



TSR SUBRAMANIAN

CHAIRMAN, NEP PANEL

While key infrastructure has been built and is essential, the quality element is clearly missing

India Facing Sharp Fall In Quality of Education, Overhaul Needed



TSR on What His Report Says

Very sharp drop in education quality in the last two decades

Education not on states' agenda, especially in the Hindi belt

Report an action plan, not vision document



Quality and inclusion running threads in report

Suggestion to handhold students from disadvantaged section from school through university to prevent Vemula like situation

Dearth of academic talent, new ideas in school education

Institutions not talking to each other



Politicisation of university and administration

Report pitches for major use of technology to track a child's performance right from school and

Incentivise teaching as a profession

Chairman of the government instituted committee to evolve a new National Education Policy for India, ex-Cabinet Secretary

TSR Subramanian says in an interview to ET that while access is largely achieves, India is faced with the sharpest decline in education quality. Excerpts:

What is the vision enunciated in your report on the proposed New Education Policy and its key take-away?

We have proposed an action plan instead. Many visions have been enunciated before with no implementation. We have made 90 recommendations and to me they all are major take-aways.

What is the key focus of your report?

It would be quality improvement and inclusion. We found large number of people are left out or left to fend for themselves, some first time learners, others from various disadvantaged sections. They need support and it should be built in. System cannot be blind to these kinds of needs. Students coming from various state boards comes to study in cities and find themselves at sea in the English oriented social and academic set up. They are unable to cope- look at the case of Rohith Vemula. Some kind of half hour-one hour classes and mentor systems which are locally organized are advised. This is the thread we have.

What about the issue of quality of education?

There is an overhaul required in every area from school to higher education. We have recommended examination and curriculum reforms. Overhaul is needed in the mental approach of the people running the show. For instance,



today only those who are unable to make it to top notch professional courses take up teaching. What if we say that the Top 5 per cent holders in Class X or XII, we will give your full tuition fee and living expenses but you must work for five years' as a teacher? We have to encourage people to go and teach.. One thing we saw repeatedly in this sector is complete lack of ideas and thinking. They are mechanically doing their job.

What is your assessment of the current state of education in the country?

By and large, it is felt that there is a very sharp increase in terms of access to education- unlike previous years now anyone who wants to get and education can largely do so. However, there is a very sharp decline in the quality of education in the last two decades especially in school education. There may many more colleges but industry says barely 20% pass outs are employable, there are fake

degree rackets, institutions be it the IIMs and IITs are not even talking to each other. So there is a structure or say a façade but is is empty. While key infrastructure has been built and is in fact essential, but the quality element is clearly missing.

You mention the sharp drop in quality in last 20 years. Elaborate pls.

Our report clearly says in the Preamble itself that the education system is in disarray. There is a slow decline that continues to plague government schools, drop out rates are still high, corruption is there n appointments and transfers of teachers, approval of institutions. Donations have to be paid for admission especially in medicine and engineering schools, in some places papers are leaked, copying is widespread...

Look at our research institutions ..they study what is happening in Rwanada, in Santiago. There is nothing about this place....we could not get one page worth of material from soe government organistaions on the 33 themes we were looking at. In fact, we found quality material from private research centres.

Overall quality of education is a function of the political attention to it. Which CM actually worries about Education and it is fundamental to our future. ...except I think we saw Anandiben Patel who was herself a teacher, others don't care. We found Gujarat, Andhra, couple of states have done well.

By and large, they don't care, particularly in the Hindi belt. The politician is not aware that there is an education department. It exists because he can appoint a Vice chancellor, and work around transfers and postings of teachers. For them this is the education department.

There has been excessive politicization of the University as a structure

and also lack of governance essentially. Issues are well known, we have steadfastly refused to address these.

There are apprehensions that a saffronistaion attempt may be made through your report and its recommendations. Your comments?

Are we including values? Of course yes, Values are fundamental. When we find such lumpen element in our society, something has gone wrong... In nuclear family set ups and working parents the school has a larger responsibility and must work more to inculcate values.

Acceptance of diversity of India's heritage, cultural history, religious amity, the teacher as role model, inculcator of values, Dharma, Shanti, Prem, Nonviolence, these are core values. Religion- it has to be taught that every religion has the same message- that's a core value. We have talked of practical qualities- regularity, punctuality, cleanliness, self-control, industriousness, spirit of entrepreneurship, spirit of duty, desire to serve, responsibility, creativity, and sensitivity to gender equality, democratic temper and obligation to preservice of environment. Lastly we say that it must be taught that not only do you have fundamental rights but also fundamental duties. If someone calls this saffronistaion, I cant help it.

What about the issue of nationalism?

We have tried to bring the sense of taking pride in India much like the American way of life. I don't have to feel why I am not born a European or in America. Indianness through our value system and articles of faith like dharma, righteousness, correct action, correct thinking and then living with others, ...in fact we had cut out tolerate to say 'accept' others...in a diverse system, we 'accept', we just don't merely 'tolerate'