

# A paradigm shift in education system

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**A** well thought out British design that the Indians were uneducated and uncivilised buffoons before their grand arrival continues to have its sway on many of us and we continue to give full credit to them for giving a proper education system to the country.

But as a matter of fact, they imposed their so-called modern system, because traditional education was against their interest and purpose. As pointed out by Will Durant, well organised community schools in the form of *pathshalas*, *mokhtabs*, *toles* and *satras* were decimating knowledge and skills to the students of the country based on Indian values and ways in pre-British era. It was pure education and not targeted to produce employable clerks. All those revered ancient sages who were pathfinders in the world of astronomy, astrology, philosophy, medicine, science, etc., up to our own Srimanta Sankaradeva and after were definitely not uneducated duffers.

The British needed hordes of subservient clerks to run the administration and so, the education system in the country was meticulously designed on that line. As per a candid admission made by Macaulay, "to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions we govern; a class of persons, Indians in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect". Otherwise how could just a handful of colonialists run their writ over millions of disorganised Indians for two centuries? They deliberately shattered our moral, cultural and

spiritual backbone and we started hating our thousands of years old rich heritage and knowledge. Rich Indian skills, knowledge and wisdom in architecture, culture, literature, history, etc., were relegated to the back seat.

After Independence, the people at the helm of affairs decided to follow the colonial education system and allowed it to flourish further. Today, in India, there are 320 million students in some 60,000 universities, colleges and other institutions as against just 500 in 1950. From 7 per cent literacy in 1950 we have jumped to 80 per cent. Highly commendable achievement, indeed. But, are we producing enough skilful, knowledgeable, innovative and employable quality people? We have established many high-end educational and research institutions over the years. But how many innovative patents are there to our credit? We still equate education with qualification. Education is not about filling of a pail, but about the lighting of a fire in the learners.

Steve Wozniak, co-founder of Apple Computers said, "Indian education system does not encourage innovation and creates only high class subservient people who know only to follow orders." A very harsh comment indeed, but it demands serious introspection by all concerned. Incidentally, our prevalent system produces some distinguished luminaries, but these are more of an exception than a rule

and most of such 'exceptions' fly away in search of greener pastures abroad and blossom there. Another argument in support of the British is that they left us the legacy of the English language that helped us to develop. But, we must also remember that highly developed countries like Russia, Japan, South Korea and even China were never British colonies!

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working age population. When earning population is more than the dependants in a country it is known as demographic dividend stage. It propels increase in earning, purchase power and fuels manifold increase in consumption, production, economy, employment and GDP. Japan had it (1964 to 2004). South Korea (1987 to 2027) and China (1994 to 2031) are having it. All of them are growing very fast. We must derive the benefits of demographic dividend and not

allow it to turn into a demographic disaster, because a whole lot of unemployed and frustrated youths can become a ticking bomb!

Appreciating the gravity of the situation, the Government of India announced a new National Education Policy on July 29, 2020. It takes care and addresses the long awaited transformation of intent and content of the education sector and related pedagogy to a large extent. The new NEP is expected to lay the foundation of an aspirational India and is aimed at unleashing the hitherto

captive competencies of the youths. It focuses shifting of burden of school bag to boon learning and from 'what-to-think' to 'how-to-think'. However, making a policy and implementing it properly against many odds are two different ball games.

The nitty-gritty of the NEP has already been discussed in many fora and the media; hence, better to avoid repetitions. But two core essentials need to be highlighted. First, the policy tacitly incorporates Dr Howard Gardner's postulations of multiple intelligence. It suggests that the traditional notion of intelligence based on IQ testing is far too limited. Instead, Dr Gardner proposed eight different intelligences to account for a broader range of human potential in children and adults. Each individual is different and has varying potential because the mix of aptitude is unique in each.

Second, the policy brings teach-

ers right on to the pinnacle. The teacher is not expected to remain just a run-of-the-mill knowledge giver; he or she has to act like a mentor, a guru to the pupils, individually. Traditionally, the same teaching approach was used for every student and the method of assessment was same. But, the new policy envisages reducing all subjects to core essentials, reduced dependency on textbook and learning through interactive teaching, critical thinking, enquiry, discovery, discussion and analysis, experiential learning through fun, creativity, collaborative and exploratory activities in the classroom, focus on experiential, inquiry and discovery-based syllabus and integrated pedagogy. No hard separation between curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular area, freedom to choose a variety of subject combinations, to schedule bag-less days in and so on.

Albert Einstein had rightly said, "Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid." One single size cannot fit all. Over the time, we have developed a mental block to measure intelligence based only on mathematical logic. A child not doing well in this kind of fixed measurement is condemned as a failure, notwithstanding that he or she may possess a very high degree of a different intelligence; because it is never assessed. This parochial approach is likely to lead to a severe consequence of alienation of the child from the system and society. Holistic and pragmatic implementation of the NEP, 2020 could do away with the lacunae of the system to lead the young students to a newer horizon.