



## **Need for Revamping of Schools in the Light of National Education Policy in Tripura**

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### **Abstract**

*The objective of any education system is very noble that ensures no child losing any opportunity of learning and excelling because of circumstances of birth or background. The NEP 2020 is no exception to it and it sets a target of 100% Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in school education by 2030. According to the Honorable Vice President of India 'a complete revamp of the school education system is necessary to ensure that children enjoy schooling and become life-long learners'. The Government of Tripura has already resolved to implement the NEP 2020 in the state in letter and spirit. To implement the NEP 2020, state government needs to work upon a few major challenges confronting the roll out of NEP 2020 in Tripura. This article is an attempt to spell out the some of the key challenges that require proper attention of the government for rolling out the NEP 2020 in Tripura. The article is based on secondary data encompassing the opinions of some teachers, administrators etc. Although the suggestions could be many, a few that felt pertinent are discussed herein the article.*

**Keywords:** *National Education Policy, State Council for Education Research and Training, Curriculum, Early Childhood Care Education.*

### **Introduction**

In July 2020, the Union Cabinet had approved the New Education Policy (NEP), aimed at universalizing of education from pre-school to secondary level. The NEP-2020 that replaces the National Policy on Education-1986 is an inclusive framework focusing on the elementary-level of education to higher education in the country. The objective of any education system is very noble that ensures no child losing any opportunity of learning and excelling because of circumstances of birth or background. The NEP 2020 sets a target of 100% Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in school education by 2030. The Policy reaffirms that bridging social gaps in access, participation, and learning outcomes in school education will

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continue to be one of the major goals of education. According to the Honorable Vice president of India ‘a complete revamp of the school education system is necessary to ensure that children enjoy schooling and become life-long learners’. The NEP-2020 is no different from what he referred to.

The Government of Tripura has already resolved to implement the NEP 2020 in the state in letter and spirit. To implement the NEP 2020, state government needs to work upon few major challenges confronting the roll out of NEP 2020 in Tripura, which is one of states of North Eastern Region of India having a population of 40 lakh. Industrial backwardness, unemployment and unskilled workforces are some of the key challenges to the state. At the outset, it needs to be mentioned that Government of Tripura has been giving highest priority on ‘Education’ as an important agenda of development since it attained statehood in 1972 and allocating at least one-fifth of the budgetary expenditure on Education on an average. At present there are about ‘4945 schools in the state with 81 exclusively for girls and 46909 teachers are appointed in various schools to support the fee free education in government schools. Government of Tripura envisions to make Tripura as model state in the country and simultaneously adopts a number of development programmes alike introduction of NCERT curriculum, Nutan Disha (New Direction), smart classes in schools, introduction of vocational education in Tripura, conversion of some Bengali medium schools to English medium schools , distributing free cycles to girl students, training 40000 teachers as per the NCERT guidelines, etc. aimed at improving the overall quality of education, increasing the accessibility, affordability of large number of students from ST/SC/ minority/backward classes and arresting the drop-outs in secondary stage and onwards and making the vision a reality. It may be mentioned the overall quality of students in Tripura is below par the expectation and there are still some flaws that would haunt a common man if they know the report of the base line survey conducted during 25th February to 28th February, 2019 in all Govt. & Govt. Aided schools /Madarassas where 3, 16, 611 students of Classes III to VIII were evaluated covering 98.53%. The report shows that 46% of the class V students cannot do subtraction and 81% cannot divide in Mathematics subject and 60% students cannot read upto class II standard in Bengali (though Bengali in his/her their mother language) while 67% of the students reading in class VII cannot divide in Mathematics and 36% students cannot read upto Class II standard in Bengali. The roll out of NEP is thus a blessing in disguise for the state as many steps taken by government of Tripura coincide with the recommendations of NEP that may go a long way in translating its vision into reality. However, the journey has yet not picked up momentum; rather it is in nascent stage.

Given the backdrop, this article is an attempt to spell out some of the key challenges that require proper attention of the government for rolling out the NEP 2020 in Tripura. The article is based on secondary data encompassing the opinions of some teachers, administrators etc. Although the suggestions could be many, but a few that are felt pertinent is discussed below:

1. The NEP 2020 has proposed a structural change from ‘10+ 2’ to ‘5+3+3+4’ called as foundational, preparatory, middle stage and secondary respectively. In the earlier

structure, children from 3 to 6 were not covered but herein a strong base for Early Childhood Care Education (ECCE) from the age of 3 years is proposed. ECCE would consist of flexible, multi-faceted, multi-level, play-based, activity-based, and inquiry-based learning about, e.g., alphabets, languages, numbers, counting, colours, shapes, indoor and outdoor play, puzzles and logical thinking, problem solving, drawing, painting and other visual art, craft, drama and puppetry, music and movement. Although NCERT would develop curricular and pedagogical framework for ECCE in two parts namely a sub framework for 0-3 years and for 3-8 years, the various institutions like (a) stand-alone Anganwadis; (b) Anganwadis co-located with primary schools etc. need to be expanded across the nook and corner of the state and strengthened as early as possible with adequate number of teachers specially trained in the curriculum and pedagogy of ECCE. Available records show that there are about 10145 AWCs are in the state of which 9911 are operational and there are about 9911 Anganwadi workers (AWWs) are in position catering services to about 3.3 lakh children within 6 years of age with average in-take of 33 children in each AWC besides 31000 children enrolled in other schools of the state. Thus at least 3.60 lakh children are likely to join the new structure.

Of these AWCs, 9273 are stationed in governmental building with 8196 AWCs having drinking water and 6160 with serviceable toilet facility. Now the government has to focus on building the necessary infrastructure for the other AWCs suffering from basic amenities of drinking and toilet facilities including infrastructure facilities for their play activities. The question also arises whether the existing Anganwadi centres (AWC) would serve the purposes or not and whether available teachers for children from 0-3 years are sufficient enough and eligible and capable enough as per requirement spelt out by NEP to meet the needs of the state as a whole besides the hefty task of training all of them on the curriculum and pedagogy of ECCE by the state government. This is a major challenge on which the state government needs to harp on immediately to fill the void.

2. Development of content, curriculum and pedagogy for preparatory, middle and secondary structure: It is already told that the 10+2 structure of school curricula is to be replaced by a 5+3+3+4 curricular structure corresponding to ages 3-8, 8-11, 11-14, and 14-18 years respectively. The new system will have 12 years of schooling with three years of Anganwadi or pre-schooling. To implement the changes at other levels, a thorough restructuring of the curriculum, pedagogy and the content would be done as per the NCF (National Curriculum Framework) but at the state level, the whole work is to be supervised and monitored by the state government and pedagogical structure should be such that the outcome of learning should not be based on the completion of course but on the understanding of the topic. Vocational or skill-based learning is must and thus it should also be included right from class VI for which nature and content of curriculum need to be ascertained including modus operandi. Practical and experiential learning should be emphasized to in still the 21st century skills of creativity and critical thinking in the children. Thus the inclusion of some

curriculum related to local traditions, custom, heritage, traditional and tribal knowledge need to be identified and included into the vocational courses so that 21st century skills meet the local interests amply, promote sustainable development and stand useful to the students in latter part of their lives with proper pedagogy so that they may be imparted to the students at ease keeping in view the overall policy perspectives. Thus, proper planning in this field needs to be done as early as possible. Otherwise, it would be alike the mere imitation. To make Bharat as “Atmanirbhar”, all “Bharatvasis” need to be ‘Atmanirbhar’ for which vocal for local as advocated by the PM is must. The underlying objective of NEP also conforms to it. Thus, it is a very important part requiring serious consideration by the state government.

3. Separate stage wise classifications of schools showing number of schools covered under foundational, preparatory, middle and secondary should be done with number of students and teachers in respective category. At present in Tripura, there are 4945 schools classified as 2578 junior basic schools, 1245 senior Basic schools, 669 high schools and 453 higher secondary schools and these need to be re-classified in line with the recommendation of NEP 2020. Simultaneously the number of teachers should be also pooled together in the respective category and notified. Besides, the NEP 2020 also calls for the establishment of school complex in the state as per the guidelines where existing schools have tiny enrolment. Thus, clubbing some schools is necessary because small schools are economically suboptimal with lack of physical infrastructure as well. In Tripura also, there are many schools where enrolment of students in primary schools, upper primary and secondary schools is very slender and thus government may think of clubbing some schools together and pool the teachers and other transferable infrastructure in one school and create some school complexes for better management, economy and promotion and sustenance of quality. The average number of students in primary schools in Tripura is 44 while for high schools it stands at 282 only. The government may think of developing at least three to four clusters in each block without compromising the accessibility of students living in the remote and far flung areas particularly in tribal dominated hilly areas. The creation of school complexes could go a long way towards building vibrant teacher communities. It would also help ensure excellent subject-wise distribution of teachers, creating a more vibrant teacher knowledge base. Teachers at very small schools will not remain and feel isolated any longer and may become part of and work with larger school complex communities, sharing community best practices with each other and working collectively and collaboratively and this would also make learning to students joyful, pervasive and effective as well. This, in turn, would cause effective distribution of teachers in all schools and no school would suffer from the scarcity of subject teacher(s) reducing the burden on government regarding transfer of teachers recurrently.
4. Training of teachers: It is a serious challenge for the state government given the large number of teachers already lacking adequate training. Although the situation has improved over the last three and four years, it is still a point to ponder upon. The

guidelines of the NEP 2020 call for a compulsory continuous training of faculties for 50 hours in a year for their own professional development, driven by their own needs and choice. Continuous Profession Development (CPD) opportunities will, in particular, systematically cover the latest pedagogies regarding foundational literacy and numeracy etc. so that the purposes of formative and adaptive assessment of learning outcomes get fulfilled and individualized and competency-based learning related pedagogies, such as experiential learning, arts-integrated, sports-integrated, and storytelling-based approaches can be known by the faculties etc. Teachers should be encouraged to be bilingual as study shows that children pick up different languages quickly in the early ages. But the fact is that in Tripura, there are many teachers lacking the command over different languages warranting some discernible steps from the school authorities in future. State Council for Educational Research and Training (SCERT), Tripura needs to devise some strategies and concentrate on the modus operandi for the comprehensive training of faculties including the training of the backlog teachers if any, right from now, otherwise it would be too late to deliver the goods properly.

5. Appointment of teachers and their equitable distribution: Appointment of adequate qualified teachers particularly subject teachers hold another key for the proper implementation of NEP in Tripura. Teachers truly shape the future of our children and, therefore, the future of our nation. It is because of this noblest role that the teacher in India was the most respected member of society. By 2030, the 4-year integrated B.Ed. programmes would be essential qualification including strong practicum training in the form of student-teaching at local schools and recruitments would be through Teachers' Eligibility Test (TET). TET would be covered in every stage across all stages (Foundational, Preparatory, Middle and Secondary) of school education. For subject teachers, suitable TET or NTA test scores in the corresponding subjects would also be taken into account for recruitment. In Tripura, there were about 741346 students with 46909 teachers at the end of 2018, although number would go down if the number of terminated teachers is considered. Available information shows that about 30000 teachers are trained and mostly through online certificate course of NISHTHA of MoE substantiating the fact that more than one third of teachers are yet untrained.

As the students are given increased flexibility and choice of subjects to study, particularly in secondary school -including subjects in physical education, the arts, and vocational crafts and holistic development, 'availability of number of subjects and courses' year to year stand as the new distinguishing feature of secondary school education. Thus, all schools would have to meet multiple knowledge needs of students for which requirement of teachers would be higher than the past. But the main problem of scarcity of teachers in Tripura is the unequal distribution of teachers and lack of adequate trained teachers in lower stage. Ensuring an adequate number of teachers across subjects -particularly in subjects such as art, physical education, vocational education and languages including the conventional subjects has turned

would be another 'tine' mandated by the NEP as paramount necessity. At present in many schools of Tripura, vocation education is hardly taught as subject except 24 schools very recently notified with physical education and music etc. falling apart. But the NEP 2020 demonstrates that the middle stage and secondary level schools should have teachers on the above subjects and thus adequate number of teachers on the above subjects is to be appointed diversifying the requirements and composition to meet the needs. Engagement of special educator for children with disabilities / divyang children at the middle and secondary school level is another important part. Thus, the state government must focus on the future needs of the state right from now. It may be mentioned that the government has already taken positive steps in this direction for the introduction of 4-year integrated teachers training programme in four colleges of Tripura, but the colleges are yet to commence the courses besides existing colleges offering 2 year B.Ed. courses.

6. The NEP 2020 proposes that teachers should be used to technology and they should embrace technology in the classroom. Technology would play an important role in the improvement of educational processes and outcomes and increase participation of teachers in the classroom, assessment outcomes and promote 'inquiry-based, discussion-based methods' envisaged by NEP. Thus integration of technology in education with component of digital literacy, scientific temper and computational thinking is a dire need for a holistic learning experience of the students. Blending of technology with the teaching learning process are to be carried out on war footing in association with National Educational Alliance for Technology (NEAT) a regulatory body to be created to use technology for better learning outcomes. All middle and secondary schools need to be equipped with the adequate technology and other needed infrastructure in this respect by the state government.
7. Overhauling the assessment of the students: The assessment of the students in school is a vital area and it needs a complete revamp. Mere marks should not be yardstick of assessment but it should be an outcome of a qualitative analysis of the child. As every child is different and the same question can be understood in numerous ways by the different children, uniform way of assessment is neither logically acceptable way nor right way of assessment. The NEP 2020 recognizes the need to evaluate "higher-order skills, such as analysis, critical thinking and conceptual clarity," and hence assessment is not limited to mere examination and memorization parts shifting the focus of assessments from marks based to competency based. Thus assessment and marking system need to be designed to recognize creative potential, problem solving and innovative skill so that goal of our education system in creating entrepreneurs, innovators, thinkers, scientists and writers is achieved. To this end, SCERT and Tripura Board may deliberate on the assessment criteria through workshops etc and formulate a short-term and long -term strategy and disseminate the information to all teachers across the state.

8. School Education Council: A school education council with the representatives from government, legislatures, some bureaucrats, headmasters and headmistress, representatives of state board, SCERT, departmental representatives covering all districts, representatives from private schools, Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya (JNV), representatives from different recognized teachers' association etc may be formed by government to avert any conflicting issue from cultural to political and implement the NEP at ease as the government is the regulator and implementer of the policy. The SCERT or the state government may replicate the success stories of some schools including the private schools, government schools and JNV as model school and implement the best practices for improving the quality of education.
9. Greater allocation of fund is the crying need particularly during the transition period. The NEP 2020 largely hits almost all the areas to attain perfect symphony. So, the process of implementation requires massive outlay of fund at the initial stage for its implementation. The spending on the education sector should increase substantially aimed at immaculate implementation of the NEP 2020 including infrastructure development and meeting the recurrent expenditure. Thus the state government has to increase its allocation on education sector for the first five years substantially if it is to catch the benefits at the right time. Although the state government spends more than one fifth of budgeted expenditure on Education, lion share of allocation is meant for the salary and pension and thus the state government needs to allocate more fund for the implementation of NEP 2020.
10. Revamping also includes the provision of adequate infrastructure and increasing the amenities in the schools. Many schools suffer from adequate joint benches, tables, chairs and serviceable electric fans etc. Sanitation, drinking water are still the basic problems that de-motivate a section of school goers in attending schools regularly. Panchayats and school management committee must come forward voluntarily to redress the tricky issues on a regular basis, wherever possible, so that cleanliness remains in order. Lack of ministerial staff in many schools has ultimately posed an extra burden on the shoulder of some teachers rendering them busy in clerical works right from the preparation of salary bills, filling up examination forms and moving to the boards and department hindering the normal academic duties. Thus the department should come out with plans for increasing the manpower like some additional ministerial staff, librarians and sweepers etc. so that the academic ambience of the school remains undisturbed.
11. Governance and Management of the school: The government must revamp this part if quality of education is to be ensured. In the private schools, it is not an issue but for government schools/ government aided schools, the governance and management are talking point and it changes with the change of vanguard. As policy changes, guidelines also change. Organization structure of the school management seems to be centralized at the top with hardly any 'authority equal to responsibility' delegated on the micro level institutions to take decision on matters related to the development of

respective schools without the consent of government or higher authorities. There is no approved transparent policy for teachers rendering career of every teacher hooked on uncertainty. Zeal, motivation and attitude of every teacher may be changed to great extent if government makes a transparent transfer policy assuring the transfer and mobility of teachers from one place to another place after specific period. At present government is the regulator of schools but the academic control and regulation should be transferred to SCERT for the attainment of overall quality in the state for which strengthening of SCERT with the experts from domain knowledge is unavoidable necessity.

## **Conclusion**

It is expected that revamping of the schools in Tripura following the guidelines of NEP is a paramount necessity and revamping would enable the students to think rationally, independently and act convincingly and make the students an ideal citizen of this country and consequently building the country a global knowledge superpower. The introduction of vocational education would make students more skilled and in still confidence offering them opportunity for employment in their future life. Role of teachers would be paramount for which they need to be empowered (academically, financially and mentally) enabling them to act as real transformers, reach the students without bias and compulsion to orient and reorient the future of Tripura. A motivated teacher is far better than well learned tech savvy reluctant teacher. To conclude, it needs to be iterated that although the key focus area of NEP-2020 is transforming the 'quality of teaching,' where teachers would be empowered to lead from the front, revamping of schools is an inescapable necessity.

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