

# National Education Policy 2016: Can it Bring the Teacher to School?

NISHANT CHADHA

---

Recognising a lack of teacher presence and motivation in the Indian schooling system, the draft National Education Policy 2016 proposes solutions. This article critiques them for encouraging excessive bureaucratisation and centralisation. And recommends that a crucial change that the draft overlooks is training and employing local teachers.

*Keywords: national education policy 2016; india; teacher recruitment*



Source: <http://www.thebetterindia.com/>

In a startling, and possibly legally untenable, judgement passed on August 18, 2015 the Allahabad High Court ordered that the Uttar Pradesh state secretary should ensure that all government servants send their children to government schools. The court felt that this was the only way to reduce the apathy of government officials to the poor condition of government schools.<sup>1</sup> And it is in times such as these, when the country's education system is in desperate need of vitality, modernisation and a coherent social direction, that the draft version of the National Education Policy 2016 (NEP) has been made

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.legallyindia.com/Bar-Bench-Litigation/no-pvt-schools-for-up-public-servants-kids-allahabad-hc>

available in the public domain.<sup>2</sup> Comments from various stakeholders have been solicited.

Explaining its context, the NEP draft says that the emphasis of previous policies was primarily on quantity of provision (especially at the school level) and increasing access to schooling. The expansion of schooling through various schemes, most notably the Sarva Siksha Abhiyaan (SSA), has proved to be a spectacular success as far as universal enrolment in primary and to some extent middle schools is concerned.<sup>3</sup> But quality of schooling, progression to

---

<sup>2</sup> <http://mhrd.gov.in/nep-new>

<sup>3</sup> The Age-Specific Enrolment Ratio (children of a specific single-age/age group, i.e. 6 to 10+ years or 11 to 13+ years, enrolled, irrespective of level of education, as a percentage of

secondary and senior secondary education, and dropouts (especially amongst girls and disadvantaged groups) remain significant challenges.

The Indian school education system is for the most part stale, outdated and incapable of producing the kind of citizens needed to achieve its ambitious social and economic progress targets. The increase of private schooling (and private presence in tertiary education) has witnessed a manifold increase in the past decade and a half. Indeed, according to the 2011 census, the ratio of private to public provision in secondary, senior secondary and tertiary education is close to one. Even if we were to accept that private schools, if they are of good quality, can exhaust private returns to education, one cannot reasonably expect them to exhaust the social returns. Only a universal and good quality public education system can produce a citizenry that is not just *trained* well but also *educated* well, i.e. which is socially, politically and culturally aware and sensitive. So, will the proposals in the NEP revive the Indian government school system?

### ABSENTEE TEACHER

Arguably, the most critical input in education is teachers. However, the Indian school system suffers from two chronic problems — a shortage of trained teachers and teacher absenteeism. According to the Education for All 2014 (EFA 2014), the top six states in terms of teacher shortages, add up to a shortfall of 7, 73,763 teachers.

**Table 1: States with large teacher vacancies**

State	Teacher vacancies
Uttar Pradesh	269,539
Bihar	219,066
West Bengal	105,200
Jharkhand	69,163
Odisha	56,103
Chhattisgarh	54,692

Source: Table 3.2 in EFA 2014

the population of the same single/age group) for children of age 6-10 years was 93.11 per cent for the year 2013-14 (EFA 2014).

A severe shortage of teachers impacts the learning outcomes of all students in the schooling system as it increases the workload of existing teachers. This has also led to many primary schools being single teacher institutions. According to the U-DISE data, in 2013-14, 14.3 per cent of all schools in the country were single teacher institutions.<sup>4</sup> This problem is of course much more severe in rural areas with 95 per cent of the single teacher schools being in rural areas. With various administrative duties that the teachers are required to perform, in and outside the school, teaching in single teacher institutions suffers a lot more than in other schools.

Even when there is a teacher in the job, it is quite likely that they are not on the job. According to Kremer et. al (2005) about 25 per cent of teachers are absent from school on any given day. Even when they are there, they are not engaged in teaching. Only about half the teachers are actually engaged in instruction. Here, we must note that these two problems are not mutually exclusive. Increased workloads, lack of teaching infrastructure, inflexible transfer policies, corruption in teacher hiring, and lack of a proper incentive structure are some factors that lead to both a low number of people entering the profession and also the wrong kind of people entering the profession (that is people with no motivation for teaching). This leads to teacher shortage and teacher absenteeism. So, what solution does the NEP propose for these?

### MAKING THE TEACHER ATTEND

The draft NEP recognises the importance of teacher presence and teacher motivation. It also recognises the current lack of both. Unfortunately, there is too much proposed bureaucratisation and centralisation of regulation, curriculum design and teacher training and progression in the draft. There is a proposal to set up cadres of teachers and principals which will introduce segregation and hierarchy for perpetuity.

Teacher training, hiring and progression is already too centralised in India. The move should

<sup>4</sup> Unified District Information System for Education <http://www.dise.in/udise.html>

be towards localisation of teacher training and hiring. There is pervasive unemployment and underemployment amongst Indian youth, especially amongst women. Why can this group not be tapped to identify local talent that can then be upgraded? Localisation of teacher hiring will also provide one solution to the problem of teacher motivation. It is not possible to motivate teachers only through monetary incentives. Prestige and respect that communities associate with teachers attract the right kind of people into the profession. But, if teachers do not belong to communities that they teach in, then they have no connect with these communities and hence we lose this all important way of motivating teachers.

Presently there is no concrete evidence that localisation of teacher training coupled with proper incentives may lead to more and better teachers joining. Though, India Development Foundation (IDF) has been part of a couple of projects that suggest hiring and training local teachers, coupled with appropriate monitoring mechanisms may lead to better student learning outcomes.<sup>5</sup>

## LESSONS TO BE DRAWN

The acute teacher shortage and absenteeism in Indian schools needs to be urgently addressed to implement any substantial changes in pedagogy and curriculum or to improve student outcomes. Hiring teachers from local communities, in which the school is situated, not only reduces the commute that the teacher has to make (which can be very substantial), but may also allow for experimentation with providing the teachers with non-monetary incentives to perform better.

This is not to suggest that localisation will fix everything that is wrong with the schooling system, but it may make it easier to fix those other things.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Education For All Towards Quality with Equity India (EFA 2014), Government of India, August 2014, [http://mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload\\_files/mhrd/files/upload\\_document/EFA-Review-Report-final.pdf](http://mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/upload_document/EFA-Review-Report-final.pdf)

Kremer, Michael, et al. "Teacher absence in India: A snapshot", *Journal of the European Economic Association* 3.2-3 (2005): 658-667.

Kohli, Namita "Not in Class: A Story of India's Missing Teachers", *Hindustan Times*, April 6, 2015, <http://www.hindustantimes.com/india/not-in-the-class-a-story-of-india-s-missing-teachers/story-8HITtop9bbJbL18cGC5U7H.html>, (accessed on 04.09.2016)

---

<sup>5</sup> In a recently concluded project in Odisha, the Odisha Girl's Incentive Program (OGIP), IDF successfully designed and piloted an intervention using local teachers to develop and teach remedial content to address the issue of girls dropping out of school during the transition from elementary to secondary school. (<http://idfresearch.org/projects.html>)