A discussion on the draft National Education Policy 2019 was organized at Dharamshala, Himachal Pradesh with Teachers’ Associations by RTE Forum HP.

DISCUSSION ON DRAFT NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY-2019:-

- The Committee for Draft National Education Policy (Chair: Dr. K. Kasturirangan) submitted its report on May 31, 2019. The Committee was constituted by the Ministry of Human Resource Development in June 2017. The report proposes an education policy, which seeks to address the challenges of: (i) access, (ii) equity, (iii) quality, (iv) affordability, and (v) accountability faced by the current education system.

- The draft Policy provides for reforms at all levels of education from school to higher education. It seeks to increase the focus on early childhood care, reform the current exam system, strengthen teacher training, and restructure the education regulatory framework. It also seeks to set up a National Education Commission, increase public investment in education, strengthen the use of technology and increase focus on vocational and adult education, among others.

Key observations and recommendations of the draft Policy include:

**School Education :-** Early Childhood Care and Education: In addition to problems of access, the Committee observed several quality related deficiencies in the existing early childhood learning programs. These include: (i) curriculum that doesn’t meet the developmental needs of children, (ii) lack of qualified and trained teachers, and (iii) substandard pedagogy. Currently, most early childhood education is delivered through Anganwari’s and private-preschools. However, there has been less focus on the educational aspects of early childhood. Hence, the draft Policy recommends developing a two-part curriculum for early childhood care and education. This will consist of: (i) guidelines for up to three-year-old children (for parents and teachers), and (ii) educational framework for three to eight-year-old children. This would be implemented by improving and expanding the anganwadi system and co-locating anganwadis with primary schools.

- The Right to Education Act, 2009 (RTE Act): Currently, the RTE Act provides for free and compulsory education to all children from the age of six to 14 years. The draft Policy recommends extending the ambit of the RTE Act to include early childhood education and secondary school education. This would extend the coverage of the Act to all children between the ages of three to 18 years.

- In addition, the draft Policy recommends that the recent amendments to the RTE Act on continuous and comprehensive evaluation and the no detention policy must be reviewed. It states that there should be no detention of children till class eight. Instead, schools must ensure that children are achieving age-appropriate learning levels.

- **Curriculum framework:** The current structure of school education must be restructured on the basis of the development needs of students. This would consist of a 5+3+3+4 design comprising: (i) five years of foundational stage (three years of pre-
• The Committee noted that the current education system solely focuses on rote learning of facts and procedures. Hence, it recommends that the curriculum load in each subject should be reduced to its essential core content. This would make space for holistic, discussion and analysis-based learning.

• **School exam reforms:** The Committee noted that the current board examinations: (i) force students to concentrate only on a few subjects, (ii) do not test learning in a formative manner, and (iii) cause stress among students. To track students’ progress throughout their school experience, the draft Policy proposes State Census Examinations in classes three, five and eight. Further, it recommends restructuring the board examinations to test only core concepts, skills and higher order capacities. These board examinations will be on a range of subjects. The students can choose their subjects, and the semester when they want to take these board exams. The in-school final examinations may be replaced by these board examinations.

• **School infrastructure:** The Committee noted that establishing primary schools in every habitation across the country has helped increase access to education. However, it has led to the development of very small schools (having low number of students). The small size of schools makes it operationally complex to deploy teachers and critical physical resources. Therefore, the draft Policy recommends that multiple
public schools should be brought together to form a school complex. A complex will consist of one secondary school (classes nine to twelve) and all the public schools in its neighborhood that offer educations from pre-primary till class eight.

- The school complexes will also include anganwadis, vocational education facilities, and an adult education centre. Each school complex will be a semi-autonomous unit providing integrated education across all stages from early childhood to secondary education. This will ensure that resources such as infrastructure and trained teachers can be efficiently shared across a school complex.

- **Teacher management:** The Committee noted that there has been a steep rise in teacher shortage, lack of professionally qualified teachers, and deployment of teachers for non-educational purposes. The draft Policy recommends that teachers should be deployed with a particular school complex for at least five to seven years. Further, teachers will not be allowed to participate in any non-teaching activities (such as cooking mid-day meals or participating in vaccination campaigns) during school hours that could affect their teaching capacities.

- For teacher training, the existing B.Ed. program will be replaced by a four-year integrated B.Ed. program that combines high-quality content, pedagogy, and practical training. An integrated continuous professional development will also be developed for all subjects. Teachers will be required to complete a minimum of 50 hours of continuous professional development training every year.

- **Regulation of schools:** The draft Policy recommends separating the regulation of schools from aspects such as policymaking, school operations, and academic development. It suggests reading an independent State School Regulatory Authority for each state that will prescribe basic uniform standards for public and private schools. The Department of Education of the State will formulate policy and conduct monitoring and supervision.

Apart from these, many other recommendations are written in 484 (Four hundred eighty four) pages in the draft of National Education Policy- 2019. But, how, this policy can be efficient for children of this country and for Himachal Pradesh, for this purpose state level consultation was organized on 2nd August, 2019 in Dharamshala of Himachal Pradesh.

Program started in the morning sharp at 10:30 a.m. with registration of every person who came to attend this state level consultation. More than 81 (eighty one) teachers, and other stakeholders included: rte- activists, representatives from N.B.Os, SMC members, DIET staff and principal and some other stake holders of education attended this program.

**MS. AATREYEE SEN (CONVENER OF RTE FORUM - HIMACHAL PRADESH)** addressed the session and started the program. She presented some data of HP vis-à-vis Education and schools. Data presented by her showed that Himachal Pradesh could not even
implement only 10 parameters from 34 decided parameters of Education; this remained a big thing to worry. She said that in present time in Himachal Pradesh only 85 percent of school students are taking education in Government schools and others are going to private schools, this percentage is decreasing day by day. It’s not a good thing for Government schools. In India, education system is going towards privatization, so we should make a better education policy. She presented the draft of National Education Policy 2019, and discussed many points related to it.

MR. RAGHU TIWARI (NC MEMBER RTE FORUM & CONVENER OF RTE FORUM - UTTARAKHAND) said that there is lot of difference between present and older educational system. In present time the privatization of education is increasing day by day. People are more interested to send their children to private schools as comparison to Government schools. And there are many reasons behind it. Some reasons are like shortage of teachers in Government schools, lack of infrastructure and other basic needs related to children like laboratories, libraries, playgrounds etc. He said that Government should invest minimum 6% of the G.D.P. on the education for the better improvement and totally free education in school till 12th. He highlighted the point that in real scenario Government is just spending only near about 3 to 3.5 % of G.D.P. on education.

MR. RAJ KUMAR SHARMA , DEPUTY DIRECTOR ELEMENTARY EDUCATION KANGRA AT DHARAMSHALA shared his life experiences with present audience and he
also introduced Mr. Sunil Dhiman who is a national awardee teacher of Himachal Pradesh. He discussed some reasons that are responsible for the lower standard of education in Government schools like:-

1. Indulgence of teachers in non-teaching activities.
3. Teachers have not adopted the idea of “My School My Children”.
4. Teachers and students are never appreciated for their good contributions.

MR. SUKHDEV VISHWAPREMI (RTDC, PALAMPUR) said that first of all we have to know the meaning of education. What is the necessity of education? He said that the need of education is for the welfare of this society. He presented some good points related to National Education Policy. He told that ground level implementation of any act or law or policy is important for the success of any policy. He also mentioned social evils as barriers in educational institutes. Our society has to come out from all of these social evils but it will be only possible when our education system will be strong and every school, college, and educational institute will be free from every kind of discrimination. He told that for the implementation and for better results of any policy Government has to spend more budget and time in education sector.

OPEN SESSION:-

There was an open session of 15 (fifteen) minute’s duration for the representatives of N.B.O’s and SMC’s. During the open session lot of questions and queries were answered from every side related to school management, teachers, basic needs, mid-day meals discriminations, and other issues.
MR. JOGINDER SINGH (LECTURER FROM DIET, DHARAMSHALA) addressed the present audience about National Education Policy. He said that we have to focus on:-

1. Implementation of policy.
2. Reasons of dropouts.
3. Teacher’s training.
4. Motivations, Community Participations on ground level and not only in papers.
5. Monitoring, tutoring etc.
6. Education divided in three parts i.e. school based, home based and vocational education.

He told that schools that have minimum number of students should be merged with nearby schools. Parents should choose the school on the basis of quality of education but not only on the basis of facilities provided in schools. However, Mitra Ranjan from RTE Forum argued that it should be probed into that if a school has less number of children where are the rest of the children of that locality going. This is because it is the responsibility of the Government to provide free and compulsory education to children.

Other person Mr. Raj Kapoor, who was also from DIET, Dharamshala shared his life experiences about education sector and presented some aspects of policy in front of all and thanked everybody for their active participation.
MR. RAMESH MASTANA (EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF SHRAM (N.B.O) & MEMBER OF RTE FORUM – H.P. :-)

These useful recommendations were given by Mr. Mastana during his address.

1. To conduct regular training for the members of School Management Committee.
2. Adequate number of teachers should be available in schools.
3. Same curriculum in all schools including the schools of public and private sector both.
4. Privatization should be stopped.
5. CCE system should stop.
7. Involvement of community in development of schools and education system.

Mr. Mastana emphasized that if these points are taken care of and new education policy will be implemented on ground level, only then we can make a better education system.

MR. MITTRA RANJAN (NATIONAL SECRETARY OF RTE FORUM)

He reviewed many points related to the “Draft of National Educational Policy- 2019”. He also took valuable suggestions and recommendations from the present audience to make this education policy better which had to be submitted on or before 15th August, 2019.

“EDUCATION IS THE MOST POWERFUL WEAPON WHICH YOU CAN USE TO CHANGE THE WORLD.”
CONSULTATION WITH TEACHERS’ ASSOCIATIONS
DATE: 2nd August 2019
RTE FORUM HIMACHAL PRADESH

DAILY NEWSPAPER’S COVERAGE:

शिक्षा का व्यापारीकरण, भविष्य के लिए चिंता का विषय
सरकारी स्कूलों में निरंतर घट रही बच्चों की संख्या: रघु तिवारी

दिवाली से दिमाग तक