The official policy has used Hindi to replace the rich languages like Bhojpuri, Maithili

and Magahi (Bihar); Awadhi, Braj, and Bundelkhandi (U.P.); Malawi, Nimadi, Gondi, Bhili and Bundelkhandi (M.P.) and a host of tribal languages in the other states of the region, most of them being predecessors of Hindi. The silence of NEP 2020 on this crucial question is an adequate proof of its consent to this misconceived language policy, acting as one of the key factors in exacerbating the alleged learning crisis of the Hindi belt and also leading to mass exclusion of the children from schools.

24. Further, the policy makers are not confident whether they can ensure the use of home language/mother tongue even until Grade 5, let alone using it “till Grade 8 and beyond” where this would be a matter of ‘preference’.
25. The aforesaid uncertainty and ambiguity continue to impact on the policy with respect to the language of the text books as well (NEP: 4.11). The policy makers are not even sure whether the teachers and students would share a common language! NEP 2020 refuses to clarify why the textbooks would not be available in home language/mother tongue. If the textbooks are not available in home language/mother tongue, what language would they be available in? One can assume that the textbooks would be invariably available in English! This explains why the policy makers had ordained earlier in the same paragraph that the ‘policy’ of home language/mother tongue as medium of instruction (*read* education) would be “followed by both public and private schools.” The truth is that the policy, using provisos and ambiguities, has given ample scope for the private schools to continue to use English as medium of instruction; otherwise, the education market for the elite would be eroded which the Indian state is committed to protect and promote. Finally, in the last sentence of the same Section 4.11, the cat is out of the bag. It reads, “a language does not need to be the medium of instruction for it to be taught and learned well!” With this truism, there should not be an iota of doubt that NEP 2020 shall continue to maintain the status quo of English as the dominant medium of instruction (*not* education), even in the alleged New India!

*Reinforcement of Sanskrit's Hegemony & Unfair Treatment of
Other Classical Languages*

26. However, when it comes to Sanskrit, all of the aforementioned uncertainties and ambiguities in the context of the home languages/mother tongues – the language of the masses – disappear. The policy states, “Sanskrit will be offered at all levels of school and higher education as an important, enriching option for the students . . . (NEP: 4.17).” Further, Sanskrit “will be taught not in isolation, but . . . connected to other contemporary and relevant subjects such as mathematics, astronomy, philosophy, linguistics, dramatics, yoga, etc. . . . Sanskrit Universities too will move towards becoming large multidisciplinary institutions of higher learning (NEP: 22.15).”
27. The NEP 2020 falsely views all Indian languages as descendants of Sanskrit. Therefore, as cited above, the NEP 2020 shows at many levels special interest in promotion of Sanskrit while giving tokenistic importance to India’s other richly endowed classical languages like Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, Odia, Pali, Persian and Prakrit. Indeed, heavy Sanskritization of many modern Indian languages has been already recognized as a serious problem, particularly articulated by the Dalit movement, in distancing these languages from the spoken colloquial of the masses. In contrast to the aforementioned policy-level provisions to promote Sanskrit for both knowledge production and transaction, the other classical languages would be “preserved for their richness and for the pleasure and enrichment of posterity . . . (NEP: 4.18)”, but not for knowledge acquisition and production in higher education!
28. In contrast to Sanskrit, the unequal treatment to the other classical languages is supported by hard core data too. The Union Ministry of Culture’s latest figures provided in response to a question in the Parliament in February 2020 reveal that the government spent Rs 643.84 crore on the promotion of Sanskrit in the last three years, 22 times the combined spending of Rs 29 crore on the other five classical Indian languages viz., Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam and Odia (Hindustan Times, 16 February 2020)!

29. Whereas NEP 2020 promises to make efforts to ensure that the “rich oral and written literatures, cultural traditions and knowledge of all Indian languages “stay alive and vibrant” (NEP: 4.18), a rich and contemporary language like Urdu, spoken in several states/UTs, is not even mentioned by the policy, despite being listed in the VIII Schedule of the Constitution.
30. NEP 2020 emphasizes the need to promote teaching-learning and research in regional and local languages up to Higher Education. However, until centralized tests for admissions to different study programmes in Higher Education, such as NEET & JEE will continue and until there are centralized Boards of Education, pressures on the learners to learn the languages of power and to rely on centrally produced textbooks such as the ones produced by the NCERT will continue to rise. If, the overall focus remains on the so-called ‘national’ knowledge and ‘national’ language, the promotion of mother-tongue as medium of education merely at the primary level is bound to fail. Through the proposals for the establishment of PARAKH and NTA, NEP 2020 is going to increase centralization at every level of education. **History tells us that until we stop seeing mother-tongue only useful for early education of children on account of pedagogic reasons and we do not address the larger political questions on language inequality, all such half-baked language policies shall remain moribund!**

Three-Language Formula: Trojan Horse for Imposition of Hindi and Sanskrit

31. NEP 2020 declares that “The three-language formula will continue to be implemented . . . there will be a greater flexibility . . . no language will be imposed on any state . . . three languages learned by children will be the choices of States, regions, and of course the students themselves,” but then comes the rider, “*so long as at least two of the three languages are native to India* (NEP: 4.13, italics & bold ours).” Strangely enough, the policy document chooses not to explain the ‘three-language formula’, despite the ‘formula’ being a highly contested and resisted concept and having

undergone several interpretations since its inception in 1960s. The National Education Policy, 1968, based upon the recommendation of the Kothari Education Commission Report (1966), unfolded the ‘formula’ as follows:

“At the secondary stage . . . the three-language formula . . . includes the study of a modern Indian language, preferably one of the southern languages, apart from Hindi and English in the Hindi-speaking States, and of Hindi along with the regional language and English in the non-Hindi speaking States. Suitable courses in Hindi and/or English should also be available in universities and colleges with a view to improving the proficiency of students in these languages up to the prescribed university standards [Kothari Commission: Section 3(3)(b)].”

32. The National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986 endorsed the above formulation (Section 8.7). Among the deficiencies in implementation of the ‘formula’, the Programme of Action (POA), 1986, an accompanying document of the above 1986 Policy, pointed out (i) a classical language (*read* Sanskrit) has been substituted for a modern Indian language in some States (*read* Hindi-dominant, not necessarily speaking States) and (ii) no provision exists for the teaching of South Indian languages . . . in the Hindi-speaking States. Some of the non-Hindi speaking States viewed the ‘formula’ as an instrument for imposing Hindi as an additional and unwanted burden on the secondary stage students and resisted its implementation. In late 1960s, the Tamil Nadu government rejected the ‘formula’ outright and instead instituted a ‘two-language policy’ of teaching at the Secondary Stage in the mother tongue of the student as medium of education, normally Tamil, but also Kannada, Telugu, Malayalam or whatever else was the student’s mother tongue, along with English as a language. In their defense, the non-Hindi speaking states pointed out that the Hindi-speaking states have failed to keep the terms of the ‘formula’ by not introducing “one of the southern languages” as a ‘modern Indian language (MIL)’ in their secondary schools and, in its place, substituted Sanskrit as an escape route (Sanskrit was introduced for

20% marks as part of the Hindi Paper in the Board Exams). The stalemate remains unresolved to date.

33. In recommending the same ‘three-language formula’ after half a century, NEP 2020 does not address any of the questions or issues that have been at the root of the aforesaid resistance. Its promise (NEP: 4.13) that “no language will be imposed on any state . . . three languages learned . . . will be the choices of States, regions, and of course the students themselves (see above)” does not carry any credibility whatsoever in light of the rider that follows “*so long as at least two of the three languages are native to India.*” This rider implies that the Hindi-speaking states, as has been the case since late 1960s, would manage to satisfy the terms of the ‘formula’, by choosing Hindi and Sanskrit in addition to English at the secondary stage. However, the non-Hindi speaking states would have no option but to choose either Hindi or Sanskrit in addition to their regional/state language and English in order to satisfy the terms of the ‘formula’!
34. Anticipating the challenge, as per a G.O. issued by the Commissioner of School Education, Tamil Nadu, the Chief Minister has already announced that “the State shall continue to follow the extant two-language policy [G.O.(ID) No. 115 dt. 8th September 2020]!”

If allowed to be implemented, the NEP 2020, using all available tactics as indicated above and promoting Sanskrit as the vehicle of Brahmanical culture rooted in Caste and Patriarchy, will succeed in its mischief of establishing that Sanskrit is the only ancient Language and is the mother of all Indian Languages.

Higher Education: Centralization and Commercialization

35. NEP 2020 surrenders universities to the management of the independent ‘Board of Governors’, to be appointed centrally. These Boards will replace the Academic and Executive Councils, presently the fountainhead of democratic functioning of the Universities. This provision would lead to

complete obliteration of the democratic role of the elected teachers' associations and the students' unions in the functioning and development of Higher Educational Institutions.

It should be safe to infer that the aforesaid all-powerful Boards of Governors would be packed with the Sangh Parivar cadre. This would ensure the RSS agenda being imposed on the universities.

36. NEP 2020 dismantles public universities through the concept of graded autonomy linked with National Accreditation Council (NAC). The colleges with better NAC score will be encouraged to move out of the university system under the scheme of graded autonomy. By linking the grants to educational institutions with accreditation, constrained by the Niti Ayog dictum of 'de-emphasising inputs, focusing on outcome alone', it ensures that only the well-funded (elite) institutions will get better funding and the majority of the already poorly funded institutions, like the state/UT-funded colleges, will be steadily phased out.
37. It reintroduces the four-year undergraduate degree program. This policy reversal would increase the cost of completing the undergraduate degree program for the substantial majority of the students belonging to the Socially and Educationally Backwards sections and the economically disadvantaged among the upper castes as well. Whereas this ill-conceived provision is re-introduced to help a miniscule segment of the students belonging to the upper classes and castes who want an easier access to the US universities and colleges, also with a comparable 4-year undergraduate program, it would be detrimental to the vast majority of the youth for whom the UG degree is crucial for seeking entry into either the next academic stage or a job.
38. The Post-Graduation program will be reduced in NEP 2020 to one year and the M. Phil program be scrapped altogether. This policy provision will substantially reduce the research base of the students.
39. NEP 2020 seeks to justify dropouts or push-outs, as the case may be, through "multiple entry and exit points" (NEP: 11.5 & 11.9) – a provision borrowed from the USA without a comparable context or need in India. Given the level of poverty and unemployment in India and the limited space in our HEIs, such "choices" would be more like 'luxuries' available

only to those belonging to the elite, both economic and caste-wise. It would be inconceivable for economically weaker sections and women, in particular, to extend the period of completing their courses by exiting and then coming back and resuming their degree programmes.

40. **(a)** NEP 2020 is sharply critical, may be even somewhat justifiably, of the present regulatory system for being “too heavy-handed”, “too much . . . regulated with too little effect”, “mechanistic and disempowering” and rife with “heavy concentration of power”, “conflicts of interest” and “lack of accountability” (NEP: 18.1). **(b)** Ironically, however, what it provides in its place through the over-arching Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) and its four verticals viz., National Higher Education Regulatory Council (NHERC), National Accreditation Council (NAC), Higher Education Grants Council (HEGC) and finally the General Education Council (GEC) far surpasses the level of centralisation of control over Higher Education – financially, conceptually as well as in terms of governance – way beyond the previous policy-makers could ever dare to conceive of, let alone legally impose (NEP: 18.2 to 18.11). **(c)** The consequence of the proposed “system architecture” in NEP 2020 can be envisaged in the following major dimensions: (i) The states/UTs, in violation of the Article 246 of the Constitution, stand essentially deprived of their existing rights and responsibilities pertaining to higher education; (ii) The Universities will lose their autonomy in determining the curriculum and syllabi, pedagogy, assessment parameters and procedures, learning outcomes and academic standards leading to a degree/diploma/certificate. This is because the General Education Council (GEC) will prepare a National Higher Education Qualification Framework (NHEQF) that will be “in sync with the National Skill Qualification Framework (NSQF)” (NEP: 18.6), the latter prepared under the aegis of the Skill India Mission. The NHEQF-NSQF shall be binding on all the Universities, public or private – a new level of external control over the Universities unforeseen in India since independence!
41. NEP 2020 proposes to establish a National Testing Agency (NTA) to conduct a single entrance examination for all university and college admissions as well as those of the Professional institutes in the country.

- Both PARAKH and NTA together will promote not only the coaching business and outsourcing of assessment/evaluation but also linking of testing in India's education with that of global agencies like PISA, to the detriment of the children from the oppressed classes and castes, particularly girls from these sections of society.
42. NEP 2020 provides for establishing the National Research Foundation (NRF) by the Central Government that would guide, coordinate and finance research across all disciplines in academic institutions, universities and colleges all over the country. NRF will play an overarching role in coordinating with all other present funding agencies in various fields like Science & Technology, Atomic Energy, Bio-Technology, Agriculture, Veterinary Science, Medicine, Social Science and Humanities (NEP: 17.9 read with 17.10). This centralisation and the associated bureaucratisation of decision-making in research and knowledge creation in a single body is bound to have an adverse impact on the spontaneity, creativity and excitement that lies at the foundation of high quality research.
 43. There is no space in NEP 2020 for teachers' associations/Unions for collective negotiations nor are democratically elected students' unions permitted either in school education or higher education.

Trade in Education: Siphoning Public Funds for Commercialization

44. NEP 2020 promotes commercialization of education under the pretext of promoting the 'philanthropic institutions' without establishing any effective mechanism for distinguishing between commercialisation and philanthropy. This deliberate ambiguity allows the government to siphon off public funds to the so-called 'philanthropic institutions' merely by extending the prevailing 'Public Private Partnership' to 'Public Philanthropic Partnership' – a dangerously modified PPP! In addition, like the other commercialised private institutions, the 'philanthropic institutions', too, are encouraged to optimise profits through self-financing courses and incrementally replacing scholarships with student loans. Further, NEP 2020 permits them to generate surplus and invest it elsewhere in starting new educational

institutions, presumably abroad too. This is the first time since independence that the government is officially allowing the private or philanthropic educational institutions to make profits and generate surpluses by hiking fees, withdrawal of fee subsidies, reduction in scholarships, salary cuts and dilution of infrastructural facilities. The only restriction is to ‘invest the same in education sector’ (understandably, either in the country or outside). The aforesaid policy changes, allowing free flow of capital and repatriation/siphoning of profits, open up the floodgates for unregulated commercialisation of education.

45. It completely deregulates fee and salary structures of educational institutions if they merely fulfil the requirement of online transparent self-disclosure i.e. ***‘Loot and exploit but declare!’***
46. Let us recall that NEP 2020 has decided not to distinguish between ‘public’ and ‘private’ educational institutions. This has opened the avenue for siphoning off public funds to all categories of private educational bodies – irrespective of whether make profits and generate surpluses; exploit students, parents, teachers and non-teaching staff; exacerbate inequalities; undermine Social Justice; and otherwise dilute the Fundamental Rights provided by the Constitution. Undoubtedly, these new provisions shall also enable the BJP-led central and state/UT governments to siphon public funds to the Sangh Parivar institutions like Ekal Vidyalayas, Saraswati Shishu Mandirs, in the name of Public Philanthropic Partnership.
47. The much-acclaimed Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme of NEP 2020 for the 3-6 year age group children has a hidden agenda i.e. opening and promoting a huge untapped market of pre-primary education, from play school/nursery onwards. To achieve this purpose, the policy makers have proposed to combine the ongoing public-funded nationwide Anganwadi Programme with the first two years of the Primary Schools i.e. Classes 1 & 2 for 6-8 year age group. How does this policy measure provide a fertile ground for tapping India’s vast pre-primary education market? As of now, the state-funded Anganwadi Programme has essentially focused on nutrition and health of the 3-6 year age-group children, with only a modest component of pre-primary education. This is the basic reason why the Pre-Primary Education from Play

Schools/Nurseries to KG-I & II has become one of the most profitable sector, if not the biggest, of India's market in education. NEP 2020 has raised the market's stakes in ECCE by making two crucial policy provisions viz.,

- (a) ECCE's status is raised in parental perception as a high-sounding 'National Mission on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy' whose objective would be to ensure that all children at the age of 6 years would be school-ready for entry into Grade 1; and
- (b) Even more importantly, ECCE henceforth would be integrated into the first two years of the Primary/Elementary Schools i.e. with Class I-II, without any assurance of public funds for upgrading the government schools. This implies that the parents would be keen to send their children to private ECCE centres (Play Schools, Nurseries) in large numbers since it now would lead to an assured entry into the elite private schools as well. Since the programme of School Complex is bound to lead to massive closure of the existing government schools, even the lower middle class would have no option but to rely on the private schools which begin from play schools/nurseries but guarantee entry into private elementary schools!

48. Not merely the private institutions of domestic capital but also foreign universities are being allowed to conduct their business in India and invest their surplus in opening more and more institutions elsewhere in the world. NEP 2020 is the first policy document which allows that private institutions can accumulate surplus or profit; and that they can withdraw it out of the institution and invest it anywhere else within 'education sector'. This will add another layer of exploitation in an already stratified system of higher education, promote transfer of talent from public universities to foreign universities and put students and parents under tremendous financial debt through educational loans. Notably, a joint document of the World Bank and UNSECO (The Task Force, 2000) reported, "there are prestigious universities from developed nations offering shabby courses in poor and developing countries, using their renowned names, without assuring equivalent quality." Ironically, NEP 2020 would promote foreign universities in India in order to enable them to mitigate the crisis of fund

cuts in their own countries even as they end up providing ‘shabby courses’ in India!

Online and Digital Education

49. NEP 2020 vigorously promotes online and digital education at all levels of education as a parallel and often as alternative to regular formal education. It conceives online and digital education as a strategy for curtailing dropouts and for providing education to the disadvantaged groups (SEDGs). However, according to the National Sample Survey (NSS) data (2017-18), only 8% of all households with members aged between 5 and 24 years have both a computer and an internet connection; only a little over 15% of rural households and 42% households in the urban areas have access to internet services (including through cyber I or neighbouring homes); among the poorest 20% households, only 2.7% have access to a computer and 8.9% have access to internet facilities. The rising cost of smartphones and other devices along with that of the cost of data renders online education way beyond the capacity of the masses.
50. There is centralization and imposition of uniformity of school education across states and union territories that is sought to be justified by the diversionary claim that “one nation, one digital platform” is most appropriate to the country. This is reinforced in the national program for television of “one class, one channel” which would promote the standardization of syllabi, learning and teaching methodologies and textual material. The curricular content of online education is increasingly being generated by the agencies of the transnational capital linked to the World Stock Exchanges. The profits of these agencies would be expectedly optimised by providing homogenised knowledge for all the countries of the world or the various regions within a country. However, this profit-making strategy of homogenisation would constitute an assault on the diversity of Indian society i.e. plural sources of knowledge and perceptions of society, history, language and culture, relationship with nature & natural resources and also the modes of production in the informal sector. In this sense, the

homogenised knowledge would trivialise plural knowledge frameworks, manipulate critical thinking and criminalise dissent, as has already been the case in recent years, for the sake of optimising corporate profits, thereby re-colonising and enslaving the human mind!

51. The dominance of Sanskritized terminology for naming and defining the various online-digital programmes reflects a Brahmanical mindset attempting to homogenize the education system across the country through euphemisms like E-vidya, Deeksha, Shiksha Vani, Swayam Prabha and others. The scheme of the VIDYADAAN is a clear reflection of the influence of this ideology. At its core is the understanding that knowledge is handed down by the 'guru' as an act of benevolence to students who must uncritically accept it as the ultimate truth. In this circumscribed framework, education is not recognised as an equitable right to be exercised by every young person as the basis for a life with dignity for all citizens of a democratic state and society.
52. Without the human agency of the teacher and also the human interaction with classmates, online education as an alternative mode to formal education will lead to serious psychological imbalance among the children and the parents alike as well as between the children and the parents. This may even lead to dangerous rise in depression and suicides, as is already evident due to significantly decreased human interaction during the lockdown induced by Covid-19. Moreover, face-to-face formal education provides opportunity for meeting children from different socio-economic groups and the opportunity for sharing their experiences, cultures, feelings and food etc. with others – an opportunity that is otherwise denied in a highly iniquitous society.
53. The policy is criminally irresponsible in not uttering a word of caution on the damage to human health and ecology due to the push to online teaching-learning and the proliferation of digital/e-devices. It also keeps silent about the huge setback and challenge posed by the intentional disruption brought by online work in education to the long-established and hard-earned service conditions and workers' rights.

Teacher and Teacher Education

54. No system can fulfil the commitment of providing equitable quality universal education to students without making concrete arrangements for the training and regular appointment of the required number of teachers. However, the NEP 2020 does little towards this objective. On the contrary, it proposes three measures elaborated below:
- (a) It makes the teacher even more vulnerable to Neoliberal curtailment in their service conditions – a pre-condition for the shift from public education system to edu-market;
 - (b) By maintaining and augmenting iniquitous teacher availability to government schools of ordinary category, largely attended by disadvantaged masses, it exacerbates the lack of environment conducive to learning, thereby leading to early and increased rate of dropout/pushout of such children in order to supply cheap labour force; and
 - (c) NEP 2020 intends to achieve the cultural agenda of the BJP-RSS by giving entry to its cadre in educational institutions from ECCE to Class XII and even beyond to Higher education.
55. Instead of providing qualified permanent teachers, the NEP 2020 amply provides for recruitment of ‘volunteers, social workers, counsellors, local eminent persons, school alumni, active and healthy senior citizens and local public-spirited community members’ at various stages of school education for informal undefined roles without any eligibility requirements which allows any ruling party, either at the centre or in the states/UTs, to recruit its political cadres from the backdoor and use them to promote its ideological agenda in education (NEP: 2.7, 2.9, 3.3, 3.7, 5.6, 5.10, 6.5, 6.20, 7.5 & 7.7). It would facilitate the BJP-RSS to fill educational institutions with their cadre even though they are otherwise unqualified for the said roles; and thus, get them funded out of the state exchequer.
56. Although the NEP 2020 proposes to close down substandard and stand-alone teacher training institutions, it does not propose any alternative plan for expeditiously ensuring availability of the required number of trained teachers. It simply envisages to provide teacher training through multidisciplinary institutions of Higher Education. For achieving this

objective of the replacement of standalone institutions with multi-disciplinary institutions of Higher Education, it keeps the year 2035 as the target year. This is yet another example of the mindless postponement of fulfilling the goal of the required Pupil-Teacher Ratio (PTR) for the coming two generations of students in Elementary Education.

57. Through its emphasis on ‘output measurement approach’ instead of the long-established ‘input-based approach’, NEP 2020 legitimizes both the RSS-run Ekal Vidyalaya’s (Single Teacher Schools) in tribal areas and also the Budget Primary Schools mushrooming in recent years in urban areas due to the dismantling of the government school system. Most of the schools in the above two categories are being run without trained and sufficient number of teachers and the required infrastructure which will be legitimised by NEP 2020.
58. NEP 2020 requires all teachers of the government schools to serve within an entire School Complex which could include remotely located areas within a radius of 5 kms to 10 kms or even more in difficult terrains. The School Complexes along with the pairing of each government school with a private school provides for dilution of the pupil-teacher ratio (PTR) and loss of teaching time.
59. In the name of creating ‘special educational zones’, the NEP 2020 seeks to establish yet another layer of educational institutions in an already stratified multi-layered school system.
60. Weakening of the service conditions through contractualisation of teachers has been an integral part of the destruction of the public education system by the neoliberal model of education introduced by the World Bank in 1990s through its District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) and continued to date through SSA. Therefore, NEP 2020 introduces ‘tenure track system’ for appointment and confirmation of teachers (NEP: 5.17), in contrast to the current system of appointment on probation. If no punitive action has been taken against an employee, at the completion of the currently prevalent system of probation period (which ranges from one to two years), he/she automatically becomes permanent. Under the Tenure Track system, the performance would be evaluated after a defined period

(of whatever duration) based upon which the teacher may be either granted extension of tenure or made permanent or simply asked to leave. It is another way for continuing contractualization and destabilization and for keeping teachers and non-teaching staff under control as bonded labour. The teachers from disadvantaged sections and women, in particular, will be additionally vulnerable to exploitation and discrimination in the Tenure Track system, given the existence of prejudicial and patriarchal mindset in the society towards them. NEP 2020 de-regulates the salary structure of the private school teachers which given the pairing/twinning of government and private schools at all levels (NEP: 7.10 read with 8.5c) will impact adversely on the salary structure of the government school teachers as well.

61. In similar vein, NEP 2020 denies time-bound permanent appointments against all vacancies of teachers as per the 200-point roster. It does not address the issue of the absorption of contractual, ad-hoc and para-teachers in a time-bound justified manner. It does not provide for appropriate in-service training and elevation of the Anganwadi/ECCE workers to the full status of a Pre-Primary teacher. It does not resolve the pending problems in availing overdue promotions to permanent teachers, pension for teachers who joined after 2003 and health facilities and maternity leave for contractual and *ad-hoc* teachers.
62. NEP 2020 abolishes the criteria of reservation in both the recruitment and promotion of teachers and replaces the entire Constitutional provision of Social Justice by the misleading concept of ‘Merit’ which represents the social privileges of the upper classes/castes inherited over generations (NEP: 5.2, 5.17 & 5.19). Further, the experience measured in terms of seniority will no longer be a criterion in the promotion of teachers. Hence, the promotions will become even more arbitrary which will compromise particularly the interests of teachers coming from disadvantaged sections and women.
63. While claiming that “teachers will not be engaged any longer in work that is not directly related to teaching” (NEP: 5.12), NEP 2020 is curiously silent on the long-established practice of massive engagement of the government teachers (but not the private school teachers) in census which

now goes on for years, elections and related tasks from Village Panchayats to the Parliament, local surveys and disaster relief duties.

Financing Education

64. There has been much media hype about the claim in NEP 2020 that the “Centre and the States will work together to increase the public investment in Education sector” from the current level of about 3.5% to 4% – depending upon how the government computes the figure – “to reach 6% of GDP at the earliest (NEP: 26.2).” However, this is not the first time that the policy makers have made such a claim. As recommended by the Kothari Education Commission Report (1966), this commitment was made by the 1968 Policy, followed by the 1986 Policy and reaffirmed in the 1992 review of the Policy (NEP: 26.1).”
65. Given this history, it was expected that NEP 2020 would provide a critical assessment of the reasons for the non-fulfilment of the promise for more than half a century by successive governments of various political coalitions, led by either Indian National Congress, Janata Dal, Congress (S) or the BJP! Otherwise, there is no reliable basis for the people to expect that the present regime would fulfil the promise. The trust deficit is heightened due to the following facts:
- (i) NEP 2020 misreads the recommendation of the Kothari Education Commission Report which had recommended that the public expenditure on education as proportion of the national income should be raised “from 2.9 per cent in 1965-66 to 6.0 per cent in 1985-86 (Kothari Commission: Table 19.9 and p. 893).” However, in 1985-86, the public expenditure on education had reached only 3.5% of the GDP and has been hovering between 3.5% and 4% of the GDP, or even less, from 1985-86 to date! It follows that there has been **a cumulative gap building up year after year for 35 years**. This cumulative gap, widening every successive year, is reflected in the lack of the required number of Anganwadis/ schools/ colleges/ universities and their inadequate infrastructure; contractualisation of teachers and unfilled vacancies; substandard Pupil:Teacher Ratios (PTRs); inadequate teacher education programmes; absence of

libraries/laboratories/ playgrounds, physical education teachers & games/sports equipment; non-provisioning of teachers and related facilities for arts, music and performing arts and so on. It further leads to steady dismantling of the Social Justice agenda; exclusion of the *Bahujan* children and youth from education and also those from the low-income upper caste families; and fee hikes forcing the students to depend on bank loans, indebting their families. NEP 2020 neither recognizes this crisis nor attempts to provide any action plan, short-term or long-term, to fill-up the aforesaid gap.

(ii) NEP 2020 takes no notice of the Report of the committee constituted by the Ministry of HRD, Government of India in October 2005 “to assess the resources likely to be available if 6% of the GDP is made available to the Education sector.” The committee chaired by Late Prof. Tapas Majumdar, the indomitable educational economist, submitted its Report in November 2005. After projections of the economic growth rates and the availability of the resources over the next decade, the Committee concluded that “six per cent of national income is the minimum level that is required *now* (italics in original) for public expenditure in the education sector . . . the actual requirements would have to be eventually seen as substantially larger in the future (pp. 6-7).” The Committee recommended that “three per cent [about half the allocation] be allocated to elementary education, 1.5 per cent to secondary education, one per cent to higher general education and 0.5 per cent to higher technical education (p. 11).” Based upon three comparative scenarios of the rate of growth in expenditure on education projected over a 10-year period from 2005-06 to 2014-15 (Table 1, p. 8), the Committee inferred that, starting from 2005-06, the 6% goal can be progressively reached by 2009-10 and, by maintaining the same rate of growth of expenditure in the later period too, the expenditure on education “might cross ten per cent [of GDP]” by 2014-15 (Table 1, p. 8). Further, the Committee contended that “if the GDP grows faster than anticipated (seven per cent) . . . this proportion as % of GDP need not continue to grow . . . can get stabilized around 8-10 per cent (p. 10).”

(iii) There are cogent reasons to believe that the Committee’s computations showing how to raise the allocations in education to 10% by 2014-15 and

then stabilize around 8-10% is recognition of the need to fill-up the cumulative gap building up from even before 1985-86. Notably, the Committee observes, “allocations to higher education suffered severely . . . during the 1990s and later, creating a huge backlog . . . reflected in the form of thousand of vacant teaching positions, and poor infrastructure in . . . institutions of higher education. The 12 times increase in allocations to technical education will also be justified, given the huge backlog of public investment . . . and the increasing demand . . . (p. 13)” Similar concerns in the elementary education sector must have led the Committee to assert, “the allocation to elementary education needs nearly to be doubled as a proportion of national income . . . [this] will have effect on demand for secondary education . . . [which] in turn enhances demand for higher education (p. 5).” The Report is referring to the Structural Adjustment Programme imposed by IMF-World Bank on Indian economy in the 1990s requiring that, in order to procure loan from the global market, the government would be bound to steadily *decrease* public expenditure on health, education and other social welfare measures. In the process, the World Bank entered India’s primary education sector in 18 states and almost half of the Districts through its District Primary Education Programme, DPEP (1993-2002). This led to dilution and distortion of the then existing policy provisions. The consequent dismantling of the primary education system provided the required fertile ground for the primary education market to flourish in the post-DPEP phase. Not that India lacked resources for its primary education. In the year 2001-02, when DPEP was at its peak, the World Bank’s loan constituted merely 1.38% of the total public expenditure incurred by the Centre and the States together on education!

(iv) Understandably, the above contention of the Committee to meet the “huge backlog” read with the damage inflicted by the World Bank’s DPEP on primary education would not fit in the ideological framework of NEP 2020. If the proposed measures to increase public expenditure on education are taken, there would be no need at all for either the investment from the domestic capital or the FDI from the international finance capital. Nor would there be any space for Foreign Universities either since the public-

funded colleges/universities would be well-provided for, the over-glorified recommendation of Foreign Universities by NEP 2020 notwithstanding. The Tapas Majumdar Committee (2005) asserted, **“the suggested levels of expenditure and the proportions of GDP have to be made available from government resources – centre and the states, and that they are not inclusive of any contributions from the private sector, community in general and students and parents in particular (italics ours) [read, fees and/or loans] (p. 14).”** This must be at least partially the reason for NEP 2020 not drawing any lessons from the Committee’s insightful study and conclusions inspired by the Constitutional vision.

66. There is yet another ideological logic that leads NEP 2020 to reject the basic principles of financing education that emerge from the Constitutional vision. It recommends “rejuvenation, active promotion and support for private philanthropic activity in the education sector . . . over and above the public budgetary support which would have been otherwise provided to them, any public institution can take initiatives towards raising private philanthropic funds to enhance educational experiences (NEP: 26.6).” Instead of using public funds for strengthening the public education system, the policy makers are proposing to siphon off public funds to private institutions!
67. The lack of resources for education is a myth that has been propagated since Macaulay’s Minutes of 1835, primarily by the upper classes and castes in order to maintain their hegemony over knowledge, employment and upward social mobility. The question of allocating adequate resources to education, health and other social development sectors is not at all a question of lack of resources but a question of political priority. How does the government find money for spending more than Rs. One lakh crore on a Bullet Train from Ahmedabad to Mumbai which will be used by less than half a percent of the people travelling on that track? Similar unending and uncomfortable questions can be asked to the ruling classes. Notably, the taxation rates i.e. tax/GDP ratio in India are among the lowest in the world even as the Non-Performing Assets (NPAs) imposed upon the public sector banks are touching embarrassing heights! Income tax exemptions to India Inc. of lakhs of crores of rupees have become an annual habit of the central

government. Inequality has increased in the recent past at rates surpassing the rates of the previous 70 years, in blatant violation of the Articles 38(2) and 39 (b & c) of the Constitution. All these and many more of such anti-people structural distortions were laid bare by the Covid-19 pandemic.

68. Here is a straightforward pragmatic solution provided that ensuring equitable, discrimination-free and state-funded entirely cost-free and, at the same time, emancipatory education from 'KG to PG' is a political priority.

A Social Welfare Tax of merely 2% should be levied immediately on the richest 1% (the 'Super-rich') of the country in order to generate an additional amount of almost Rs. 10 lakh crores annually for achieving the goal of education (and health too) with Social Justice for the masses. This long-awaited policy provision is mandated by Articles 38(2), 39(b) and, particularly, 39(c) in the Constitution read in "harmonious construction" with Fundamental Rights to Equality before Law (Article 14), freedom from discrimination (Article 15-1) and Right to Life (Article 21) in fulfilment of successive Supreme Court orders.

Let us not forget that today India is a rich country whose people are impoverished!

A NOTE ON CURRICULUM

The curricular structure as envisaged in NEP 2020 is divided into four stages, viz the foundational, preparatory, middle and secondary, but we may identify the following three emphases in the first two, the third and the fourth stages, respectively: foundational literacy and numeracy, 'Indian ethos' and culture (pegged heavily on a distorted study of language) and vocational courses. For the children of Bahujans and working classes, the **curricular conception of NEP 2020 stands on two legs, one reducing academic rigour, the other increasing hegemonic indoctrination.** Both are interconnected and intended to serve the interests of both the global masters as well as the national rulers.

At one level, the curricular focus of NEP 2020 can be said to be foundational literacy and numeracy and vocationalisation. At another level, there is a consistent and strong emphasis upon 'Indian ethos' and values. In all cases, there is a **clear design to centrally control all aspects of curriculum, including textbooks, daily activities, yearly calendars, report cards etc.** On the one hand, the policy **trespasses dangerously against states' autonomy** to organise schools, which is their right and responsibility as per the federal character of the constitution. On the other, it also takes the **unprecedented and dictatorial step of intruding into the classroom and professional space by decreeing, all in the name of various centrally-proposed and dictated activities, programs, courses etc, lesson-plans and pedagogy to be adopted by teachers!** The overall intent of the curriculum envisaged in the policy is to a) capture and command the curriculum centrally; b) dilute, de-academise and dumbify the content; and c) differentiate and segregate the content unequally between children from different classes. The following is an exemplification of the above-stated critique.

The declaration of **curricular objectives** is focused on students' becoming 'good, successful, innovative, adaptable, and productive human beings in today's rapidly changing world.' (4.23) This presents the larger changes taking around us as fait accompli to which students must learn to adapt in order to achieve success, which equals goodness. Obviously, there is no place for a transformatory role of education or agency of students and young people in such a curriculum. The prioritisation of fundamental duties

over rights (which are conspicuously absent throughout the text) is only a logical corollary of such a curriculum.

The proposal of a **National Curricular and Pedagogical Framework for Early Childhood Care and Education** (NCPFECCE, 1.3) makes the intention to even control and design pedagogy, something which falls in the domain of higher education institutions and professional and academic bodies, starkly clear. This is a clear attempt to pre-empt research based, disciplinarian development and practices of pedagogy. That this conception includes 0-3 year-old children hint at the Orwellian designs of total control over child-rearing practices and cultural influences in early childhood. Given the obvious slant of the curriculum, as envisaged in the policy, towards an uncritical and glorified conception of 'ancient India' and 'Indian ethos', it is inconceivable that this is a well-intentioned, leave alone an innocent proposal. Apart from this, the proposals for a pre-primary preparatory class and making children school ready as per the logic of foundational literacy and numeracy is a direct encouragement to a sort of coaching for the initial stages of curriculum termed foundational and preparatory. The curricular conception of foundational literacy and numeracy is itself built upon weak grounds and fails to learn any lessons from the discredited NCLB (No Child Left Behind, a standards and target-setting Act promulgated in 2001 in the USA). The targeting of universal FLN standards (by grade 3) by 2025 is an open invitation to disaster as it ignores the invalidity of borrowing an approach from the world of business, industry and corporate offices which is so ill-suited to the complex, humane and engaging world of education (2.2). Such targeting of outcomes is sure to produce distortions like 'teaching to test', manipulation, gaming, exclusion, dilution of content etc. Moreover, the cantering of MHRD's (MoE, post policy) role in deciding ECCE curriculum and pedagogy is also patently anti-federal (1,9).

That '**experiential learning**' is meant to be used as a Trojan horse to infiltrate biased content and regressive values in the curriculum is clear not only from the contradiction with its stated association with 'learning outcomes' and 'competency-based learning' (4.6) but also from more sincere references to its use 'for imbibing the Indian ethos through integration of Indian art and culture in the teaching and learning process at every level' (4.7). The open call to reduce curriculum (4.5) complements the emphasis on experiential, joyful and activity-based learning. The two together are

intended to serve the objective of dumbing down the content and processes of education, which is so essential to the attainment of the next objective, that is to indoctrinate into a hegemonic world-view. The soup of FLN, experiential learning, flexibility, fun-activity etc is, on the one hand, an attack on academic rigour and content standards, and, on the other, a ruse to impose centrally controlled, designed and surveilled curricular programs and classroom processes.

The obvious implications of the particular presentation of the **3-language formula and multilingualism in the policy** will be that state-run schools in north India will keep on teaching Hindi, Sanskrit and English; other states may provide their respective languages, English and Hindi/Sanskrit; and elite private schools across the country will offer their students Hindi, Sanskrit and English and/or a Foreign Language. To probe the claims of choice, it must also be asked as to whether students in state-run schools will get a chance to study foreign languages as students of elite private schools do. The policy does not commit to linguistic curricular fairness to students from all sections and schools. A close look at the language part of the curricular design proposed by NEP 2020 provides a clear idea of its biases. While Sanskrit gets independent and repeated attention, other languages, including those accepted as classical, are given short shrift. Thus, while textbooks for Sanskrit will be prepared even for the foundational stages, it will continue to be offered as part of the 3-language formula and included at all levels, no such large-heartedness is shown to any other language. Moreover, while exposure to other languages may take place through digital means, making no such suggestion for Sanskrit alone indicates that actual recruitment in schools will focus on it. All this becomes especially ironical when the policy declares its intent to ensure that these languages, which are actually spoken by millions and have a thriving tradition of literature, 'stay alive and vibrant', without saying a word about the near dead nature of a language which, if at all it survives, does so on rather generous and biased state-support!

NEP 2020 does a huge disservice to **the idea of India** and her students by the petty-mindedness it brings to the exercise and intent of the proposals. It stoops down to retorting to the infamous slander against Sanskrit by Macaulay, by asserting that Sanskrit 'possesses a classical literature that is greater in volume than that of Latin and Greek put together...(4.17)' Such pettiness is once again evident in excluding, for obvious and non-academic

reasons, Chinese/Mandarin and Arabic from the list of curricular foreign languages, which is limited to 3 east Asian and 5 European languages and ignores whole continents. Such a narrow conception is again evident in limiting Knowledge of India (4.27) to 'ancient India', an empty eulogy and unsubstantiated glorification of Indian ethos and languages (4.15, 4.29 etc) which caricatures learning about languages and cultures to memorising stock phrases (4.16). Of course, this shorthand prescription does not apply to Sanskrit! It is ironic that a policy which talks of millenia of development in local ECCE practices skips a whole millenia and more of Indian history as an exercise in blackout or censorship. This selective amnesia with facts and history is treason against reason and the rights of students and must not be countenanced in a policy on education. This intellectually lazy approach is extended to the matter of values, where not only are 'traditional Indian values' put before Constitutional values but particularistic manners and variedly interpretable cultural practices such as courtesy, patriotism, patience, *swachchhata*, *nishkam karma*, *sewa*, are listed as values to be developed in all students (4.28). Not surprisingly, the constitutional and modern values of justice, liberty, equality and fraternity come last in this listing, almost as an afterthought. In keeping with the strain of narrow-mindedness, it is proclaimed, "All curriculum and pedagogy, from the foundational stage onwards, will be re-designed to be strongly rooted in the Indian and local context and ethos in terms of culture, traditions, heritage, customs...ancient and contemporary knowledge...(4.29)", thereby putting a question mark on the universal elements of education and the research-based disciplinarian elements of pedagogy which are shared across countries. Such a narcissistic approach to curriculum which denies the universal character of certain knowledge systems and belittles the contribution of the rest of the world to knowledge and human values will only lead to narrow-minded and intellectually impoverished young people. Perhaps, that is precisely the intention.

While reading, writing and speaking are unthinkingly listed as 'subjects' in reference to the curriculum for the foundational stage (4.2), **the leaving out of Environmental Studies** as a subject fit in with the reduction of environmental awareness to 'water and resource conservation' (4.23), without any mention of that profit-oriented exploitation of humans and resources inherent in capitalism which is responsible for environmental degradation and climate crisis. Similar obfuscation of reality is reflected when the policy shies away from naming caste, communalism, patriarchy

etc for curricular themes. This curricular approach in NEP 2020 is designed to produce a blinkered and ostrich-like mentality among students. As with EVS in the earlier part, science too is conspicuously absent from the focus on later stages of the curriculum. In all, there seems to be no space in the policy's layout of curricular structuring for an engagement with either the objectivity and temper of sciences or the empathy and depth of arts. Almost all the space and attention is occupied by a shallow and distorted conception of language and culture which in turn serve vested interests.

Unmindful of its disastrous implementation in universities and its unsuitability to the social reality of large sections of students, the **policy suggests the adoption of a semester system** even for schools. This is to be seen with the intent to break down the curriculum into disconnected capsules and distort any meaningful engagement with subject matter and disciplines. What such a disjointed curriculum would readily provide space for is the government's propaganda programs like "Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat initiative" and "Fit India movement" (4.16 and 4.8, respectively). For example, proposals like 'week of language' activity (4.16) are highly likely to be used, as the commands to upload photos and videos of compliance have been showing us, to directly control the daily routine of schools. We have already been seeing how schools have become convenient captive spaces for the government's partisan and propaganda events mandatorily entailing collective oath-taking, runs, live telecasts of PM's speeches etc. NEP 2020 paves the curricular way to cement such anti-education interventions in schools. The hype about giving students the choice to select subjects at the secondary stage is proved hollow by the policy's affirmation that the suggested curricular structure does not require any infrastructural changes. Moreover, nothing in the policy indicates that multiple subject resources and teachers would be made more available than before in order to realise the choices of students. In fact, when the policy actually derides the idea and value of inputs, it is certain that the much touted subject-choice will meet the same result as the 3-language formula, only with starker and wider disparity across different classes of schools. The design of vocational courses, in its reference to ten bagless days, holiday periods, bagless days throughout the year etc, again in the name of experiential learning, is also intended to achieve a hollowing-out of the curriculum.

Board exams present a similar logic. They will be made 'easy' enough for all students 'going to school and making a basic effort to pass and do well' (4.37), but segregate students for assessment at two unequal levels in all subjects (4.38). The falsity of the purported logic of reducing stress, increasing flexibility etc for students vis-a-vis the Board exams is immediately proved in the proposal to institute centralised tests for assessing learning outcomes and tracking students at grades 3, 5 and 8 (4.40). All this boils down to a consistent recipe for diluting academic standards and segregating students into unequal tracks. Thus, bodies like PARAKH (NAC) and platforms like SAS and NAS will use 'learning outcomes' to push schools and boards to 'shift their assessment patterns towards meeting the skill requirements of the 21st century in consonance with the stated objectives of this Policy (4.41).' The policy could not have been more upfront about its meaning of the '21st century skills', a term otherwise left elusive and conveniently undefined in the policy. The gloss of '21st century skills' which is being put upon the minimalist and decontextualised parameters and tools of assessment that India's schools and teachers are being forced to adopt cannot hide the shadow of PISA (which the GoI has signed into) looming over these national centres of assessment and their agenda to make education subservient to the global market economy and finance capital order.

The policy's **proposals around school textbooks**, always an important part and signifier of curriculum, provide a textbook summary of the whole import of NEP 2020. Their content will be reduced, character will be centralised/nationalised but segregated as per the class background of students and schools and they will not be free (4.31 and 4.32). Indeed, privately published textbooks will be encouraged, in the name of additional material and the new PPP (public-philanthropic partnerships), thereby catering to the needs and demands of elitist private schools, whereas public distribution of textbooks will be discontinued to ease 'logistical burden' and 'conserve the environment' (4.3)! This concern about protecting the environment is unsurprisingly missing in the context of the much more harmful effects of a growing digitalisation and that proliferation of e-devices which this policy itself promotes unabashedly.

There is a special **section on 'gifted students with special talents'** (4.43 to 4.46) which is telling, especially in the context of no special attention

having been paid in NEP 2020 to children from marginalised and deprived sections or children with special needs or the girl child. This special focus also fits in with the larger discourse of 'merit' consistently and aggressively pushed by the policy. This promise of one-sided attention and material support is not only antithetical to the norms of social justice but also goes against the pedagogic responsibility of schools and teachers towards those students who may be struggling academically, mostly for reasons of material, social and cultural capital. Its ramifications are plain to see when we realise that the policy is proposing the minimalism of foundational literacy and numeracy and an intellectually compromised and indoctrinaire education for the masses, and special academic support for the 'meritorious' few.

THE POLITICAL CONTEXT OF NEP 2020

Today the right to dissent is being totally crushed as the neoliberal economic loot of the working people on the one hand and the Hindutva supremacist policies and practices on the other are being steam-rolled across the country. There is an undeclared Emergency as the Government of India (GoI) under Prime Minister Narendra Modi advances its harshly authoritarian mode of 'governance'. It has adopted a stridently anti-democratic approach to demolish the republican character of the Indian Constitution which embodies the secular, socialist values of the freedom movement and to set up in its place Hindutva's foremost ambition of the "Hindu Rashtra".

The public display of majoritarian religious hegemony, mobilization and vigilantism has become a divisive and aggressive tool intensifying the communal threat to the unity and integrity of a diverse nation.

“Hindu Rashtra”, according to the RSS chief, is a ‘collective bonding spirit’ based on ‘our eternal life values’. These same eternal values are advanced by NEP 2020 to be inculcated at the individual, familial and societal level. Only those who adhere to this timeless, ahistorical conception can be called true patriots and nationalists. The main objective of NEP 2020 basing education and culture on the "Indian ethos" is precisely to embed and instil this new false sense of patriotism in the future generation. The Hindu Rashtra is in fact an authoritarian State which seeks to hegemonize and suppress not only Muslims, Christians and other religious minorities, but also workers, peasants, petty producers, oppressed castes, tribals, artists, intellectuals and women.

So, while the Modi government furthers the interests of corporate-financial oligarchs like the Ambanis, Adanis and foreign corporations, it stridently exploits its Hindutva ideology as a means for gaining political mileage. This also serves a political purpose in diverting attention from the

incompetence of the Government in averting a rapid economic decline and in delivering on issues that affect the daily lives of the people.

Even before the Covid-19 pandemic, India was facing its most acute economic crisis since independence. Between 2011-12 and 2017-18, per capita real consumer expenditure in rural India declined by 9 per cent, a fall so massive and unprecedented that the government suppressed the NSS data. However, reality does not remain hidden on the ground. Unemployment has hit the highest levels in the past forty-five years. Consumer prices are rising perilously. The government's "solutions" to the crisis - fiscal transfers to the corporates, suppression of workers' rights, privatization of public sector assets, transfer of agricultural and forest lands to corporations, dilution of environment regulation regime to promote 'Ease of Doing Business' and the recent Farmers' Bills to increase corporate profiteering in farm produce and deprive farmers of their lands - have only aggravated it. Investment depends on anticipation of a growth in demand but already it can be seen that demand is actually dwindling because of these measures, since even a rupee transferred from the poor to the rich reduces overall consumption demand.

Central government has ruthlessly exploited the pandemic and lock-down conditions and the massive disarray caused particularly to the lives of masses of workers, daily-wagers and self-employed to push through its neoliberal agendas. Major labour laws (Trade Union Act, Industrial Disputes Act, Act on Occupational Safety and Health, Contract Labour Act, Interstate Migrant Labour Act, Equal Remuneration Act, Maternity Benefit Act, etc.,) have been suspended; the working day extended to 12 hours; employers permitted to hire and fire at will; contractors to function without inspection and regulation; and right to collective bargaining denied. Violating India's international commitments, the suspension of these rights, fought for and secured during the freedom struggle and after Independence, have pushed workers into the conditions of virtual slavery prevailing under colonial rule. The recent farmers bills pose a grave threat to the very survival of the farming community and to food security for the people.

The government has used its brute majority in Parliament to push through fundamentally anti-constitutional legislation like the Citizenship (Amendment) Act which questions and repudiates (as in Assam) the citizenship of lakhs of Indians, particularly Muslims, while granting citizenship only to non-Muslims from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh. Denying individuals this fundamental recognition on a discriminatory basis such as religion, not only deprives them of their political and civil rights but also opens the floodgates for systematic bigotry and persecution.

Similarly, NEP 2020 impinges on the constitutional principle of social justice by denigrating, in the name of the so-called 'merit', the Reservation policy which is a primary form of affirmative action in favour of oppressed castes, tribals, religious and linguistic minorities, women and the disabled. When inequality is so stark that barely 10% of the above groups even pass Class XII, disparaging the Reservation policy only means that there can be no 'level playing field' where the oppressed and the socially and educationally backward can 'compete' with the privileged elites.

The strictest restrictions on democratic protest allow the government to pursue the so-called 'reforms' at breakneck speed in the interest of international finance capital and big business in India. The infamous anti-sedition law of British colonialism is used against student leaders and activists opposing government's policies of fee hikes, budgetary cuts, privatization and corporatization of education which are part and parcel of the neoliberal strategy of 'opening up' social services like education, health and public utilities for profit. The corporatization, commercialization and centralization of education are being used to facilitate this process even though they violate constitutional federal norms, threaten equality of access and endanger the quality of education.

The past year has seen the worst assault against teachers and students of most central universities since independence. The draconian Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) permitting arrest, without trial, of members of designated terrorist organizations has been made applicable to

any individual who the government chooses to dub a terror threat. As a result, poets, academics, lawyers, public intellectuals, students and trade unionists, human rights and civil liberties activists have been picked up on fabricated charges and incarcerated, some for more than two years already, for having raised their voices in defence of the constitutional rights of citizens.

The self-styled patriots or ‘desh-bhakts’, who adhere to the regime, have the run of the country. They viciously troll and try to silence oppositional and critical voices on social media and on TV channels. On the streets, they attack targeted minorities and peaceful protestors mobilized against government's anti-people policies and actions. They endanger the democratic right to protest by spreading violence and fomenting communal tensions. They act with impunity, unafraid of being identified even on CCTV footage as they are ‘escorted’ by the police, protected by the ruling Hindutva regime and never held accountable even if their assaults result in the deaths of their victims. Since the Bhima Koregaon riots of 2018-19, a pattern has emerged in the violence directed against JNU students, in police brutality and vandalism at the Jamia Milia Islamia campus and finally in the terrible riots in north-east Delhi. The victims of violence are charged with heinous crimes and instigating trouble. Hindutva leaders and their right-wing storm-troopers, even when identified, are either never touched or else are immediately released on bail.

All institutions crucial for a functioning, vibrant democracy (parliament, free press, election commission, an independent judiciary, the police force and bureaucracy, and armed forces that are free of politico-ideological interference) are being shamelessly undermined. Such subversion is the modus operandi adopted by Sangh Parivar affiliates at all levels. They not only instigate vigilante acts but now provoke and protect heinous acts of mob lynching, rape and murder particularly against the Muslims, Dalits and women.

Even the highest Court seems susceptible to the possibility of vindictive threats or lured by plum posts and inducements. The failure to intervene on

behalf of migrant workers during the Covid-19 pandemic and the refusal to direct the central government to arrange their safe return home will forever be a mark of shame on India's highest court. The shocking verdict in the Babri Masjid demolition case actually rewards what the court itself regarded as an act of vandalism. A criminal case acquitted all those, including senior RSS members, who were charged with the crime.

The strongest ray of hope in this dismal situation was the spontaneous but critically self-conscious resistance and spread of the anti-CAA movement which brought alive once again the power of the Constitution, its values and its significance in the peaceful but resolute protection of citizens rights. It showed that the Indian people cannot be taken for granted by the ruling elite even when it resorts to draconian, fascist methods against them.

To carry this struggle forward we must clearly understand that government's policies of economic neoliberalism to commoditize all aspects of social life for the benefit of corporate profit are being facilitated by the present regime's ideological obsession with the goal of replacing India's constitutional and democratic Republic with a Hindu Rashtra.

The strategy of undermining all democratic practices, structures and institutions in order to single-mindedly pursue the interests of the less than 1% beneficiaries of the neoliberal so-called 'reforms', requires the destruction of the fundamental socio-political values adopted by India in the Preamble of the Constitution – liberty, equality and social justice for India's diverse peoples and regions.

Democracy and federalism lie at the core of the Constitution drawn up by Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar. Both are under severe attack and this is evident in the area of the so-called educational 'reforms' as much as any other.

Officially in the making since 2014, NEP 2020's intent is most evident in NITI Aayog's 'Three Year Action Agenda, 2017-18 to 2019-20 (April 2017) and the RSS's triumphant claims of satisfaction over the extent and success of their involvement in NEP 2020.

NITI Aayog represents the dominance of the World Bank and global capital in promoting the privatization and centralization of education to facilitate its commodification. Almost a century after its founding, RSS remains the fountainhead of a Brahmanical-Hindutva concentration of power to divide the working masses and consolidate a socio-religious hold over the people. Common to both is the subversion of constitutional democratic principles and the humanitarian and pedagogically grounded principles of education.

Throughout the opaque consultations over the National Education Policy (NEP), “a stream of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) affiliates were involved in the drafting process. There were meetings between RSS functionaries, education ministers of some BJP-ruled states, representatives of the Government and NEP drafting committee chairman K Kasturirangan” (Indian Express, 30 July 2020). Similarly, Niti Aayog when seeking to regulate the quality of social work courses offered at Indian universities held a meeting with social work educators from reputed institutions like Delhi University, Jamia Milia Islamia and TISS, but also included members of the Bharatiya Samaj Karya Parishad, an RSS affiliate that claims to “decolonise social work”. No doubt “ancient and eternal” Indian value systems will contribute the “Indian ethos” to future social work courses.

This is in keeping with the actions taken by the NDA government since 2014. Academic institutions of the social sciences, humanities and the natural sciences are headed by persons supporting a particular ideological tendency. Vice-Chancellors too are carefully chosen and since the student and faculty movements of resistance against the present policies of the government, even posts of assistant professors are being filled with such candidates.

The packing of Sangh Parivar supporters and cadres in school education will, with the help of NEP 2020, go beyond appointing teachers. A special category of Principal-administrators is to be set up on the one hand, while on the other a whole range of cadres can be inducted in informal capacities

as ‘volunteers’, ‘public-spirited’ social workers and respected members of the community right from the pre-primary stage up to Class XII.

Such policy provisions, and the process of determining curricula, syllabi and the preparation of text-books under central government appointed bodies, with higher education courses to be designed by the central General Education Council (GEC) and research in all universities to be controlled by the National Research Foundation (NRF), will facilitate the penetration and spread of anti-scientific, irrational and authoritarian modes of thought. Public funds would be used for organizational spread and consolidation of this tendency.

A grave threat to the future of Indian education is posed by the dominance of a dictatorial and communal ideology which shows no respect for, or affinity with, the democratic functioning and academic criticality required in a dynamic education system. NEP 2020, therefore, threatens to push education into a quagmire of superstition, conformism and authoritarianism.

WHAT WOULD HAPPEN TO PEOPLE OF INDIA IF WE DO NOT STOP IMPLEMENTATION OF NEP 2020?

The NEP 2020 has to be examined on the touchstone of Constitutional values deriving from the anti-colonial and anti-caste struggle of the people of India. The Constitution is not merely a legal document, but a social-political and philosophical document that strives to end the hierarchical and unjust traditional order based on caste and patriarchy and usher a modern society based on freedom, justice and equality. The constitution also mandates the state not only to provide fair and just governance while observing the Constitutional morality as a defining principle, but expects the state through policy intervention to transform the hierarchical, unequal and unjust hegemonic structures of dominance by continuously reducing all forms of inequalities- social, political and economic.

The NEP 2020 fails on every count of the constitutional values as we know them. Its dangerous impact of the people of India can be summed up as follows –

(i) The children and youth of oppressed and disadvantaged sections will be pushed out of the education system,

- by pushing students from disadvantaged background to vocational training right from the elementary education stage itself
- by establishing dual standards of academic courses and examinations
- by establishing multiple exit points in higher education courses
- by weakening the public educational institutions through under-funding
- by giving a free hand to profit-making entities to extort money from students leading to increased student loans and unbridled commercialisation of education right from pre-school stage to higher education.

(ii) All the gains of the reservation policy in admissions and appointment of faculty will be obliterated and education will become the monopoly of savarna castes and moneyed classes

- by replacing reservation in admissions and appointments with so-called 'merit' and other vague qualities like commitment, leadership etc; and
- by eulogising 'merit' without any reference to the unequal and hierarchical socio-cultural processes that have made 'merit' a monopoly of the savarna castes through generations;

(iii) Any possibility of transformative potential in education will be annihilated and replaced by reactionary indoctrination of Brahmanical and status quoist values suitable to culturally regressive agenda and corporate requirements

- by establishing complete control of the central government over the structure, processes and curriculum right from the ECCE stage to higher education leading to complete ideological takeover of the education system by the RSS and its sympathisers;
- by recruitment of RSS cadres at every level of education;
- by promoting a narrow view of education as numeracy and literacy;
- by reducing education and its knowledge content to skills, philosophically, pedagogically and programmatically, wherein skills would be imparted as per the socio-economic status of the children and youth, based upon class, caste, race, gender, linguistic background, birthplace and 'normal body', thereby reinforcing and widening the present gulf between low-wage labour (unorganized sector) and high-wage labour (organized sector);
- by paving the way of complete ouster of diverse languages of the people and entrenching the dominance of English, Sanskrit and sanskritised versions of the regional languages;

- by subverting the content and structure of education to the requirements of domestic and international corporate houses instead of the needs and aspirations of the peoples of India; and

- by eliminating any scope of critical thought and inquiry on part of the students or the teachers through extreme centralization and control of every aspect of education right from the stage of early childhood onwards.

(iv) Federalism in education will be ended and the rights of states/UTs under Article 246 (Seventh Schedule) to determine educational structure, processes, courses and content, evaluation and assessment parameters, teacher recruitment will be undermined

- by establishment of a plethora of central bodies like Higher Education Commission of India (HECI), National Higher Education Regulatory Council (NHERC), National Accreditation Council (NAC), Higher Education Grants Council (HEGC), General Education Council (GEC), National Research Foundation (NRF), National Testing Agency (NTA), etc that will control governance, curriculum, standards, research, finance and overall structure of the higher educational institutions; and

- by imposing centrally made textbooks and curriculum from pre-school to Class XII as well as higher education level on the states.

(v) Any possibility of democratic space for students, teachers and *karmcharis* in universities will be completely thwarted

- by creation of Board of Governors that will have control over all aspects of the university without any democratic representation of the university community

- by ending reservation in appointments and promotion and introducing 'tenure track system', the teachers will be exploited and arm-twisted to kowtow by the authorities. This will thwart the possibility of any kind of teacher activism in the campus.

(vi) The historical traditions and knowledge of tribal and other marginalised communities will be permanently pushed out of the education system

- by pushing a monolithic conception of history that privileges the savarna worldview, the NEP 2020 will lead to complete ouster of even the possibility of preserving and developing the diverse and rich traditions of knowledge, resistance, culture and language of the tribal societies and other marginalised and oppressed communities.

(vii) The public-funded education system would be destroyed

- by converting state-funded schools, colleges and universities into private institutions (including FDI-supported) which would have full freedom to increase fees and exploit the students and teachers, provided they declare the quantum and manner of their 'loot' on the required website;

- by incremental transfer of public funds to the so-called 'philanthropic' institutions (PPP), thereby resulting in massive closure of state-funded institutions; and

- by total sell-out of India's education system to the forces of international finance capital, represented by IMF, World Bank, WTO-GATS and marketing agencies, with a view to allow market fundamentalism to take control of knowledge transaction and production

To sum up,

The imposition of the NEP on the people of India will lead to the destruction of the diverse social, ethnic, religious and linguistic communities and their respective traditions, cultures, knowledges and world-views by a hegemonic, oppressive and monolithic Hindu Rashtra based on Brahmanical values. It will turn the people into slaves of corporate capital. It will lead to destruction of democracy, reinforcement of status quo, further feudalization of social relations and complete re-colonization of the economy. All the gains of the great anti-caste and anti-colonial freedom struggle will be obliterated. Instead of an enlightened

humane society, we will become a mass of regimented mob ready to carry orders of Brahmanical Hindutva fanatics and corporate bosses.

AIFRTE calls upon all sections of the struggling people, organisations and groups to unite at this critical juncture of history when we need to fight for the very space to struggle for our distinct and diverse visions, politics and strategies of emancipation.

ALTERNATIVE VISION OF EDUCATION

The aim of education is to contribute to building a democratic, socialist, secular, egalitarian, just, enlightened and humane society based on diversity, plurality and equality. In this sense, the role of education in society is essentially transformative, not status-quoist.

- Providing education to every child, adolescent and youth is the Constitutional obligation of the state and there is no place for discrimination in any form whatsoever including discrimination based on class, caste, race, gender, religion, language, region or disability.
- As enshrined in the Constitution, Social Justice to the oppressed, the deprived and the disabled should be organically built into the education system.
- It is the Constitutional obligation of every state/UT government to establish a fully state-funded, entirely free and egalitarian education system, based on mother tongue in multilingual context as a medium of education at all levels from pre-school to higher education including professional education and research. This obligation includes establishing centres of Early childhood Care and Education (ECCE) and a Common School System from 'Class I to Class XII' based on Neighbourhood Schools to be governed in a democratic, federal and participative mode in order to exclude disparities and democratize diversities.
- There is no place in education for communalism, majoritarianism or any form of hegemony based on class, caste, race, gender, religion, language, region or 'normal body'.
- There is no place in education either for negation, dilution or distortion of India's rich diversity.

AIFRTE rejects all laws and policies, including those of World Bank and WTO-GATS, for promoting trade or profiteering, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), international funding and/or Public Private/Philanthropic Partnership (PPP) in education. Further, it rejects loans from Government

agencies, Banks or the market, whether personal or institutional, at any level of education.

AIFRTE's AGENDA FOR PEOPLE'S MOVEMENTS

1. Abolishing Global Trade in Education: Oppose all policy provisions aimed at exacerbating commercialization and corporatization of education and fight for establishing an egalitarian state-funded public education system to provide completely free education of equitable quality from 'KG to PG' including professional courses and research. Private institutions demanding money from students in the form of tuition fees or other heads must be regulated and steadily abolished instead of allowing them to make profits and transfer 'surplus' from one institution to another within the country or outside.

2. Resisting Ease of doing Business in Education: The parents, students, teachers and their representative bodies shall exercise their powers to regulate the privately operated institutions in all aspects, including financial transactions. The minimum required level of infrastructural, teacher-related and curricular-cum-pedagogical norms and provisions shall be regulated through legislation.

3. Raising Public Expenditure on Education and Undoing Siphoning of Public Funds to Private Operators: (a) Fight for raising public expenditure on education to 6% of GDP from 2021-22 Budget itself in order to provide free education of equitable quality to every child and youth from pre-school to higher education through public-funded institutions. (b) Simultaneously, mobilise public opinion for filling up the gap in funding accumulated annually over the past several decades within the next 10 years, from 2021-22 Budget onwards. (c) Build democratic pressure on the central and state/UT governments to immediately stop siphoning of public funds to private operators in education under no pretext whatsoever, not even to the so-called 'philanthropic' institutions in the name of Public-Philanthropic Partnership (PPP). Philanthropic institutions, if any, should neither be allowed to collect fees or any other charges from the students nor receive funds from the governments. If these are genuine philanthropic

institutions, they should be persuaded to provide education from their own resources, as was the inspiring tradition during the freedom struggle and also in the wake of independence for several years.

4. Protecting Federalism, Fighting Centralisation: (a) Fight against centralisation of powers pertaining to education from ‘ECCE to Higher Education’ as provided for in NEP 2020. This centralisation constitutes a blatant assault on the Federal powers of the states/UTs as enshrined in the Article 246 (Seventh Schedule) of the Constitution. NEP 2020 seeks to centralize all powers ranging from developing Early Childhood education, school curriculum and text books; designing courses and instituting parameters of evaluation and assessment at all levels; governance of educational institutions at all levels; and even controlling knowledge and research in universities.

(b) Create democratic public opinion to resist the provision of a plethora of centralised mechanisms, bodies and institutions like the Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) and its four verticals viz., National Higher Education Regulatory Council (NHERC), National Accreditation Council (NAC), Higher Education Grants Council (HEGC) and General Education Council (GEC) [NEP: 18.2 to 18.6] and also National Research Foundation (NRF) [17.9 to 17.11].

(c) Mobilise parents’ associations, students’ organisations and teachers’ unions to seek scrapping of the National Testing Agency (NTA) which is equipped with powers to conduct entrance exams for all universities (including state universities) and professional institutions and courses. We must ensure that all entrance exams are conducted only at the state/UT-level, keeping in mind the local requirements and socio-economic conditions.

(d) Similarly, in ECCE and school education, mobilise parents’ associations, students’ organisations and teachers’ unions to call for scrapping NCPFECCE (for ECCE), National Assessment Centre (NAS) for school education and PARAKH (for both school and higher education) and other similar mechanisms and bodies provided for in NEP 2020. The NCERT curriculum/syllabus/text books shall only serve as models for

states/UTs and it shall be left to the discretion of the respective SCERTs to design curriculum, develop textbooks and formulate parameters for assessment and evaluation, in collaboration with the district-level DIETs.

(e) Most importantly, organise an all-India movement to seek restoration of education to the State List (List II, Seventh Schedule, Article 246), as was the case in the original Constitution, drafted under the visionary leadership of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar.

(f) All the student and youth organisations, teachers' associations, Trade Unions, Parents' Associations, and other democratic organisations in the non-BJP ruled states along with some eminent persons drawn from various walks of life may join hands to open dialogue with the Chief Ministers of the respective state/UT governments with a view to persuade them to reject NEP 2020 outright and refuse to implement it on the sole ground that it seeks to deprive the states/UTs of their federal Rights in the field of education at all levels in violation of the federal structure enshrined in the Constitution in Article 246 (Seventh Schedule). Further, these state/UT government may also demand that the subject of education may expeditiously be restored to the state/UT list, as was originally the case in the Constitution, through constitutional amendment in the Parliament.

Once the states/UTs regain their respective federal rights to education, each of these states/UTs would be free to formulate its own education policy in conformity with the Constitutional values of social justice, liberty, equality, fraternity, socialism and secularism in order to provide free education of equitable quality to all wherein the core purpose of such education shall be enlightenment of the individual and social transformation to build a humane, democratic, egalitarian and just society.

5. Protecting Democratic Functioning and Stopping Bureaucratization of Universities: (a) Mobilise students organisations and teachers' associations/unions in each college and university campus across the country in order to oppose the provision in NEP 2020 for bureaucratisation of the universities through centrally constituted Board of Governors (BOG) for all state/UT or central universities. These BOGs are designed to substitute for the democratic role performed presently by the Executive and

Academic Councils in decision-making for all matters concerning the functioning of the universities. **(b)** The policy doesn't even recognize the democratic rights of the university community – teachers, students and non-teaching staff. Hence, we have to fight for protecting the democratic functioning of the universities by strengthening and, if required, reformulating the prevailing legislative and executive measures. Our struggle shall aim at ensuring that the universities would remain free of external control and interference from the government or any other body. In the process, we also have to make sure that our Universities value their precious autonomy reinforced by their internal democracy and stand for the Constitutional values steadfastly.

6. Eliminating Three-tier Discrimination in School Education and Building Common School System:

(A) Mobilise parents associations, teachers unions, Village Panchayats, Zila Parishads and School Management Committees (SMCs) to build public opinion against the provision in NEP 2020 for new forms of **Three-tier Discrimination in school education** viz., **(i)** some children being provided education through proper formal schools while the majority, belonging to the historically oppressed sections of society i.e. *Bahujans*, being diverted to the non-formal education modes like Open and Distance Learning (ODL) programmes [NEP: 3.5] and the essentially inaccessible online courses [NEP: 24.4(c), (f) & (h)], thereby continuing as child labor; **(ii)** some children would be enabled to pursue academic courses like languages & literature, mathematics, social science and natural science in schools while the majority would be pushed to vocational courses related with caste-based occupations [NEP: 4.26]; and **(iii)** some students would study higher-level courses and write higher-level exams while the rest would study lower-level 'standard' courses and write lower-level 'standard' examinations [NEP 4.38]. The latter class of students would become ineligible for higher education where the entrance exams would be centralized under National Testing Agency (NTA) [NEP: 4.42]. It implies that, according to this policy, the majority of the children from the deprived and the disadvantaged sections of society joining school would be pushed to

vocational courses while some of these who somehow manage to pursue academic courses would be pushed to lower-level ‘standard’ courses and examinations. At the end of the day, most of these students, primarily *Bahujans*, would become ineligible for higher education.

(B) Notably, the above three forms of discriminations are in addition to existing discriminations inherent in the multi-layered school system, differentially available for the upper caste and the lower caste as well as the rich and the poor. Hence, the aforesaid mobilisation, as elaborated in **(A)**, needs to be extended and enriched to persuade or, if necessary, compel the respective state/UT government to guarantee that all children are provided **(i)** schools of comparable standards; **(ii)** education through classroom-based transactions; and **(ii)** equitable access to academic courses like languages & literature, mathematics, social science and natural science, at least up to Class X; **(iii)** No child below 18 years of age be pushed to any full-fledged vocational training and that **(iv)** the policy provision of dual courses and examinations shall be withdrawn altogether; **(v)** Fine & performing arts education, work-centred education and health and physical education shall be provided as integral part of education to all children up to Class XII.

(C) Although both the mobilisations and democratic pressure building, as proposed above in **(A)** and **(B)** are essential components of the movement for equitable education without any discrimination whatsoever, the gains made from them need to be protected from rampant commercialisation by bringing them under the statutory cover of the Constitution. Hence, the above movement needs to be taken further to demand that the Fundamental Right of the Children for Free and Compulsory education for the age group of 6-14 years i.e. Article 21A of the Constitution is extended up to age of 18 years in order to cover senior secondary education (Class XI-XII) and also downward in order to include the children below 6 years of age with Fundamental Right to ‘Early Childhood Care and Education’ (ECCE). In spite of the high profile rhetoric of NEP 2020 for providing ECCE, it preferred not to extend the statutory provision of Fundamental Right to all the children from 3 years to 18 years i.e. from ‘ECCE to Class XII’ so that this entire sector, on the one hand, is left vulnerable for commercialisation and, on the other hand, massive exclusion of the children from the

education system before becoming eligible for Higher Education. Keeping the crisis of unemployment in mind, as part of this movement for equitable education without discrimination, we should further demand that the Academic Junior Colleges, Vocational Junior Colleges, Polytechnics and Industrial Training Institutes are strengthened and expanded while also ensuring that all children are enabled to complete their Senior Secondary education, thereby having equal opportunity to either pursue academic or vocational education or any combination thereof.

(D) Our struggle is still incomplete without resolving the larger policy-based systemic challenge. Even if we win all the above battles, there will be systemic lacunae through which both the Manuwadi and the Neoliberal forces can enter and dismantle the gains made by the people's movements. **The Kothari Education Commission Report (1966) made the revolutionary recommendation of establishing a Common School System based on Neighbourhood Schools for all children, irrespective of their class, caste, race, religion, gender, language, birth-place or disability.** This recommendation transforms India's school education to become consonant with the Constitutional provisions of Fundamental Rights to equality (Article 14), freedom from discrimination (Article 15-1), social justice (Article 16), freedom of speech and expression (Article 19-1a), Freedom from Child Labour (Article 24) and Right to Life with Dignity (Article 21). In addition, the aforesaid recommendation is the logical consequence of the anti-caste discourse initiated by Savitribai-Jotiba Phule and Shahuji Maharaj in the 19th century and carried forward by Periyar and Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar in the 20th century. It is in this background that we have to carry forward our struggle for equality and social justice by demanding that **a fully public-funded 'Common School System based on Neighbourhood Schools' be established for all children** such that it will provide entirely free education of equitable quality from 'ECCE to Class XII' through the mother tongue medium in the multi-lingual context without any discrimination whatsoever and (a) be governed in the federal spirit of the Constitution democratically and in participative mode; and (b) such that it would *minimize inequalities and democratize diversities*.

7. Restoring Social Justice: Build a vigorous resistance movement in each college and university campus in the country to restore Social Justice agenda (including reservations) in both the admissions of students and the recruitment of faculty in Higher Education – an agenda that stands eliminated entirely from NEP 2020. There is no provision in the new policy for reservation in the admission of students belonging to categories of SC, ST, OBC, minorities, women, and persons with special needs. Nor is there a similar provision for these social categories in teacher recruitment. The policy does not provide for other duly legislated elements of Social Justice either like scholarships/fellowships/stipends, hostels and subsidies for tuition/hostel fees. As in school education, the policy aims at pushing all *Bahujans* out of Higher Education. This is why precisely the policy does not recognize the oppression of these communities for generations which has led to their marginalization and denial of knowledge. No wonder that Caste and Patriarchy do not find any place in the policy document. The Constitutional mandate of protecting these sections of society and ensuring a level-playing field for them through affirmative action is not even referred to in NEP 2020.

What is of even greater concern is the replacement of reservations by the so-called ‘Merit’ which represents social privileges inherited by the upper classes and castes, particularly the men, through generations. Various provisions in this policy are cleverly designed to push the disadvantaged communities towards Online and Open and Distance Learning (ODL) modes of education which essentially amounts to denial of formal education.

In this background, it is proposed to wage sustained democratic struggles in order to:

- (a) eliminate the provision for Three-tier Discrimination from school education and to ensure that all the *Bahujan* children and the impoverished children from the upper castes as well are enabled to complete education up to Class XII, thereby becoming eligible for Higher Education;

- (b) establish public-funded and entirely free ‘Common School System based upon Neighbourhood Schools’ from ‘ECCE to Class XII’ for all children across the country;
- (c) increase the opportunities in Higher Education by two-fold within five years (not in 15 years as targeted in the NEP);
- (d) create adequate number of colleges and universities so that education of equitable quality can be provided to all those crossing Class XII essentially through formal classroom interaction and not through online or distance mode.
- (e) continue reservations in admissions in Higher Education and teacher recruitment in both School and Higher education and implemented strictly as per law in all educational institutions, both public and private.
- (f) retain ‘merit’ and not the capacity to pay as the criteria of selection in competition for admissions both in the reserved and the open category but in no case, it may be permitted to replace the duly legislated provision of reservations in admissions and recruitments as faculty and also in scholarships/fellowships/ stipends;
- (g) augment the hostel facilities in schools, colleges and universities as per the requirement and subsidise the hostel fees;
- (h) abolish commercialisation of education at all levels of education so that high fee structure in both public and private institutions can be done away since it is resulting essentially in a sort of ‘reservation’ of educational opportunities for those from affluent families, the ultimate objective being making education at all levels entirely cost-free.
- (i) restore the prevailing Social Justice agenda (including reservations) and enlarge its scope as per the Constitutional mandate.

8. Strengthening Objectivity and Minimising Subjectivity in Teachers’

Appointment and Promotion: Organise teachers in both School and Higher Education to fight for restoring objective parameters in their appointments and promotions. In contrast, NEP 2020 seeks to introduce subjective methods of selection and promotion of school teachers which

include class room demonstration and performance. It proposes to liquidate the rights of the teachers to job security and legitimate promotion opportunities, thereby depriving them of their freedom to differ with authorities. As part of the 'tenure track system', it proposes for an undefined probation period, ostensibly, to ensure 'excellence' for regulation of services of the university teachers [NEP: 13.6]. According to the policy, the promotions will be given to persons with "other forms of service (?) to the institution and the community" and "demonstrated leadership . . . will be identified early and trained through a ladder of leadership positions" [NEP: 13.6 & 13.7]. This implies that the prevailing rules of reservation and seniority will be at stake. The policy seeks to replace objective parameters by the ambiguous "institutional service and community outreach" [NEP: 13.7]. This subjectivity will invariably lead to large scale nepotism, favouritism and recruitment and promotion of the right-wing cadre loyal to the ruling party, particularly from upper caste-class. In sum, this policy is against reservations, against seniority and against merit based on academic qualification.

Hence, the teachers' associations/unions should brace themselves to demand that the aforesaid undemocratic and subjective provisions of NEP 2020 regarding appointment, confirmation and promotion of teachers in school and higher education be scrapped altogether. At the same time, the existing rules and regulations will need to be further developed in order to minimize the subjective role of the authorities in appointment, confirmation and promotion. Similarly, the prevailing rules governing reservation in appointments and the rules of reservation in combination with seniority in promotions would require further strengthening and protection.

9. Saving Constitutional Values from Manuwadi-cum-Neoliberal Attack: The progressive and democratic organizations across the country need to expeditiously come together in order to protect the Constitutional values from the Manuwadi-cum-Neoliberal attack which the NEP 2020 is unleashing. The new policy is designed to undermine the Constitutional values of secularism and socialism which emerged from the twin anti-caste and anti-imperialist discourse during the Freedom Movement. The

aforesaid two defining concepts in the Preamble – Socialism and Secularism – are not referred even once in the entire policy document. Nor does the social justice agenda (including reservations) find any place in the NEP 2020. Nowhere does the policy refer to the Fundamental Rights of the people while restricting itself only to the Fundamental Duties, as was also the case during the NDA-1 regime (1999-2004). NEP 2020 doesn't recognize the cherished notion of unity in diversity which is at the core of the rich and vibrant legacy of our composite culture inherited from the Freedom Struggle. Hence, the agenda of saving and reinforcing the Constitutional values must be vigorously pursued with a view to rejuvenate the 'Idea of India'!

10. Stopping Infiltration of Sangh Parivar Cadre and Ideology: We need to be on high alert that NEP 2020 provides extensively for infiltration of the ruling party cadre and its ideology into educational institutions at all levels. The inherent fascist design of the Sangh Parivar must neither be overlooked nor underestimated even for a moment. We must all learn to decode the hidden agenda “by reading between the lines” in NEP 2020 and also undertake mass education programmes to enable the people from various sections of society to do the same. We, belonging to the educated sections of society, owe it to the masses that we share with them that we have learnt in order to save the 'Idea of India' for the future generations. For instance, take a look at the 'class demo system' provided by NEP 2020 for the selection of school teachers for appointments which would facilitate the ruling party to select persons close to their ideology; the proposed 'probation' in both school and higher education, as part of the 'tenure track' system, for confirmation of the teachers' services would make it possible for the ruling powers to build pressure on the probationer to fall in line with the authorities and their dominant ideology; similarly, non-adherence to the rule-bound reservations, seniority and qualifications in selection would be used to promote the cadre of the party in power; and the appointments to the proposed Board of Governors (BoG) to control universities will be done on similar lines. The 'volunteers, social workers, counsellors, school alumni, public-spirited members of the local community and healthy and

active retired personnel’ proposed repeatedly by NEP 2020 for various undefined informal tasks from ‘ECCE to Class XII’ are provisions for recruitment of the local cadre of the ruling party in the education system whose expenditure will be borne out of public funds i.e. out of the taxes paid all of us. As the BJP is in power, the *Sangh Parivar* will be ruling the roost.

The above scary narrative does not end here. The school text books will be written by the NCERT and the parameters as well as procedures of evaluation and assessment from Class 3 onwards would be dictated by the central agencies viz., National Assessment Centre along with PARAKH. The higher education courses would be designed by GEC and research in universities will be controlled by NRF, thereby giving ample scope for ideological infiltration in the entire education system from ‘ECCE to Higher Education’. Even the admission of students in Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs), public or private, will be screened by entrance examinations to be conducted by NTA, not by the state bodies. To sum up, the NEP 2020 is designed not only for centralization of administrative control but also for ideological infiltration and regulation in every aspect of education system. This paves the way for the *Sangh Parivar* to distort and derail the entire process of education for imposing regimentation of thought in order to facilitate a brutal fascist takeover of India. No wonder that the RSS leaders claimed that 80% of their demands have been accommodated by NEP 2020!

11. Resist and Fight Cultural Fascism to save the ‘Idea of India’: We have underlined above why we need to wake up to the nefarious design of NEP 2020 for facilitating infiltration of the ruling party cadre and its anti-Constitutional ideology in the entire education system from ‘ECCE to Higher Education’. Let us reiterate that, through NEP 2020, the Sangh Parivar seeks to establish a hegemonic order in all societal dimensions viz., caste, patriarchy, race, religion, language, birth-place, ‘normal body’ and culture. Therefore, the NEP 2020 speaks of India’s ancient history and then jumps abruptly to the modern period i.e. neoliberal phase of capitalism, without any reference to the medieval period, social reformation

movements and the freedom struggle against British imperialism. The history of the significant material and spiritual achievements under the Delhi Sultanates and Mughal Kingdoms during medieval period is deliberately ignored only because the rulers were Muslims; the social reformation movements are ignored because the policy makers want to continue and rather intensify the caste and gender discriminations and various hegemonies; similarly, there is no reference to the independence struggle because the policy makers are against the Constitutional values and rights which were products of the independence struggle. The NEP projects Sanskrit to downgrade the languages of the people, thereby downgrading the linguistic and cultural minorities and dismantling plurality. For the policy, culture is something monolithic and doesn't change in time and diversify across populations and communities. In the name of Indian culture, the policy document eulogizes culture of the ruling classes/castes of a select region and select time and thus negating diversities, struggles and development process. In nutshell, the policy uses Hindutva Brahmanical culture against the vast majority of population including religious and linguistic minorities, SCs, STs, OBCs; women and the disabled and thus essentially against democracy. There is a nefarious fascist design in the policy that provides for siphoning of public funds to *Sangh Parivar* institutions in the name of encouraging philanthropic institutions and facilitates the *Sangh Parivar* cadre to take over administration of educational institutions from *anganwadis* to universities through both formal and informal methods, thereby promoting infiltration of RSS ideology i.e. fascist ideology in the education system.

What is required today on a priority basis is the scrapping of NEP 2020 entirely, abolishing commercialization of education in all forms and shifting the subject of 'education' back to the State List. Only then it would be possible for the states/Uts to evolve their education policies in consonance with needs of the people and prepare democratic citizens who would pursue knowledge and work for equitable development of the society in with the values of the Constitution.

EVOLUTION OF THE NEP 2020

First Draft of NEP

1. India: Three Year Action Agenda, 2017-18 to 2019-20, Niti Ayog, GoI (Chapter 20: Education and Skill Development, pp. 135-143).

A careful analysis would reveal that the basic framework of NEP, 2020 emerges from this document of NITI Ayog.

2. Subramanian Committee Report (April 2016) which was never placed by the government in the public domain. It was ultimately leaked by Mr. Subramanian, former Cabinet Secretary, GoI, who chaired the committee.

Second Draft of NEP:

3. Some Inputs for Draft National Education Policy 2016, MHRD, GoI, placed on the MHRD website.

Third Draft of NEP:

4. National Education Policy, 2019 (Kasturirangan Committee Report, 484 pages, June 2019)

5. Draft National Education Policy, 2019, Summaries, July 2019.

Fourth Draft of NEP:

6. National Education Policy, 2019 (55-pages, October 2019)

Fifth Draft of NEP:

7. National Education Policy, 2019 (60-pages, December 2019)

Sixth & Final Draft of NEP:

8. National Education Policy, 2020 (65-pages, July 2020)

51 REASONS WHY NEP 2020 MUST BE OPPOSED

1. The implementation of the NEP 2020 is grossly undemocratic as it does not have the approval of the Parliament.

2. NEP 2020 is anti-constitutional as it overrides the rights of state governments for taking important decisions about education which is a subject in the Concurrent List of the Indian Constitution where usually, state governments should decide. It denies state governments their constitutionally provided federal power to take necessary academic and pedagogic decisions by imposing centralized regulatory bodies, centralized eligibility and evaluation tests and even centrally coordinated tests at classes 3, 5, and 8 in schools.

3. NEP 2020 uncritically mimics the long-discarded idea of the ‘ancient golden age’ propagated by the colonial Indologists ignoring caste and gender discrimination. It entirely ignores the non-Brahmanical rich contribution to knowledge and pedagogy of debate led by Gautam Buddha and Mahavira as well as by the philosophical work of Charvak in the ancient period and by the Sufi-Bhakti, Islamic and Sikh traditions during the medieval period.

4. It is anti-constitutional because it violates the fundamental right to equality, an obligation of the state, by making substandard educational provisions such as School Complexes, single teacher schools, home-based education, two-level of courses and exams, one-way digital education through E-vidya Programme, and open schooling, etc, for 85% to 90% of our population belonging to the disadvantaged category.

5. NEP 2020 ignores, through the ill-conceived notion of so-called ‘Merit’, the Constitutional provision for reservation in admissions, recruitment and promotions and other duly legislated provisions of Social Justice, such as scholarships, fellowships, hostels, subsidies etc.

6. Again, ‘merit’ is understood not as qualifications and eligibility conditions of teachers but as “commitment to the institution and society and

showing leadership qualities”, leaving scope to promote ‘politically committed’ persons to higher posts in governance and control of educational institutions.

7. NEP 2020 makes no mention of the constitutional provision of reservation for ensuring social justice to the discriminated SC/ST/OBC/PWDs and other disadvantaged sections.

8. It deliberately excludes the words secularism and socialism which constitute the legacy of the Freedom Struggle.

9. It nowhere mentions the Constitutional mandate of “free and compulsory education” for all children or even for the disadvantaged sections.

10. NEP 2020 will push 85% to 90% of our children and youth out of full-time formal education of equitable quality, relegate them to substandard and retrogressive education and push them towards lowly paid child labour or family occupations which are most likely to reinforce caste status.

11. It actually reduces the scope of mother tongues as the medium of Education: while the RTE Act provided for mother tongues as a medium of education up to grade VIII, the NEP 2020 reduces it to grade V only; and like the former act, this document also applies similar provisions like ‘except wherever not possible’ making the whole provision ineffectual.

12. It augments the processes of homogenization and centralization which are essentially antithetical to the survival and progress of mother tongues, regional and local languages, and diversity of knowledge.

13. Whereas NEP 2020 speaks nowhere about Urdu, despite it being listed in the VIII Schedule of the Constitution, it seeks to impose Sanskrit, almost like an obsession, at every level of education, including Higher Education.

14. It does not provide for Pre-Primary Education and Secondary Education as a fundamental right.

15. NEP 2020 will also lead to massive exclusion of the disadvantaged masses (or Bahujans) from education because it further dilutes the ‘no-

detention policy’ of the RTE Act by instituting conventional examinations externally co-ordinated by PARAKH from Class III onwards.

16. It promotes the commercialization of education in the name of promoting philanthropic institutions without establishing any effective mechanism for distinguishing between the two. It promotes self-financing courses, slashing of grants, and increasingly replacing scholarships with student loans.

17. It completely deregulates fee and salary structures of educational institutions if they merely fulfil the requirement of online transparent self-disclosure i.e. ‘Loot and exploit but declare’!

18. It dismantles public universities through the concept of graded autonomy linked with National Accreditation System.

19. It surrenders universities to the management of an “independent” ‘Board of Governors’, to be appointed centrally. These Boards will replace the Academic and Executive Councils, presently the fountainhead of democratic functioning of the Universities.

20. By linking grants to educational institutions with NAC and output measurement approach, it ensures that only some better performing (elite) institutions will get better funding and majority of already poorly funded institutions will be phased out.

21. It reintroduces four years undergraduate degree program which the BJP itself had earlier scrapped in Delhi University following the concerted struggles of students and teachers.

22. Post-Graduation programme will be reduced in NEP 2020 to one year and MPhil program will be scrapped altogether. This policy provision will substantially reduce the research base of the students. It will also cause workload fluctuation for the teachers in the university departments.

23. It seeks to legitimize dropouts, more correctly termed pushed-outs, through multiple exit points. It will be particularly difficult for

economically weaker sections and women to come back and resume their degree programmes.

24. NEP 2020 is sharply critical of the present regulatory system for being too heavy-handed but ironically, what it provides in its place, through the over-arching Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) and its four verticals viz., National Higher Education Regulatory Council (NHERC), National Accreditation Council (NAC), Higher Education Grants Council (HEGC) and finally the General Education Council (GEC), far surpasses the current level of centralization of control over Higher Education – financially, conceptually as well as in terms of governance.

25. It seeks to control research centrally through the proposed National Research Foundation, thereby undermining the spirit of spontaneity, creativity and excitement of research.

26. NEP 2020 proposes to conduct a single entrance examination centrally for all university and college admissions as well as those of the professional institutions in the country through the centralized National Testing Agency (NTA), ignoring the wide-spread inequalities and disparities as well as diversities in the school systems of different States/UTs, thereby undermining the federal role of the States/UTs guaranteed under Article 246 (Seventh Schedule) of the Constitution. Besides, both PARAKH and NTA together will promote not only the coaching business and outsourcing of assessment/evaluation but also the linking of testing in India's education system with that of global platforms like PISA, to the detriment of the children from the oppressed castes and classes, particularly girls from these sections of society.

27. Online courses are being introduced at all levels of education as a parallel and at times as alternative to regular education, even though these won't be available to the vast majority of the Bahunjan children.

28. All scholarships will be centralized in order to be made available from a single window across the country, strictly on the basis of merit and for fewer students, which means that scholarships based on social deprivation will be stopped and the total number of scholarships decreased.

29. Foreign Universities are being allowed to conduct their business in India and invest their surplus, through the profit derived from here, in opening more and more institutions anywhere in the world. This will add another layer in an already stratified system of higher education; promote transfer of talent from public universities to foreign universities and put students and parents under tremendous financial debt through educational loans.

30. It denies time-bound permanent appointments against all vacancies of teachers as per the 200-point roster.

31. It does not address the issue of the absorption of contractual and para-teachers in a justified and time-bound manner.

32. It does not provide for appropriate in-service training and grant of full status of Pre-Primary teacher to Anganwadi/ ECCE workers.

33. It does not resolve pending problems in availing overdue promotions to permanent teachers, pension for teachers who joined after 2003 and health facilities and maternity leave for contractual and ad-hoc teachers.

34. It will require all teachers of government schools to serve within an entire School Complex which could include remotely located areas within a radius of 5 km to 10 km, even across difficult terrains.

35. Through its proposal of School Complexes and the idea of pairing of each government school with a private school, the NEP 2020 provides for dilution of the pupil-teacher ratio and undermines the concept of neighbourhood government schools, thereby paving the way for their closure/merger.

36. It allows employers to increase employees' probation period, thereby allowing for exploitation of teachers.

37. It introduces a tenure track system to promote contractualization.

38. Seniority or experience will no longer be a criterion in promotions.

39. It abolishes the criteria of reservation/social justice in promotions.

40. It de-regulates the salary structure of private school teachers which, given the pairing/twinning of government and private schools at all levels, will also impact salary structure of government school teachers.

41. NEP 2020 provides for large-scale recruitment of ‘volunteers’, ‘social workers’, ‘counselors’, ‘local eminent persons’, ‘school alumni’, ‘active and healthy senior citizens’ and ‘public-spirited’ community members at various stages of school education, from ECCE onwards for informal undefined roles, thereby enabling ‘cadres’ to be recruited through the backdoor for promoting the ideological agenda of the ruling party in power in education.

42. Further, there is no room for associations of teachers for collective bargaining and nor are students’ unions permitted.

43. The centralization of power is being undertaken in order to provide single window clearance as per WTO-GATS dictates for expediting corporatization and globalization in education as well as to advance religious fundamentalism and serve the anti-constitution and anti-national Hindu Rashtra agenda embedded in the Brahmanical, casteist and patriarchal hegemony.

44. The use of home language/mother tongue/local language/ regional language as synonyms is dangerous. How can regional language or the state language be allowed to replace the mother tongue of the child, even if the number of people speaking that mother tongue is rather few?

45. The policy document chooses not to explain the ‘three-language formula’, despite the ‘formula’ being a highly contested and resisted concept and having undergone several interpretations since its inception in 1960s.

46. The much-acclaimed Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme of NEP 2020 for the 3-6 years age group children has a hidden agenda i.e. opening and promoting a huge untapped market of pre-primary education, from play school/nursery onwards.

47. Even more importantly, ECCE henceforth would be integrated into the first two years of the Primary/Elementary Schools i.e. with Class I-II, without any assurance of public funds for upgrading the government schools.

48. NEP 2020 is the first policy document which allows that private institutions can accumulate surplus or profit; and that they can withdraw it out of the institution and invest it anywhere else within the 'education sector', even shift it to foreign countries.

49. Through 'output measurement approach' instead of the long-established 'input-based approach', NEP 2020 legitimizes both the RSS-run Ekal Vidyalayas (Single Teacher Schools) in tribal areas and also the Budget Primary Schools mushrooming in urban areas, run without trained and sufficient number of teachers, and required infrastructure.

50. Instead of acknowledging the Tapas Mazumdar Committee's (2005) suggestion to make available educational expenditure only from the government sources, without including any contributions from the private sector, community, students or parents, NEP 2020 calls for not only the so-called 'private philanthropic' activity but also Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the education sector.

51. By encouraging privatization in a big way, the NEP 2020 is implicitly trying to proclaim that there is a lack of resources. This myth has been propagated since Macaulay's Minutes of 1835, primarily by the upper classes and castes to maintain their hegemony over knowledge, employment and upward social mobility. Allocating adequate resources to education, health, and other social development sectors is not at all a question of lack of resources but a question of political priority.

“Those who eat their fill speak to the hungry
Of wonderful times to come.
Those who lead the country into the abyss
Call ruling too difficult
For ordinary men.”

- Bertolt Brecht, 1937
From ‘A German War Primer’