

EFFORTS TO REINTEGRATE DROPOUTS IN LIGHT OF DRAFT OF NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY 2019

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ABSTRACT

Dropouts are the children who are not in the educational field because of various reasons. All those children who could not either get enrolled in the school or dropout from the school before completing the education. There have many efforts to bring all children in school. Right to Education was one such effort to achieve 100% enrolment for children upto 14 years. Draft of National Education Policy has also suggested various measures to ensure that all the students could be streamlined in the educational field. This paper critically analyzes the suggestions made in the Draft of National Education Policy to reintegrate the dropouts.

Keywords: Reintegrate, Dropouts, Philanthropic

INTRODUCTION

Right to Education (RTE) Act 2009 stated Free and Compulsory Education to all children of India in the 6 to 14 age group. In 2010, with the implementation of the RTE Act, it was expected to bring all the children in the group 6 to 14 in the educational fold. All the dropouts and children who have never been enrolled in the school were expected to bring together in the school. A lot of improvement is seen with the implementation of the RTE Act as the dropout rate at upper primary level came down to 4.03% and 17.06% at the secondary level.

The Draft of the National Education Policy 2019 aims at extending the provision of Free and Compulsory Education of RTE Act 2009 to the entire school-age group of 3 to 18 years and achieves 100% GER till 2030. Quality is the most neglected aspect of the educational field has found its place and provisions to improve in this policy. Along with free and compulsory education, quality has also been emphasised to bring all the children back into the educational fold and to prevent students from dropping out.

Apart from the reasons that force students to drop out such as accessibility, poor hygienic conditions at home which makes children ill frequently and uninteresting education which is of no current use to them, the policy also highlights one major concern that is of harassment and safety. Draft of the Policy does mention safety as a major concern which forces students to dropout particularly girls and students coming from unrepresented groups. Swatch Bharat Abhiyan has contributed a lot in lowering the dropout rate since non-availability of toilets in schools has forced many children especially girls to drop out.

Draft of the policy suggests two basic initiatives that can be undertaken to bring children back to school and to prevent further children from dropping out. First, to focus on effective and sufficient infrastructure at all levels upto grade 12. For this, the policy recommends upgrading the schools that already exist in terms of area, conveyance for students to commute and hostels for the needy students. Secondly, the policy recommends to carefully track the students who are out of school or have not achieved learning levels to achieve 100% Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) and quality education.

This article will analyse the recommendations made to fulfil the initiatives. Following are suggestions made to reintegrate the dropouts through effective and sufficient infrastructure:

- The policy recommends addressing the gaps in infrastructure. To increase the intake capacity of the schools where many students are out of school.
- The policy also suggests to merge the schools with very low attendance and are running as only primary, secondary or higher secondary schools into composite schools. It talks about the sharing of material and human resources through composite schools.
- Considering the main problem to commuting as a hurdle in achieving the 100% GER, the policy suggests enhancing road and transport facility to schools.
- Recommendations are made to provide transport allowance, bicycles and school buses to ensure safe transport to children with special needs.
- The policy also recommends providing hostel facility to students coming from far and disadvantaged economic background with suitable arrangements for safety.
- The policy recommendations to ensure the security and safety of students is applaudable. It recommends providing credible mechanisms for students to report

harassment. A 24 x 7 helpline number would be made available to report harassment at any time. It aims at adopting a zero-tolerance policy towards breach of child rights.

Policymakers suggest that if the infrastructure is in place, participation can be increased and meaningful learning can take place easily. Following are the recommendations regarding ensuring the increase in participation and learning:

- To enhance participation and learning, it recommends to monitor the attendance in the schools regularly and making SMCs more effective. Provisions like morning meal along with midday meal are suggested to increase the attendance of the students. Reinforcement in the form of reward to children with 100% attendance is suggested.
- Teachers are asked to monitor learning outcomes regularly to check the students who are falling behind and provide them, remedial classes. Students who are falling behind will be linked with programmes NTP and RIAP.
 - NTP – National Tutor Programme wherein good performers from each school will be provided with an opportunity to teach the fellow students for 5 hours in a week as a tutor and earn a certificate from the state.
 - RIAP – Remedial Instructional Aides Programme will draw people from local communities especially women who were good performers as instructional aides at the school level to formally help those children who were dropouts and have fallen behind in studies. These instructional aids would provide remedial classes during schools, after school hours and in the summer holidays.
- The policy has come up with an initiative of Second chance education programmes for long term out of school adolescents. It makes an effort to bring children back to the educational fold who have been out of the school for many years. Bridge courses and remedial classes, some skilful courses will be provided and focus will also be on vocational education.
- Role of school in children's health is emphasised in the draft of NPE 2019. The hiring of health workers at school complexes is recommended to keep a check on hygiene, malnutrition and other diseases.
- Multiple pathways of learning will be provided and strengthened so that education can reach to every single child of the nation. The policy also talks of assessing demand to improve and monitor the quality of education.

- The policy recommends multiple models for schooling. It recommends alternatives to schooling like gurukuls, e pathshalas, madrasas and homeschooling. It recommends to make the RTE Act less restrictive limited to ensure the safety of children and achieving learning outcomes. Emphasis is led on "Philanthropic Public Partnership" to open new dimensions to achieve the vision of multiple models of school.
- Extending all the provisions of RTE Act upto grade 12 and achieve 100% GER till 2030 i.e., all children are enrolled and engaged in quality education till 2030.

ROLE OF SOCIAL WORKERS AND COUNSELLORS

Role of social workers is emphasised in every aspect of school education in NPE 2019. Social workers will keep a check on the sanitation, health and hygiene in their area. Guide the parents on basic cleanliness and hygiene. Help school authorities in enrolling the students who are out of school by tracking the children in the respective area and maintaining the database. Social workers will ensure that every child is brought back to school and cared properly. Social workers and counsellors will help children who are falling behind with one to one teaching and providing one to one teaching.

Social workers will also help in identifying children with special needs and managing them so that they have hassle-free engagement in education. Hence the role of social workers and counsellors is extended to every sphere of school education to reintegrate the dropouts.

CONCLUSION

Almost all the possible efforts have been suggested in the draft of NPE 2019 to reintegrate the dropouts and achieve 100% GER. To achieve 100% GER and bring all children in school is a bigger task to achieve but not impossible. It is education that can bring equality and equity in society. So, the community have to work together to enrol all the students in school. It has to be a combined effort of all the sections of the society to get all the children enrolled in the school.

A huge responsibility lies on parents for the education of their child. By just blaming the system, teachers and infrastructure they run away from their responsibility towards their child. There are many instances when even after providing every single needed for a good education, parents are not willing to send their kids to school.

Importance of education will have to be emphasised and spread among people who think that sending children to school is wastage of time. Learning has to be meaningful to keep children engaged in school activities. Activities designed should be contextual and of immediate use so that children feel the need of engaging those curriculum activities.

The country needs a uniform education system with equivalent infrastructure and other facilities in every school. But is it important to clearly define the meaning of "Uniform Education System"? What would this system consist of? What is expected to be delivered through this Uniform Education System? How will this system work and funds allocated be regulated? Regular monitoring of learning outcomes is also required to bring quality in the education imparted and gained. A huge gap between the quality of education of poor and education of rich in our country is a matter of concern. The philanthropic public partnership will bring in new dimensions, visions and examples of varied school models.

The technology could be of great help to reach students living in far places. With technology, education could be provided at the doorsteps and assessment could be made immediately and frequently. Learning outcomes should be assessed immediately and frequently and the problem should be addressed then and there. Students should be not be promoted to the next level unless they achieve the desired minimum level of learning. The mother tongue should be medium of instruction till 9 years.

Dividing students on the basis on class i.e., class 1 students, class 2 students and so on, is completely a false idea. Students should be identified based on learning levels and age group. The race of completing the classes from 1 to 12 and scoring well by writing in exams is itself an incorrect way of assessing the quality of education provided and gained by the children.

Increase in intake of students in the present schools could disrupt the pupil-teacher ratio. So focus should be on creating new infrastructure and sharing of physical resources in a better way. Non-government schools and colleges should also make an active effort to provide education to economically weaker students and consider it a national responsibility of reaching out to every child. An Act should not be required to make them realize that they can adjust 25% seats for economically weaker section. They should identify students from the economically weaker section and provide them with the education they deserve.

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