



National Education Policy 2020

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Introduction

Education is fundamental for achieving full human potential, developing an equitable and just society, and promoting national development. Providing universal access to quality education is the key to India's continued ascent, progress, and leadership on the global stage - in terms of economic growth, social justice and equality, scientific advancement, national integration, and cultural preservation. Universal high-quality education is the best way forward for developing and maximizing our country's rich talents and resources for the good of the individual, the society, the country, and the world. India will have the highest population of young people in the world over the next decade, and our ability to provide high-quality educational opportunities to them will determine the future of our country.

The global education development agenda reflected in the sustainable development goal 4 (SDG4) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. SDG4 seeks to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” by 2030. An overarching aspect of SDG4 is that of inclusion and fostering quality education. Educational opportunity requires an effective system to support learning, including supportive organisations, resources, and sound policies. Such a lofty goal will require the entire education system to be reconfigured to support learning, else none of the goals of the SDGs can be achieved.

The world is undergoing rapid changes in the knowledge landscape. With various dramatic scientific and technological advances, such as the rise of big data, machine learning, and artificial intelligence, many unskilled jobs worldwide may be taken over by machines, while the need for a skilled workforce, particularly involving mathematics, computer science, and data science, in conjunction with multidisciplinary abilities across the sciences, social sciences, and humanities, will be in rapidly-increasing demand. With climate change, increasing pollution, and depleting natural resources, there will be a sizable shift in how we meet the world's energy, water, food, and sanitation needs, again resulting in the need for new skilled labour, particularly in biology, chemistry, physics, agriculture, climate science, and social science. There will be a growing demand for humanities and art, as India moves towards becoming a developed country and among the three largest economies in the world.

Indeed, with the quickly-changing employment landscape and global ecosystem, it is becoming increasingly important that children not only learn but more importantly *learn how to learn*. Education must thus move towards less content, and more towards learning about how to think critically and solve problems, how to be creative and multidisciplinary, and how to innovate, adapt, and absorb new material in novel and changing fields. While learning by rote may be beneficial in specific contexts, pedagogy must evolve to make education more experiential, holistic, integrated, inquiry-driven, discovery-oriented, learner-centred, discussion-based, flexible, and, of course, enjoyable. The curriculum must include basic arts, crafts, humanities, games, sports and fitness, languages, literature, culture, and values, in addition to science and mathematics, to develop all aspects of learners' capabilities and make education more well-rounded, useful, and fulfilling to the learner. Education must build character, enable learners to be ethical, rational, compassionate, and caring, while at the same time prepare them for gainful, fulfilling employment.

The aim must be for India to have an education system that is second to none by 2040, with equitable access to the highest-quality education for all learners regardless of social or economic background. To achieve this, actions must be taken now and with urgency.



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The gap between the current state of learning outcomes and what is required must be bridged through undertaking major reforms that bring the highest quality, equity, and integrity into the system, from early childhood education through higher education.

This National Education Policy, 2020 is the first education policy of the 21st century, and aims to address the many growing developmental imperatives of our country. In particular, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by India along with all United Nations Member States in 2015, includes critically the Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4): to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” by 2030. This Policy proposes the revision and revamping of all aspects of the education structure, including its regulation and governance, to create a new system that is aligned with the aspirational goals of 21st century education, while remaining consistent with India’s traditions and value systems. The National Education Policy lays particular emphasis on the development of the creative potential of each individual. It is based on the principle that education must develop not only cognitive capacities - both the ‘foundational capacities’ of literacy and numeracy and ‘higher-order’ cognitive capacities such as critical thinking and problem solving – but also social, ethical, and emotional capacities and dispositions including cultural awareness and empathy, perseverance and courage, teamwork and leadership, service and sacrifice, courtesy and sensitivity, oral and written communication, integrity and work ethic, among others.

The rich heritage of ancient and eternal Indian knowledge and thought has been a guiding light for this Policy. The pursuit of knowledge (gyaan), wisdom (pragyaa), and truth (satya) was always considered in Indian thought and philosophy as the loftiest human goal. The aim of education in ancient India was not just the acquisition of knowledge as preparation for life in this world, or life beyond schooling, but for complete realisation and liberation of the self. World-class institutions of ancient India such as Takshashila, Nalanda, Vikramshila, and Vallabhi set the highest standards of multidisciplinary teaching and research and hosted scholars and students from across backgrounds and countries. The Indian education system produced great scholars, such as Charaka, Susruta, Aryabhata, Bhaskaracharya, Brahmagupta, Chanakya, Madhava, Patanjali, Panini, Sankardev and Thiruvalluvar, among numerous others, who made seminal contributions to world knowledge in diverse fields, such as mathematics, astronomy, metallurgy, medical science and surgery, civil engineering and architecture, shipbuilding and navigation, yoga, fine arts, chess, and more. Indian culture and philosophy have had a strong influence on the world. These rich legacies to world heritage must not only be nurtured and preserved for posterity but also researched, enhanced, and put to new uses through our education system. For instance, they can be integrated into a holistic, multidisciplinary education to help develop the creativity and originality of students and to encourage them to innovate.

The teacher and the teacher’s condition must be at the centre of the fundamental reforms to the education system. The new education policy must help re-establish teachers, at all levels, as the most respected and essential members of our society, because they truly shape our next generation of citizens. It must do everything to empower teachers, and help them to do their job as effectively as possible. The new education policy must help recruit the very best and brightest to enter the teaching profession at all levels, by ensuring teachers their livelihood, respect, dignity, and autonomy, while also installing in the system basic methods of quality control and accountability.

The new education policy must provide to all students, irrespective of their place of residence, a quality education system, with particular focus on historically marginalised, disadvantaged, and underrepresented groups. Education is a great leveller and is the best tool



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for achieving economic and social mobility, inclusion, and equality. Initiatives must be in place to ensure that all students from such groups, despite inherent obstacles, are presented with (and are made aware of) various targeted opportunities to enter and excel in the educational system.

These elements must, of course, be incorporated taking into account the local and global needs of the country, and with a respect for and deference to its rich diversity and culture. An instilling of knowledge of India and its varied social, cultural, and technological needs, its inimitable artistic, language, and knowledge traditions, and its strong ethics in India's young people is considered critical for purposes of national pride, self-confidence, self-knowledge, cooperation, and integration – and thus, consequently, its continued progress and ascent.

Previous policies

The implementation of previous policies on education has focused largely on issues of access and equity. The unfinished agenda of the National Policy on Education 1986, Modified in 1992 (NPE 1986/92), is appropriately dealt with in this Policy. A major development since the last Policy of 1986/92 has been the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009 which laid down legal underpinnings for achieving universal elementary education.

Principles of this Policy

The purpose of the educational system is to develop good human beings - capable of rational thought and action, possessing compassion and empathy, courage and resilience, scientific temper and creative imagination, with sound ethical moorings and values. It aims at producing engaged, productive, and contributing citizens for building an equitable, inclusive, and plural society as envisaged by our Constitution.

A good education institution is one in which every student feels welcomed and cared for, where a safe and stimulating learning environment exists, where a wide range of learning experiences are offered, and where good physical infrastructure and appropriate resources conducive to learning are available to all students. Attaining these qualities must be the goal of every individual education institution; at the same time, there must also be seamless integration and coordination across institutions and across all stages of education.

The fundamental principles that will guide both the education system at large, as well as the individual institutions within it, are:

- **Recognise and identify** the unique capabilities of the child by sensitizing teachers as well as parents to promote the child's holistic development with focus not only through academic performance but in overall sphere of development culled out by keen observation of the child;
- **According highest priority** to Foundational Literacy and Numeracy so that all students achieve foundational learning skills in literacy and numeracy by Grade 3 ;
- **flexibility**, so that learners have the ability to choose their learning trajectories and programmes, and thereby choose their own paths in life according to their talents and interests;
- **no hard separations** between arts and sciences, between curricular and extra-curricular activities, between vocational and academic streams, etc. - in order to ensure the unity and integrity of all knowledge and to eliminate harmful hierarchies among, and silos between, different areas of learning;



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- **multidisciplinarity** and a **holistic education** (across the sciences, social sciences, arts, humanities, and sports) for a multidisciplinary world;
- **emphasis on conceptual understanding** (rather than rote learning and learning-for-exams),
- **creativity and critical thinking** (to encourage logical decision-making and innovation),
- **ethics and human & Constitutional values** (e.g., empathy, respect for others, cleanliness, courtesy, democratic spirit, spirit of service, scientific temper, liberty, responsibility, pluralism, equality, and justice), and
- **promoting multilingualism and the power of language** in teaching and learning;
- **life skills** (e.g., communication, cooperation, teamwork, and resilience);
- **focus on regular formative assessment for learning** rather than the summative assessment that encourages today's 'coaching culture';
- **extensive use of technology** in teaching and learning, removing language barriers, increasing access for divyang children, and educational planning and management;
- **respect for diversity and respect for the local context** in all curriculum, pedagogy, and policy, always keeping in mind that education is a concurrent subject;
- **full equity and inclusion** as the cornerstone of all educational decisions – along with accessibility and affordability - to ensure that all students are able to thrive in the education system;
- **teachers and faculty as the heart of the learning process** – their rigorous recruitment and preparation, continuous professional development, and positive working environments and service conditions;
- a '**light but tight**' **regulatory framework** to ensure **integrity, transparency, and resource efficiency** of the educational system (through audit and public disclosure) - while simultaneously encouraging innovation and out-of-the-box ideas through **autonomy, good governance, and empowerment;**
- **outstanding research** as a corequisite for outstanding education and development;
- **continuous policy-making** based on sustained research and regular assessment by educational experts;
- **a rootedness and pride in India**, and its rich, diverse, ancient and modern culture and knowledge systems and traditions, will be incorporated where relevant in an accurate manner and form an anchor and source of inspiration for all education; finally,
- **education is a public service** and not a commercial activity or a source of profit; access to quality education must be considered a fundamental right of every child;
- **substantial investment in a strong, vibrant public education system** - as well as the encouragement and facilitation of true philanthropic private and community participation – is absolutely vital to our democracy.

The vision of this Policy

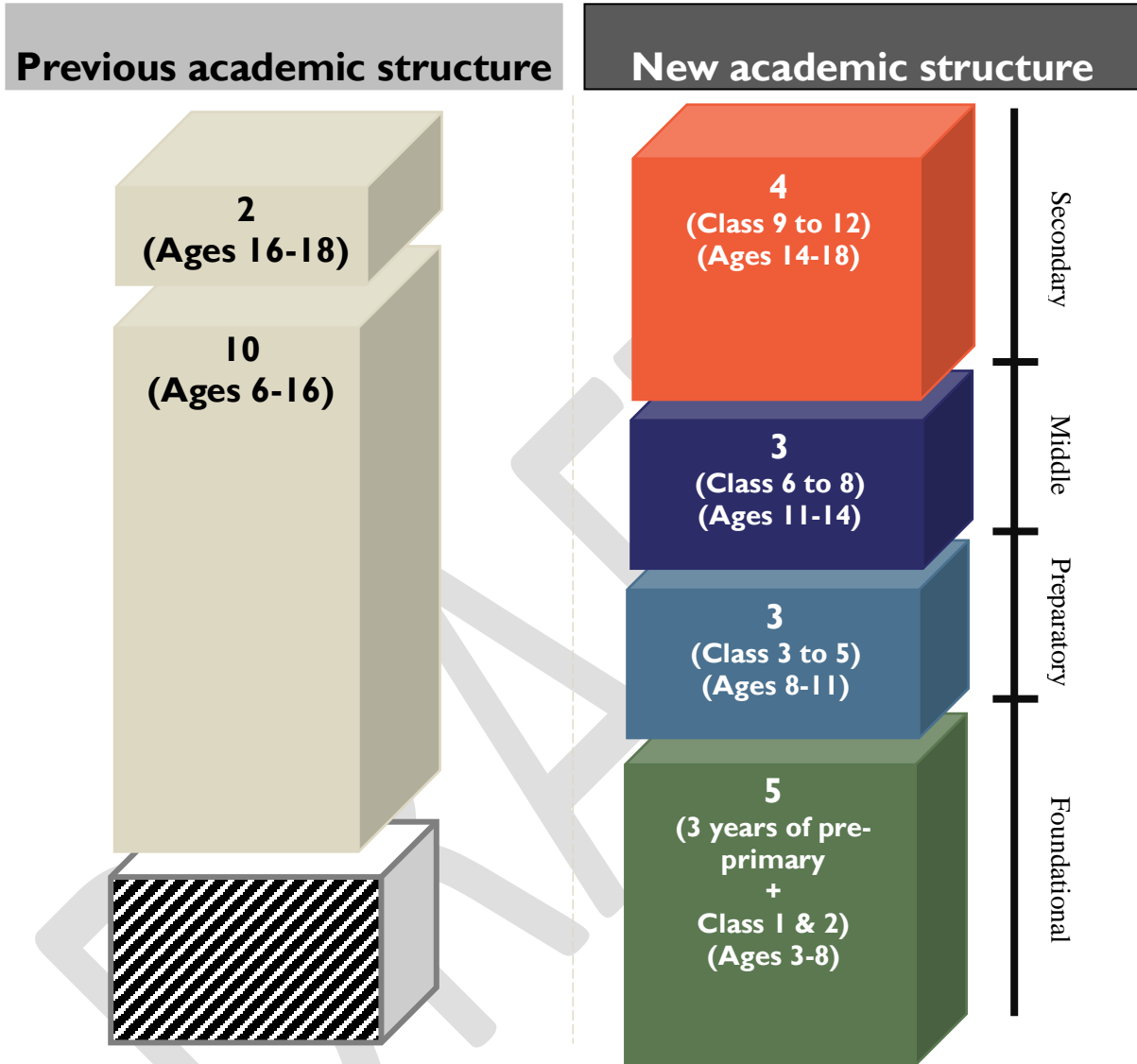
This National Education Policy envisions an education system rooted in Indian ethos that contributes directly to transforming India, that is Bharat, sustainably into an equitable and vibrant knowledge society, by providing high-quality education to all, thereby making India a global knowledge superpower.



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I. SCHOOL EDUCATION

This policy envisages that the extant 10+2 structure in school education will be modified with a new pedagogical and curricular restructuring of 5+3+3+4 covering ages 3-18 as shown in the representative figure and elaborated in detail later under Chapter 4.



Currently, children in the age group of 3-6 are not covered in the 10+2 structure as Class 1 begins at age 6. In the new 5+3+3+4 structure, a strong base of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) from age 3 is also included, which is aimed at promoting better overall learning, development, and well-being.

1. Early Childhood Care and Education: The Foundation of Learning

1.1. Over 85% of a child’s cumulative brain development occurs prior to the age of 6, indicating the critical importance of appropriate care and stimulation of the brain in a child’s early years in order to ensure healthy brain development and growth. It is therefore of the utmost importance that every child has access to high-quality early childhood care and education (ECCE). Presently, quality ECCE is not available to crores of young children, particularly children from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Strong investment in ECCE has the potential to give all young children such access, enabling all children to participate and flourish in the educational system throughout their lives. ECCE is perhaps the greatest and most powerful equaliser. Universal provisioning of quality early childhood



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development, care, and education must thus be achieved as soon as possible, and no later than 2030, to ensure that all students entering Grade 1 are school ready.

1.2. ECCE ideally consists 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. It also includes a focus on developing social capacities, sensitivity, good behaviour, courtesy, ethics, personal and public cleanliness, teamwork, and cooperation. The overall aim of ECCE will be to attain optimal outcomes in the domains of: physical and motor development, cognitive development, socio-emotional-ethical development, cultural/artistic development, and the development of communication and early language, literacy, and numeracy.

1.3. An excellent curricular and pedagogical framework for early childhood education for children up to the age of 8 will be developed by NCERT in two parts, namely, a sub-framework for 0-3 year olds, and a sub-framework for 3-8 year olds, in accordance with the above guidelines, the latest research on ECCE, and national and international best practices. In particular, the numerous rich local traditions of India developed over millennia in early childhood care and education, involving art, stories, poetry, games, songs, and more, will also be suitably incorporated. The framework will serve as a guide both for parents as well as for early childhood education institutions.

1.4. The overarching goal will be to ensure universal access to high-quality early childhood care and education across the country in a phased manner. Special attention and priority will be given to districts and locations that are particularly socio-economically disadvantaged. ECCE shall be delivered through a significantly expanded and strengthened system of early-childhood education institutions consisting of (a) stand-alone Anganwadis; (b) Anganwadis co-located with primary schools; (c) pre-primary schools/sections covering at least age 5 to 6 years co-located with existing primary schools; and (d) stand-alone pre-schools - all of which would recruit workers/teachers specially trained in the curriculum and pedagogy of ECCE.

1.5. For universal access to Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), Anganwadi Centres will be strengthened with high-quality infrastructure, play equipment, and well-trained Anganwadi workers/teachers. Every Anganwadi will have a well-ventilated, well-designed, child-friendly and well-constructed building with an enriched learning environment. Funds to achieve these aims will be provided by both the Central and State governments.

1.6. On completion of education prior to the age of 5 in Anganwadis, every child shall move to a "Preparatory Class" such as "Balavatika" (that is, before Class 1) in the primary school which has an ECCE-qualified teacher. ECCE-qualified teachers will be deployed by rationalising existing human resources, or will be specially appointed for this purpose. The learning in the Preparatory Class shall again be based primarily on play-based learning with a focus on developing cognitive, affective, and psychomotor abilities and early literacy and numeracy. The mid-day meal programme shall be extended to the Preparatory Class along with other primary school children. Health check-ups and growth monitoring that are available in the Anganwadi system shall also be made available to Preparatory Class students. Children in Anganwadi Centres shall take activity-filled tours - and meet the teachers and students - of their local primary schools in order to make the transition from Anganwadi Centres to primary schools a smooth one. Anganwadis shall be fully integrated into school complexes/clusters, and Anganwadi children, parents, and teachers will be invited to attend and participate in school / school complex programmes and vice versa.



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1.7. To prepare an initial cadre of high-quality ECCE teachers in Anganwadis, current Anganwadi workers/teachers will be trained through a systematic effort in accordance with the curricular/pedagogical framework developed by NCERT. Anganwadi workers/teachers with qualifications of 10+2 and above shall be given a 6-month certificate programme in ECCE; and those with lower educational qualifications shall be given a one-year diploma programme covering early literacy, numeracy, and other relevant aspects of ECCE. These programmes may be run through digital/distance mode using DTH channels as well as smart phones, allowing teachers to acquire ECCE qualifications with minimal disruption to their current work. The ECCE training of Anganwadi workers/teachers will be mentored by the Cluster Resource Centres of the School Education Department which shall hold at least one monthly contact class for continuous assessment. Every Anganwadi shall have at least one ECCE-qualified educator. In the longer term, State Governments shall prepare cadres of professionally-qualified educators for early childhood care and education, through stage-specific professional training, mentoring mechanisms, and career mapping. Necessary facilities will also be created for the initial professional preparation of these educators and their Continuous Professional Development (CPD).

1.8. ECCE will also be introduced in Ashramshalas in tribal-dominated areas in a phased manner. The process for integration and implementation of ECCE in Ashramshalas will be similar to that detailed above.

1.9. The responsibility for ECCE curriculum and pedagogy will lie with MHRD to ensure the continuity of curriculum and pedagogy from pre-primary school through primary school, and to ensure due attention to the foundational aspects of education. The planning and implementation of early childhood education will be carried out jointly by the Ministries of HRD, Women and Child Development (WCD), Health and Family Welfare (HFW), and Tribal Affairs. A special joint task force will be constituted for continuous guidance of the integration.

2. Foundational Literacy and Numeracy: An Urgent & Necessary Prerequisite to Learning

2.1. The ability to read and write, and perform basic operations with numbers, is a necessary foundation and an indispensable prerequisite for all future school and lifelong learning. However, various governmental, as well as non-governmental surveys, indicate that we are currently in a learning crisis: a large proportion of students currently in elementary school - estimated to be over 5 crore in number - have not attained foundational literacy and numeracy, i.e., the ability to read and comprehend basic text and the ability to carry out basic addition and subtraction with Indian numerals.

2.2 Attaining foundational literacy and numeracy for all children will thus become an urgent national mission, with immediate measures to be taken on many fronts and with clear goals that will be attained in the short term (including that every student will attain foundational literacy and numeracy by Grade 3). The very highest priority of the education system will be to achieve universal foundational literacy and numeracy in primary school and beyond by 2025. The rest of this Policy will become relevant for our students only if this most basic learning requirement (i.e., reading, writing, and arithmetic at the foundational level) is first achieved. To this end, all State/UT governments will immediately prepare an implementation plan (including many of the various items listed below) for attaining universal foundational literacy and numeracy in all primary and middle schools, identifying stage-wise targets and goals to be achieved by 2025, and closely tracking and monitoring progress of the same.



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2.3. First, teacher vacancies will be filled as soon as possible and, in a time-bound manner - especially in disadvantaged areas and areas with large pupil-to-teacher ratios or high rates of illiteracy - with special attention given to employing local teachers or those with familiarity with local languages. A pupil-teacher ratio (PTR) of under 30:1 will be ensured at the level of each school; areas having large numbers of socio-economically disadvantaged students will aim for a PTR of under 25:1. Teachers will be trained, encouraged, and supported - with continuous professional development for the purpose - to impart foundational literacy and numeracy to students who have fallen behind.

2.4. On the curricular side, it will be extremely vital to introduce an increased focus on foundational literacy and numeracy - and generally, on reading, writing, speaking, counting, arithmetic, and mathematical thinking - throughout the primary school curriculum, with a robust system of continuous formative / adaptive assessment to track and thereby individualise and ensure each student's learning. The dedication of specific hours daily - and regular events over the year - to activities involving these subjects will be implemented to encourage and excite students to pursue these areas. Teacher education and the early grade school curriculum will be redesigned to have a renewed emphasis on foundational literacy and numeracy.

2.5. A national repository of high-quality resources on foundational literacy and numeracy will be made available on the National Teacher's Portal, i.e., the Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing (DIKSHA). Technological interventions to serve as aids to teachers will be piloted and implemented, including to help bridge any language barriers that may exist between teachers and students.

2.6. At the current time, with lack of universal access to ECCE, a large proportion of children fall behind already within the first few weeks of Grade 1. Thus, to help ensure that all students are school ready, an interim 3-month play-based 'school preparation module' for all Grade 1 students, consisting of activities and workbooks around the learning of alphabets, sounds, words, colours, shapes, and numbers, and involving collaborations with peers and parents, will be developed by NCERT and SCERTs.

2.7. Due to the scale of the current learning crisis, all viable methods will be explored to support teachers in this all-important mission of attaining universal foundational literacy and numeracy. Studies around the world show one-on-one peer tutoring to be extremely effective for learning - not just for the learner, but also for the tutor. Thus, peer tutoring can be taken up as a voluntary and joyful activity for fellow students under the supervision of trained teachers and by taking due care of safety aspects. Additionally, it will also be made far easier for trained volunteers - from both the local community and beyond - to participate in this large-scale mission. If every literate member of the community could commit to teaching one student/person how to read, it would change the country's landscape very quickly; this mission will be highly encouraged and supported. States may consider establishing innovative models to foster such peer-tutoring and volunteer activities, as well as launch other programmes to support teachers, in this urgent nationwide mission to promote foundational literacy and numeracy during this learning crisis.

2.8. Enjoyable and inspirational children's books and books for students at all levels will be developed, including through high-quality translation (technology-assisted as needed) in all local and Indian languages, and will be made available extensively in both school and local public libraries. Public and school libraries will be significantly expanded to build a culture of reading across the country. Digital libraries will also be established. School libraries may be



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set up - particularly in villages - to serve the community during non-school hours, and book clubs may meet in public/school libraries to further facilitate and promote widespread reading. A National Book Promotion Policy will be developed and extensive initiatives will be undertaken to ensure the availability, accessibility, quality, and readership of books across geographies, languages, levels, and genres.

2.9. Children are unable to learn optimally when they are undernourished or unwell. Hence, the nutrition and health (including mental health) of children will be addressed, through healthy meals and the introduction of well-trained social workers, counsellors, and community involvement into the schooling system, as well as through various continuing measures for addressing poverty that may lie beyond the education system. All school children shall undergo regular health check-ups by schools and for this health cards will be issued to the children. Furthermore, research shows that the hours of the morning after a nutritious breakfast can be particularly productive for the study of subjects that are cognitively more demanding; these hours may be leveraged by providing a simple but energising breakfast in addition to midday meals. For this purpose, centralised kitchens will be set up in urban areas and in identified rural clusters wherever possible. In locations where hot meals may not be possible, a simple but nutritious meal, e.g., consisting of ground nuts/chana mixed with jaggery and/or local fruits may be provided. Expenditure on meals will be linked to food costs and inflation in order to ensure the quality of food served and its nutritional content.

3. Curtailing Dropout Rates and Ensuring Universal Access to Education at All Levels

3.1. One of the primary goals of the schooling system must be to ensure that children are enrolled in and attending school. Through initiatives such as the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and the Right to Education Act, India has made remarkable strides in recent years in attaining near-universal enrolment in elementary education. However, the data for later grades indicates some serious and enduring issues in retaining children in the schooling system. The GER for Grades 6-8 was 90.9%, while for Grades 9-10 and 11-12 it was only 79.3% and 56.5%, respectively - indicating that a significant proportion of enrolled students begin to drop out after Grade 5 and especially after Grade 8. As per the UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS), an estimated 6.2 crore children of school age (between 6 and 18 years) were estimated to be out of school in 2013. It must be a top priority of the country to bring these children back into the educational fold as early as possible, and to prevent further students from dropping out, with a goal to achieve 100% Gross Enrolment Ratio in preschool through secondary school by 2035. A concerted national effort by both the Centre and States/UTs will be made to ensure universal access and afford opportunity to all children of the country to obtain quality holistic education – including vocational education - from preschool through Grade 12.

3.2. There are two overall initiatives that will be undertaken to bring children who have dropped out back to school and to prevent further children from dropping out. The first is to provide effective and sufficient infrastructure so that all students have access to safe and engaging school education at all levels from pre-primary school through Grade 12. This will be attained by upgrading and enlarging the schools that already exist, building additional quality schools in areas where they do not exist, and providing safe and practical conveyances and/or hostels, especially for the girl children, so that all children have the opportunity to attend a quality school and learn at the appropriate level. Alternative and innovative education centres will be put in place in cooperation with civil society to ensure that children of migrant labourers, and other children who are dropping out of school due to various circumstances, are brought back into mainstream education.



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3.3. The second is to achieve universal participation in school by carefully tracking students, as well as their learning levels, in order to continually work towards ensuring that they a) are enrolled in and attending school, and b) have suitable opportunities to catch up and re-enter school in case they have fallen behind or dropped out. For providing equitable and quality education from the Foundational Stage through Grade 12 to all children up to the age of 18, suitable facilitating systems shall be put in place. Counsellors or well-trained social workers recruited to schools/school complexes and teachers will continuously work with students and their parents, and will travel through and connect with communities to ensure that all school-age children are attending and learning in school. Trained and qualified social workers from civil society organizations/departments of Social Justices and Empowerment could be connected to schools, through various innovative mechanisms adopted by State/UT Governments, to help in carrying out this important work.

3.4. Once infrastructure and participation are in place, ensuring quality across the board will indeed be key in retaining students, so that students (particularly girls and students from other socio-economically disadvantaged groups) and their parents do not lose interest in attending school. This will require a strong channel and system of incentives for excellent teachers with knowledge of the local language to be deployed to areas where dropout rates are particularly high, as well as an overhaul of the curriculum to make it more engaging and useful for all students.

3.5. To facilitate learning for all students, with special emphasis on socio-economically disadvantaged groups (SEDGs), the scope of school education will be broadened to facilitate multiple pathways to learning involving formal and non-formal education modes. Open and Distance Learning (ODL) Programmes offered by the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) and State Open Schools will be expanded and strengthened for meeting the learning needs of young people in India who are not able to attend a physical school. NIOS and State Open Schools will offer the following programmes in addition to the present programmes: education at A, B and C levels that are equivalent to Grades 3, 5, and 8 of the formal school system; secondary education programmes that are equivalent to Grades 10 and 12; vocational education courses/programmes; and adult literacy and life-enrichment programmes. States will be encouraged to develop these offerings in regional languages by establishing and strengthening existing State Institutes of Open Schooling (SIOS).

3.6. To make it easier for both governments as well as non-governmental philanthropic organisations to build schools, to encourage local variations on account of culture, geography, and demographics, and to allow alternative models of education, the requirements for schools will be made less restrictive. The focus will be to have less emphasis on input and greater emphasis on output potential concerning desired learning outcomes. Regulations on inputs will be limited to ensuring safety of children (both physical and psychological), access and inclusion, the non-profit nature of schools, and the attainment of minimum standards for learning outcomes. Other models for schools will also be piloted, such as public-philanthropic partnerships.

3.7. Efforts will be made to involve community and alumni in volunteer efforts for enhancing learning by providing: one-on-one tutoring in schools; the teaching of literacy and holding of extra-help sessions at schools; teaching support and guidance for educators; career guidance and mentoring to students; the fostering of adult literacy at adult education centres; etc. In this regard, the growing population of active and healthy senior citizens as well as school alumni and local community members will be suitably garnered. Databases of literate volunteers, retired scientists, alumni, and educators will be created for this purpose.



4. Curriculum and Pedagogy in Schools: Learning Should be Holistic, Integrated, Enjoyable, and Engaging

Restructuring school curriculum and pedagogy in a new 5+3+3+4 design

4.1. The curricular and pedagogical structure of school education will be reconfigured to make it responsive and relevant to the developmental needs and interests of learners at different stages of their development, corresponding to the age ranges of 3-8, 8-11, 11-14, and 14-18 years, respectively. The curricular and pedagogical structure and the curricular framework for school education will therefore be guided by a 5+3+3+4 design, consisting of the Foundational Stage (3 years of preschool + Grades 1-2, covering ages 3-8), Preparatory Stage (Grades 3-5, covering ages 8-11), Middle School Stage (Grades 6-8, covering ages 11-14), and High School or Secondary Stage (Grades 9-12 in two phases, i.e., 9 and 10 in the first and 11 and 12 in the second) stages respectively, with an option of exiting at Class 10 and re-entering in the next phase .

4.2. The Foundational Stage will consist of five years of flexible, multilevel, play/activity-based learning and the aforementioned curriculum and pedagogy of ECCE. It will also include a focus on good behaviour, courtesy, ethics, personal and public hygiene/cleanliness, teamwork and cooperation, etc. The Preparatory Stage will comprise three years of education building on the play-, discovery-, and activity-based pedagogical and curricular style of the Foundational Stage, but also gradually beginning to incorporate textbooks as well as aspects of more formal but interactive classroom learning, with the introduction of some (light) textbooks, in order to lay a solid groundwork across subjects, including reading, writing, speaking, physical education, art, languages, science, and mathematics. The Middle Stage will comprise three years of education, building on the more formal pedagogical and curricular style of the Elementary Stage, but will see the introduction of subject teachers for learning/discussion of the more abstract concepts in each subject that students will be ready for at this stage across the sciences, mathematics, arts, social sciences, and humanities. Experiential learning within each subject, and explorations of relations among different subjects, will be encouraged and emphasised despite the introduction of more specialised subjects and subject teachers. The High School (or Secondary) Stage will comprise of four years of multidisciplinary study, building on the subject-oriented pedagogical and curricular style of the Middle Stage, but with greater depth, greater critical thinking, greater attention to life aspirations, and greater flexibility and student choice of subjects. In particular, students would continue to have the option of exiting after Grade 10 to pursue vocational or any other courses available in Grades 11-12 at a more specialised school if so desired.

4.3. The above-described stages are purely curricular and pedagogical, designed to optimize learning for students based on the cognitive development of children; they will inform the development of National and State curricula and teaching-learning strategies at each stage, but it will not be necessary to make parallel changes to physical infrastructure.

Holistic development of learners

4.4. The key overall thrust of curriculum and pedagogy reform across all stages will be to move the education system towards real understanding and towards learning how to learn - and away from the culture of rote learning as is present today. The goal will be to create holistic and well-rounded individuals equipped with key 21st-century skills. All aspects of curriculum and pedagogy will be reoriented and revamped to attain these critical goals.



Reduce curriculum content to enhance essential learning and critical thinking

4.5 Curriculum content will be reduced in each subject to its core essentials, to make space for critical thinking and more holistic, inquiry-based, discovery-based, discussion-based, and analysis-based learning. The mandated content will focus on key concepts, ideas, applications, and problem solving. Teaching and learning will strive to be conducted in a more interactive manner; questions will be encouraged, and classroom sessions will regularly contain more fun, creative, collaborative, and exploratory activities for students for deeper and more experiential learning.

Experiential learning

4.6. In all stages, experiential learning will be adopted, including hands-on learning, arts-integrated and sports-integrated education, story-telling-based pedagogy, among others, as standard pedagogy within each subject, and with explorations of relations among different subjects. To close the gap between the current state of learning outcomes and what is truly needed, classroom transactions will shift in certain subjects, as appropriate, towards competency-based learning and education. The assessment tools (including assessment “as”, “of” and “for” learning) will also be aligned with the learning outcomes, capabilities, and dispositions as specified for each subject of a given class.

4.7. Art-Integration is a cross-curricular pedagogical approach that utilises various aspects and forms of art and culture as the basis for experiencing the learning of concepts across subjects. As a part of the thrust on experiential learning, art-integrated education will be embedded in classroom transactions not only for creating joyful classrooms, but also for imbibing the Indian ethos through integration of Indian art and culture in the teaching and learning process at every level. This art-integrated approach will strengthen the linkages between education and culture.

4.8. Sports-Integration is another cross-curricular pedagogical approach that utilises physical activities including indigenous sports in pedagogical practices to help in developing skills such as collaboration, self-initiative, self-direction, self-discipline, teamwork, responsibility, citizenship, etc. amongst the students while conducting an activity individually or in a group. Sports-integrated learning too will be undertaken in classroom transactions to help students to adopt fitness as a lifelong attitude and to achieve the related life skills along with the levels of fitness as envisaged in the Fit India Movement. The need to integrate sports in education is well recognised as it serves to foster holistic development by promoting physical and psychological well being while also enhancing cognitive abilities.

Empower students through flexibility in course choices

4.9. Students will be given increased flexibility and choice of subjects to study, particularly in secondary school - including subjects in physical education, the arts, and vocational crafts – so that they may be free to design their own paths of study and life plans. Holistic development and a wide choice of subjects and courses year to year will be the new distinguishing feature of secondary school education. There will be no hard separation among ‘curricular’, ‘extra-curricular’, or ‘co-curricular’, among ‘arts’, ‘humanities’, and ‘sciences’, or between ‘vocational’ or ‘academic’ streams. Subjects such as physical education, the arts, and vocational crafts, in addition to science, humanities, and mathematics, will be seriously incorporated throughout the school curriculum, with a consideration for what is interesting and safe at each age.



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4.10. Each of the four stages of school education, in accordance with what may be possible in different regions, may consider moving towards a semester or other system that allows the inclusion of shorter modules, or courses that are taught on alternate days, in order to allow an exposure to more subjects and enable greater flexibility. States may look into innovative methods to achieve these aims of greater flexibility and exposure to and enjoyment of a wider range of subjects, including across the arts, sciences, humanities, languages, sports, and vocational subjects.

Multilingualism and the power of language

4.11. It is well-understood that young children learn and grasp nontrivial concepts more quickly in their home language/mother tongue. Wherever possible, the medium of instruction until at least Grade 5, but preferably till Grade 8 and beyond, will be the home language/mother tongue/local language/regional language. Thereafter, the home/local language shall continue to be taught as a language wherever possible. This will be followed by both public and private schools. High-quality textbooks, including in science, will be made available in home languages. In cases where home-language textbook material is not available, the language of transaction between teachers and students will still remain the home language wherever possible. Teachers will be encouraged to use a bilingual approach, including bilingual teaching-learning materials, with those students whose home language may be different from the medium of instruction. All languages will be taught with high quality to all students; a language does not need to be the medium of instruction for it to be taught and learned well.

4.12. As research clearly shows that children pick up languages extremely quickly between the ages of 2 and 8 and that multilingualism has great cognitive benefits to young students, children will be exposed to different languages early on (but with a particular emphasis on the mother tongue), starting from the Foundational Stage onwards. All languages will be taught in an enjoyable and interactive style, with plenty of interactive conversation, and with early reading and subsequently writing in the mother tongue in the early years, and with skills developed for reading and writing in other languages in Grade 3 and beyond. All language learning will aim to be experiential and enhanced through arts such as music, poetry, theatre, and film. There will be a major effort from both the Central and State governments to invest in large numbers of language teachers in all regional languages around the country, and in particular all Schedule 8 languages. States, especially States from different regions of India, may enter bilateral agreements to hire teachers in large numbers from each other, to satisfy the three-language formula in their respective states, and also to encourage the study of Indian languages across the country. Extensive use of technology will be made for teaching and learning of different languages and to popularise language learning. All efforts will be made early on to ensure that any gaps that exist between the language spoken by the child and the medium of teaching are bridged.

4.13. The three-language formula will continue to be implemented while keeping in mind the Constitutional provisions, aspirations of the people, regions, and the Union, and the need to promote multilingualism as well as promote national unity. However, there will be a great flexibility in the three-language formula, in keeping with the principle of flexibility in this policy. No language will be imposed on any State. The three languages learned by children will be the choices of States, regions, and of course the students themselves, so long as at least two of the three languages are native to India. In particular, students who wish to change one or more of the three languages they are studying may do so in Grade 6 or 7, as long as they are able to demonstrate basic proficiency in three languages (including one language of India at the literature level) by the end of secondary school.



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4.14. All efforts will be made in preparing high-quality bilingual textbooks and teaching-learning materials for science and mathematics, so that students are enabled to think and speak about science both in their home language and in English.

4.15. The home/local language and/or the second Indian language will be enhanced with the reading of and analysis of enjoyable and uplifting literature from the Indian subcontinent, ancient to modern, and by authors from all walks of life, as well as through other arts, such as by playing and discussing music or film excerpts, or engaging in theatre in these languages.

4.16. As so many developed countries around the world have amply demonstrated, being well educated in one's language, culture, and traditions is not a detriment but indeed a huge benefit to educational, social, and technological advancement. India's languages are among the richest, most scientific, most beautiful, and most expressive in the world, with a huge body of ancient as well as modern literature (both prose and poetry), film, and music written in these languages that help form India's national identity and wealth. For purposes of cultural enrichment as well as national integration, all young Indians should be aware of the rich and vast array of languages of their country, and the treasures that they and their literatures contain.

4.17. Thus, in particular, every student in the country will participate in a fun project/activity on 'The Languages of India', e.g., under 'Ek Bharat Shrestha Bharat,' sometime in Grades 6-8. In this project/activity, students will learn about the remarkable unity of most of the major Indian languages, starting with their common phonetic and scientifically-arranged alphabets and scripts, their common grammatical structures, their origins and sources of vocabularies from Sanskrit and other classical languages, as well as their rich inter-influences and differences. They will also learn what geographical areas speak which languages, get a sense of the nature and structure of tribal languages, and they would learn to say a few lines in every major language of India and a bit about the rich and uplifting literature of each (through suitable translations as necessary). Such an activity would give them both a sense of the unity and the beautiful cultural heritage and diversity of India and would be a wonderful icebreaker their whole lives as they meet people from other parts of India. This project/activity would be a joyful activity and would not involve any form of assessment.

4.18. The importance, relevance, and beauty of the classical languages and literature of India also cannot be overlooked. Sanskrit, while also an important modern (Schedule 8) language, possesses a classical literature that is greater in volume than that of Latin and Greek put together, containing vast treasures of mathematics, philosophy, grammar, music, politics, medicine, architecture, metallurgy, drama, poetry, storytelling, and more (known as 'Sanskrit Knowledge Systems'), written by people of various religions as well as non-religious people, and by people from all walks of life and a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds over thousands of years. Sanskrit will thus be offered at all levels of school and higher education as an important, enriching option for students, including as a mainstream option in the three-language formula. It will be taught in ways that are interesting and experiential as well as contemporarily relevant, including through the use of Sanskrit Knowledge Systems, and in particular through phonetics and pronunciation. Sanskrit textbooks at the foundational and middle school level may be written in Simple Standard Sanskrit (SSS) to teach Sanskrit through Sanskrit (STS) and make its study truly enjoyable.

4.19. India also has an extremely rich literature in other classical languages, including classical Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, Odia. In addition to these classical languages Pali, Persian, and Prakrit; and their works of literature too must be preserved for their richness and for the pleasure and enrichment of posterity. As India becomes a fully developed country,



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the next generation will want to be able to partake in and be enriched as humans by India's extensive and beautiful classical literature which contains great intellectual and cultural treasures. In addition to Sanskrit, other classical languages and literatures of India, including Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, Odia, Pali, Persian, and Prakrit, will also be widely available in schools as options for students (possibly as online modules), through experiential and innovative approaches, including the integration of technology, to ensure that these languages and literature stay alive and vibrant, especially in those states where they may be best taught and nurtured. Similar efforts will be made for all Indian languages having rich oral and written literatures, cultural traditions, and knowledge.

4.20. For the enrichment of the country's children, and for the preservation of these rich languages and their artistic treasures, all students in all schools, public or private, will have the option of learning at least two years of a classical language of India and its associated literature, through experiential and innovative approaches, including the integration of technology, in Grades 6-12, with the option to continue from the middle stage through the secondary stage and beyond.

4.21. In addition to high quality offerings in Indian languages and English, foreign languages, such as Korean, Chinese, Japanese, Thai, French, German, Spanish, Portuguese, and Russian, will also be widely offered at the secondary level, for students to learn about the cultures of the world and to increase their global knowledge and mobility according to their own interests and aspirations.

4.22. The teaching of all languages will be enhanced through innovative and experiential methods, including through gamification and apps, by weaving in the cultural aspects of the languages - such as films, theatre, storytelling, poetry, and music - and by drawing connections with various relevant subjects and with real-life experiences. Thus, the teaching of languages will also be based on experiential-learning pedagogy.

4.23. Indian Sign Language (ISL) will be standardised across the country, and National and State curriculum materials developed, for use by students with hearing impairment. Local sign languages will be respected and taught as well, where possible and relevant.

Curricular integration of essential subjects, skills, and capacities

4.24. While students must have a large amount of flexibility in choosing their individual curricula, certain subjects, skills, and capacities should be learned by all students to become good, successful, innovative, adaptable, and productive human beings in today's rapidly-changing world. In addition to proficiency in languages, these skills include: scientific temper and evidence-based thinking; creativity and innovativeness; sense of aesthetics and art; oral and written communication; health and nutrition; physical education, fitness, wellness, and sports; collaboration and teamwork; problem solving and logical reasoning; vocational exposure and skills; digital literacy, coding, and computational thinking; ethical and moral reasoning, including knowledge and practice of human and Constitutional values; gender sensitivity; fundamental duties; citizenship skills and values; knowledge of India; environmental awareness (including water and resource conservation, not polluting or littering, etc.); and current affairs and knowledge of critical issues facing local communities, states, the country, and the world.

4.25 Concerted curricular and pedagogical initiatives, including the introduction of contemporary subjects such as Artificial Intelligence, Design Thinking, Holistic Health,



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Organic Living, etc. at relevant stages will be undertaken to develop these various important skills in students at all levels.

4.26. It is recognised that mathematics and mathematical thinking will be very important for India's future and India's leadership role in the numerous upcoming fields and professions that will involve, e.g., artificial intelligence, machine learning, and data science. Thus mathematics and computational thinking will be given increased emphasis throughout the school years, starting with the foundational stage, through a variety of innovative methods, including through the regular use of puzzles and games that make mathematical thinking more enjoyable and engaging. Activities involving coding will be introduced in middle school.

4.27. Every student will take a fun course, during Grades 6-8, that gives a survey and hands-on experience of a sampling of important vocational crafts, such as carpentry, electric work, metal work, gardening, pottery making, etc., as decided by States and local communities and as mapped by local skilling needs. All students will participate in a 10-day bagless period sometime during Grades 6-8 where they intern with local vocational experts such as carpenters, gardeners, potters, artists, etc. Similar internship opportunities to learn vocational subjects may be made available to students throughout Grades 6-12, including during holiday periods. Vocational courses through online mode will also be made available. Bagless days throughout the year for various types of enrichment activities involving arts, quizzes, sports, and vocational crafts will be encouraged.

4.28. "Knowledge of India" will include knowledge of ancient India and its contributions, modern India and its successes and challenges, and a clear sense of India's future aspirations with regard to education, health, environment, etc. These elements will be incorporated in an accurate and scientific manner throughout the school curriculum wherever relevant; in particular, Indian Knowledge Systems, including tribal knowledge, will be correctly covered and included throughout the curriculum, in mathematics, astronomy, philosophy, yoga, architecture, medicine, agriculture, engineering, linguistics, literature, sports, games, as well as in governance, polity, conservation, etc. An engaging course on Indian Knowledge Systems will also be available to students in secondary school as an elective. Video documentaries on inspirational luminaries of India, ancient and modern, in science and beyond, will be shown at appropriate points throughout the school curriculum.

4.29. Students will be taught at a young age the importance of "doing what's right", and will be given a logical framework for making ethical decisions: "Will this hurt somebody? Is that a good thing to do?" In later years, this would then be expanded along themes of cheating, violence, plagiarism, littering, tolerance, equality, empathy, etc., with a view to enabling children to embrace moral/ethical values in conducting one's life, formulate a position/argument about an ethical issue from multiple perspectives, and use ethical practices in all work. As consequences of such basic ethical reasoning, traditional Indian values and all basic human and Constitutional values (such as seva, ahimsa, swachhata, satya, nishkam karma, shanti, sacrifice, tolerance, diversity, pluralism, righteous conduct, gender sensitivity, respect for elders, respect for all people and their inherent capabilities regardless of background, respect for environment, helpfulness, courtesy, patience, forgiveness, empathy, compassion, patriotism, democratic outlook, integrity, responsibility, justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity) will be developed in all students. Children will have the opportunity to read and learn from the original stories of the Panchatantra, Jataka, Hitopadesh, and other fun fables and inspiring tales from the Indian tradition, and learn about their influences on global literature. Excerpts from the Indian Constitution will also be considered essential reading for all students. Basic training in health, including preventive health, mental health, good



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nutrition, personal and public hygiene, and first-aid will also be included in the curriculum, as will scientific explanations of the detrimental and damaging effects of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.

4.30. All curriculum and pedagogy, from the foundational stage onwards, will be redesigned to be strongly rooted in the Indian and local context and ethos – in terms of culture, traditions, heritage, customs, language, philosophy, geography, ancient and contemporary knowledge, societal and scientific needs, etc. – in order to ensure that education is maximally relatable, relevant, interesting, and effective for our students. Stories, arts, games, sports, examples, problems, etc. will be chosen as much as possible to be rooted in the Indian and local geographic context. Ideas, abstractions, and creativity will indeed best flourish when learning is thus rooted.

National Curriculum Framework

4.31. A new and comprehensive National Curricular Framework, NCF 2020, will be formulated by the NCERT - based on the principles of this National Education Policy 2020, and after discussions with all stakeholders including State Governments - and will be made available in all regional languages. The NCF document shall henceforth be revisited and updated once every 5-10 years.

National textbooks with local content and flavour

4.32. The reduction in, and increased flexibility of, school curriculum content - and the renewed emphasis on constructivist rather than rote learning - must be accompanied by parallel changes in school textbooks. All textbooks shall aim to contain the essential core material (together with discussion, analysis, examples, and applications) deemed important on a national level, but at the same time contain any desired nuances and supplementary material as per local contexts and needs. Where possible, teachers will also have choices in the textbooks they employ - from among a set of textbooks that contain the requisite national and local material - so that they may teach in a manner that is best suited to their own pedagogical styles as well as to their students' and communities' needs.

4.33. The aim will be to provide such quality textbooks at the lowest possible cost - namely, at the cost of production/printing - in order to mitigate the burden of textbook prices on the students and on the educational system. This may be accomplished by using high-quality textbook materials developed by NCERT in conjunction with the SCERTs; additional textbook materials could be funded by public-philanthropic partnerships and crowdsourcing that incentivise experts to write such high-quality textbooks at-cost-price. States will prepare their own curricula (which may be based on the NCERT National Curriculum Framework to the extent possible) and prepare textbooks (which may be based on the NCERT textbook materials to the extent possible), incorporating State flavour and material as needed. The availability of such textbooks in all regional languages will be a top priority so that all students have access to high-quality learning. All efforts will be made to ensure timely availability of textbooks in schools. Access to downloadable and printable versions of all textbooks will be provided by all States/UTs and NCERT to help conserve the environment and reduce the logistical burden.

4.34. Concerted efforts, through suitable changes in curriculum and pedagogy, will be made by NCERT, SCERTs, schools, and educators to significantly reduce the weight of school bags and textbooks that students are asked to carry to and from school on a daily basis.



Transforming assessment for student development

4.35. The aim of assessment in the culture of our schooling system will shift from one that is summative and primarily tests rote memorisation skills to one that is more regular and formative, is more competency-based, promotes learning and development for our students, and tests higher-order skills, such as analysis, critical thinking, and conceptual clarity. The primary purpose of assessment will indeed be for learning - it will help the teacher and student, and the entire schooling system, continuously revise teaching-learning processes to optimise learning and development for all students. This will be the underlying principle for assessment at all levels of education.

4.36. The report card of all students for school-based assessment, which is communicated by schools to parents, will be completely redesigned by States/UTs under guidance from the proposed National Assessment Centre /NCERT/SCERTs. The report card will be a holistic, 360-degree, multidimensional report that reflects in great detail the progress as well as the uniqueness of each learner in the cognitive, affective, socio-emotional, and psychomotor domains. It will include self-assessment and peer assessment, and progress of the child in project-based and inquiry-based learning, quizzes, role plays, group work, portfolios, etc., along with teacher assessment. This holistic report card will form an important link between home and school, and will be accompanied by parent-teacher meetings in order to actively involve parents in their children's holistic education/development, and provide teachers and parents with valuable information on how to support each student in and out of the classroom.

4.37. The current nature of secondary school exams, including Board exams and entrance exams - and the resulting coaching culture of today - are doing much harm, especially at the secondary school level, replacing valuable time for true learning with excessive exam coaching and preparation. These exams also force students to learn a very narrow band of material in a single stream, rather than allowing the flexibility and choice that will be so important in the individualised education system of the future.

4.38. The existing system of Board and entrance examinations shall be reformed to eliminate the need for undertaking coaching classes. To reverse these harmful effects of the current assessment system, Board exams will be redesigned to encourage holistic development; students will be able to choose many of the subjects in which they take Board exams, depending on their individualised interests. Board exams will also be made 'easier', in the sense that they will test primarily core capacities / competencies rather than months of coaching and memorisation; any student who has been going to and making a basic effort in a school class will be able to pass and do well on the corresponding subject Board Exam without much additional effort. To further eliminate the 'high stakes' aspect of Board Exams, all students will be allowed to take Board Exams on up to two occasions during any given school year, one main examination and one for improvement if desired.

4.39. In addition to introducing greater flexibility, student choice, and best-of-two-attempts assessments that primarily test core capacities – which must be the immediate key reforms to all Board exams - Boards may over time also develop further viable models of Board Exams that reduce pressure and the coaching culture. Some possibilities include: a system of annual/semester/modular Board Exams could be developed - that each test far less material, and are taken immediately after the corresponding course is taken in school - so that the pressure from exams is better distributed, less intense, and less high-stakes across the High School stage; all subjects and corresponding assessments, beginning with mathematics, could be offered at two levels, with students doing some of their subjects at the standard level and



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some at a higher level; and Board exams in certain subjects could be redesigned to have two parts – one part of an objective type with multiple-choice questions and the other of a descriptive type.

4.40. With regard to all of the above, guidelines will be prepared by NCERT, in consultation with major stakeholders, such as SCERTs, Boards of Assessment (BoAs), the proposed new National Assessment Centre etc., and teachers prepared, for a transformation in the assessment system by the 2022-23 academic session, to align with the NCF 2020.

4.41. To track progress throughout the school years, and not just at the end of Grades 10 and 12 - for the benefit of students, parents, teachers, principals, and the entire schooling system in planning improvements to schools and teaching-learning processes - all students will take school examinations in Grades 3, 5, and 8 which will be conducted by the appropriate authority. These examinations would test achievement of basic learning outcomes, through assessment of core concepts and knowledge from the national and local curricula, along with relevant higher-order skills and application of knowledge in real-life situations, rather than rote memorisation. The Grade 3 examination, in particular, would test basic literacy, numeracy, and other foundational skills. The results of these school examinations will be used *only* for developmental purposes of the school education system, including for public disclosure by schools of their overall (anonymised) student outcomes, and for continuous monitoring and improvement of the schooling system. Anonymity of individual test results will be enforced to ensure that these exams are not used to evaluate or judge individual students.

4.42. It is proposed to set up a National Assessment Centre as a standard-setting Body under MHRD that fulfils the basic objectives of setting norms, standards, and guidelines for student assessment and evaluation for all recognised school boards of India, guiding the State Achievement Survey (SAS) and undertaking the National Achievement Survey (NAS), monitoring achievement of learning outcomes in the country, and encouraging and helping school boards to shift their assessment patterns towards meeting the skill requirements of the 21st century in consonance with the stated objectives of this Policy. This Centre will also advise school boards regarding new assessment patterns and latest researches, promote collaborations between school boards, and become an instrument for the sharing of best practices among school boards, etc.

4.43. The principles for university entrance exams will be similar; the National Testing Agency (NTA) will work to offer a high-quality common aptitude test, as well as specialised common subject exams in the sciences, humanities, languages, arts, and vocational subjects, at least twice every year. These exams shall test conceptual understanding and the ability to apply knowledge, and shall aim to eliminate the need for taking coaching for these exams. Students will be able to choose the subjects that they are interested in having tested, and each university will be able to see each student's individual subject portfolio and admit students into their programmes based on individual interests and talents. The NTA will serve as a premier, expert, autonomous testing organisation to conduct entrance examinations for undergraduate and graduate admissions and fellowships in higher education institutions. The high quality, range, and flexibility of the NTA testing services will enable most universities to use these common entrance exams - rather than having hundreds of universities each devising their own entrance exams - thereby drastically reducing the burden on students, universities and colleges, and the entire education system. It will be left up to individual universities and colleges as to whether they see value in using NTA assessments for their admissions.



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Support for gifted students / students with special talents

4.44. Every student has innate talents, which must be discovered, nurtured, fostered, and developed. These talents may express themselves in the form of varying interests, dispositions, and capacities. Those students that show particularly strong interests and capacities in a given realm must be encouraged to pursue that realm beyond the general school curriculum. Teacher education will include methods for the recognition and fostering of such student talents and interests. The NCERT and NCFTE will develop guidelines for the education of gifted children. B.Ed. programmes may also allow a specialisation in the education of gifted children.

4.45. Topic-centered and Project-based Clubs and Circles will be highly encouraged and supported at the levels of schools, school complexes, districts, and beyond. Examples include Science Circles, Math Circles, Music Performance Circles, Chess Circles, Poetry Circles, Language Circles, Drama Circles, Debate Circles, Sports Circles, and so on. Funds will be made available for transportation of teachers to take their students to these circles or clubs when these are not meeting at their own schools. Along these lines, high-quality national residential summer programmes for secondary school students in various subjects will also be funded, with a rigorous merit-based but equitable admissions process to attract the very best students and teachers to these programmes from across the country including from socio-economically disadvantaged groups.

4.46. Teachers will aim to encourage students with singular interests and/or talents in the classroom by giving them supplementary enrichment material and guidance and encouragement, and will help them to organise such Topic-centered Clubs and Circles through specific funding allocated for this purpose, and will recommend them to appropriate summer programmes.

4.47. Olympiads and competitions in various subjects will be strengthened across the country, with clear coordination and progression from school to local to state to national levels, with the necessary funding to ensure that all students may participate at all levels for which they qualify. Efforts will be made to make available Olympiads in rural areas and in regional languages to ensure widespread participation. Public and private universities, including premier institutions like the IITs and NITs, would be encouraged to use results from Regional, National, and International Olympiads, as well as results from and work in regional and national topic-based programmes, as part of the criteria for admissions into their undergraduate programmes.

4.48. Once internet-connected smartphones or tablets are available in all homes and/or schools, online apps with quizzes, competitions, assessments, enrichment materials, and online communities for shared interests will be developed, and will work to enhance all the aforementioned initiatives, as group activities for students with appropriate supervision of parents and teachers. Every classroom will be developed into a smart classroom, in a phased manner, for using digital pedagogy and thereby enriching the teaching-learning process with online resources and collaborations.

5. Teachers

5.1. 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. Only the very best and most learned became teachers. Society gave teachers, or gurus, what they needed in order to pass on their knowledge, skills, and ethics optimally to



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students. Today, however, the status of the teacher has undoubtedly and unfortunately come down. The quality of teacher education, recruitment, deployment, service conditions, and empowerment of teachers is not where it should be, and consequently the quality and motivation of teachers does not reach the standards where it could be. The high respect for teachers and the high status of the teaching profession must be revived and restored for the very best to be inspired to enter the profession, for teachers to be well-motivated and empowered to innovate, and for education to therefore reach the heights and levels that are truly required to ensure the best possible future for our children and our nation.

Recruitment and deployment

5.2. To ensure that truly excellent students enter the teaching profession - especially from rural areas - a large number of merit-based scholarships shall be instituted across the country for study at outstanding 4-year integrated B.Ed. programmes. In rural areas, special merit-based scholarships will be established that also include preferential employment in their local areas upon successful completion of their B.Ed. programmes. Such scholarships will provide local job opportunities to outstanding local students (especially female students), so that these students may serve as local-area role models and as highly-qualified teachers who speak the local language. Incentives will be provided for outstanding teachers to take teaching jobs in rural areas, especially in areas that are currently facing the greatest teacher shortages and the greatest needs for outstanding teachers. A key incentive for teaching in rural schools will be the provision of local housing near or on the school premises or increased housing allowances to help in procuring local housing in rural areas.

5.3. The harmful practice of excessive teacher transfers will be halted, to ensure that teachers can build relationships with and become invested in their communities so that students have continuity in their role models and educational environments. Transfers will occur in very special circumstances, e.g., for promotions of outstanding teachers and administrators to leadership positions, as suitably laid down in a structured manner by State/UT governments. Furthermore, transfers will be conducted through an online computerised system that ensures transparency.

5.4. Teacher Eligibility Tests (TETs) will be strengthened to better test material correlated to being outstanding teachers, both in terms of content and pedagogy. The TETs will also be extended to cover teachers across all stages (Foundational, Preparatory, Middle and Secondary) of school education. For subject teachers, suitable TET or NTA test scores in the corresponding subjects will also be taken into account for recruitment. To gauge passion and motivation for teaching, a classroom demonstration or interview will become an integral part of teacher hiring at schools and school complexes; these interviews would also be used to assess comfort and proficiency in teaching in the local language, so that every school/school complex has at least some teachers who can converse with students in the local language and other prevalent home languages of students. Teachers in private schools also must have qualified similarly through TET, a demonstration/interview, and knowledge of local language(s).

5.5. To ensure an adequate number of teachers across subjects - particularly in subjects such as art, physical education, vocational education, and languages - teachers could be recruited to a school or school complex; the sharing of teachers across schools could be considered in accordance with the grouping-of-schools format adopted by State/UT governments.

5.6. To promote local knowledge and expertise, schools/school complexes will be encouraged and indeed will be supported with suitable resources to hire local eminent persons or experts



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as ‘specialised instructors’ in various subjects, such as in traditional local arts, vocational crafts, entrepreneurship, agriculture, or any other subject where local expertise exists and would benefit students and help preserve and promote local knowledge and professions.

5.7. A technology-based comprehensive teacher-requirement planning and predictive forecasting exercise will be conducted across India and in each State to assess expected teacher and subject vacancies over the next two decades. All the above-described initiatives in recruitment and deployment will be scaled as needed over time, with the aim to fill all vacancies with outstanding and qualified teachers, including outstanding local teachers, with suitable quality incentives given for career management and progression as described below. Teacher education programmes and offerings will also align with the teacher and subject vacancies thus projected.

Service environment and culture

5.8. The primary goal of overhauling the service environments and cultures of schools will be to maximise the abilities of teachers to do their jobs effectively, and to ensure that they are part of vibrant, caring, and inclusive communities of teachers, students, parents, principals, and other supporting staff, all of whom share a common goal: to ensure that our children are learning.

5.9. A very first requirement in this direction will be to ensure decent and pleasant service conditions at schools. Adequate and safe infrastructure, including working toilets, clean drinking water, clean and attractive spaces conducive to learning, electricity, computing devices, internet, libraries, and sports and recreational resources will be important to provide to all schools in order to ensure that teachers and students, including children of all genders and children with disabilities, receive a safe, inclusive, and effective learning environment and are comfortable and inspired to teach and learn in their schools.

5.10. State/UT Governments may adopt innovative formats, such as school complexes, rationalisation of schools (without in any way reducing accessibility for children), etc., for effective school governance, resource sharing, and community building. The creation of school complexes, for example, could go a long way towards building vibrant teacher communities. The hiring of teachers to school complexes could automatically create relationships among schools across the school complex; 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 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 to ensure that all children in the system are learning. School complexes could also share counsellors, trained social workers, technical and maintenance staff, etc. to further support teachers and help create an effective community environment for learning.

5.11. In collaboration with parents and other key local stakeholders, teachers will also be more involved in the governance of schools/school complexes, including as members of the School Management Committees/School Complex Management Committees.

5.12. To prevent the large amounts of time spent currently by teachers on non-teaching activities, teachers will not be engaged any longer in work that is not directly related to teaching; in particular, teachers will not be involved in electioneering, cooking of midday meals, or other strenuous administrative tasks, so that they may fully concentrate on their teaching-learning duties.



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5.13. To help ensure that schools have positive learning environments, the role expectations of principals and teachers will explicitly include developing a caring and inclusive culture at their schools, for more effective learning for all, and for the benefit of all in their communities.

5.14. Teachers will be given more autonomy in choosing aspects of pedagogy, so that they may teach in the manner that they find most effective for the students in their classrooms and communities. Teachers will also focus on socio-emotional learning - a critical aspect of any student's holistic development. Teachers will be recognised for novel approaches to teaching that improve learning outcomes in their classrooms.

Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

5.15. Teachers will be given constant opportunities for self-improvement and to learn the latest innovations and advances in their profession. To ensure that every teacher has the flexibility to optimise their own development as teachers, a modular approach to continuous teacher development will be adopted. Developmental opportunities will be offered in multiple modes, including in the form of local, regional, State, National, and international teaching and subject workshops as well as online teacher development modules, and will be available to all teachers so that each teacher may choose what is most useful for their own development. Platforms (especially online platforms) will be developed so that teachers may share ideas and best practices. Each teacher will be expected to participate in at least, say, 50 hours of CPD opportunities every year for their own professional development, driven by their own needs and choice. CPD opportunities will, in particular, systematically cover the latest pedagogies regarding foundational literacy and numeracy, formative and adaptive assessment of learning outcomes, individualised and competency-based learning, and related pedagogies, such as experiential learning, arts-integrated, sports-integrated, and storytelling-based approaches, etc.

5.16. Leaders such as school principals and school complex leaders will have similar modular leadership/management workshops and online development opportunities and platforms to continuously improve their own leadership and management skills, and so that they too may share best practices with each other. Such leaders will also be expected to participate in at least, say, 50 hours of CPD modules per year, covering leadership and management, as well as content and pedagogy for the teaching and pedagogy-leadership aspects of their jobs, with a focus on preparing and implementing pedagogical plans based on competency- and outcome-based education.

Career management and progression

5.17. Teachers doing outstanding work must be recognised, promoted, and given salary raises, to incentivise all teachers to do their best work. Therefore, a robust merit-based tenure (i.e., confirmed employment following probation), promotion, and salary structure will be developed, with multiple levels within each teacher rank that incentivises and recognises excellent and committed teachers through tenure, promotions, and salary increases. A system of multiple parameters for proper assessment of performance will be developed for the same by State/UT Governments that is based on peer reviews, attendance, commitment, hours of CPD, and other forms of service to the school and the community. Such merit-based assessments would be used to determine tenure decisions and the rate of promotions and salary increases for each teacher. (In this Policy, in the context of careers, 'tenure' refers to



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confirmation for permanent employment, after due assessment of performance and contribution, while ‘tenure track’ refers to the period of probation preceding tenure.)

5.18. The approach to career management of teachers in schools will be to ensure that growth of teachers in their career (in terms of tenure, promotions, salary increases, etc.) is available to teachers within a single school stage (i.e., Foundational, Preparatory, Middle, or Secondary), and that there is no career progression-related incentive to move from being teachers in early stages to later stages or vice versa (though such career moves across stages will be allowed, provided the teacher has the desire and qualifications for such a move). This is to support the fact that all stages of school education will require the highest-quality teachers, and no stage will be considered more important than any other.

5.19. Vertical mobility of teachers based on merit will also be paramount; outstanding teachers with demonstrated leadership and management skills would be trained over time to take on academic leadership positions in schools, school complexes, and BRCs, CRCs, BITEs, DIETs as well as relevant government departments and ministries.

Professional standards for teachers

5.20. A common guiding set of National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST) will be developed by 2022, by the National Council for Teacher Education in consultation with NCERT, and coordinated by the NCERT, SCERTs, teachers from across levels and regions, expert organisations in teacher preparation and development, and higher education institutions. The standards would cover expectations of the role of the teacher at different levels of expertise/rank, and the competencies required for that rank. It will also comprise standards for performance appraisal, for each rank, that would be carried out on a periodic basis. The NPST will also inform the design of pre-service teacher education programmes. This could be then adopted by States and determine all teacher career management, including tenure (after the probationary/tenure track period), professional development efforts, salary increases, promotions, and other recognitions. Promotions and salary increases will not occur based on the length of tenure or seniority, but only on the basis of such appraisal. The professional standards will be reviewed and revised nationally in 2030, and thereafter every ten years, on the basis of rigorous empirical analysis of the efficacy of the system.

Special educators

5.21. There is an urgent need for additional special educators for certain areas of school education. Some examples of such specialist requirements include subject teaching for children with disabilities / divyang children at the Middle and Secondary school level, including teaching for specific learning disabilities. Such teachers would require not only subject-teaching knowledge and understanding of subject-related aims of education, but also the relevant skills for and understanding of such special requirements of children. Therefore, such areas could be developed as secondary specialisations for subject teachers or generalist teachers, during or after pre-service teacher preparation. They will be offered as certificate courses, in the pre-service as well as in-service mode, either full time or as part-time/blended courses - again, necessarily, at multidisciplinary colleges or universities.

Approach to teacher education

5.22. Recognising that the best teachers will require training in high-quality content as well as pedagogy, teacher education will gradually be moved by 2030 into multidisciplinary colleges and universities. As colleges and universities all move towards becoming multidisciplinary,



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they will also aim to house outstanding education departments that offer B.Ed., M.Ed., and Ph.D. degrees in education.

5.23. By 2030, the minimum degree qualification for teaching will be a 4-year integrated B.Ed. degree that teaches a range of knowledge content and pedagogy, and includes strong practicum training in the form of student-teaching at local schools. The 2-year B.Ed. programmes will also be offered, by the same multidisciplinary institutions offering the 4-year integrated B.Ed., and will be intended only for those who have already obtained Bachelor's Degrees in other specialised subjects. These B.Ed. programmes may also be replaced by suitably adapted 1-year B.Ed. programmes, and will be offered only to those who have completed the equivalent of 4-year multidisciplinary Bachelor's Degrees or who have obtained a Master's degree in a speciality and wish to become a subject teacher in that speciality. All such B.Ed. degrees would be offered only by accredited multidisciplinary higher education institutions offering 4-year integrated B.Ed. programmes. Multidisciplinary higher education institutions offering the 4-year in-class integrated B.Ed. programme and having accreditation for ODL may also offer high-quality B.Ed. programmes in blended or ODL mode to students in remote or difficult-to-access locations, with suitable robust arrangements for mentoring and for the practicum-training and student-teaching components of the programme.

5.24. All B.Ed. programmes will include training in time-tested as well as the most recent techniques in pedagogy, including pedagogy with respect to foundational literacy and numeracy, multilevel teaching and evaluation, teaching children with disabilities, teaching children with special interests or talents, use of educational technology, and learner-centred and collaborative learning. All B.Ed. programmes will also include strong practicum training in the form of in-classroom teaching at local schools. All B.Ed. programmes will also emphasise the practice of the Fundamental Duties (Article 51A) of the Indian Constitution along with other Constitutional provisions while teaching any subject or performing any activity.

5.25. Special shorter local teacher education programmes will also be available at BITEs, DIETs, or at school complexes themselves, so that eminent local persons can be hired to teach at schools or school complexes as 'specialised instructors', for the purpose of promoting local professions, knowledge, and skills, e.g., local art, music, agriculture, business, sports, carpentry, and other vocational crafts. This programme will be suitably supported by Central and State governments.

5.26. Shorter post-B.Ed. certification courses will also be made widely available, at multidisciplinary colleges and universities, to teachers who may wish to move into more specialised areas of teaching, such as the teaching of students with disabilities, or into leadership and management positions in the schooling system, or to move from one stage to another between foundational, preparatory, middle and secondary stages.

5.27. By the end of 2021, a new and comprehensive National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education, NCTFE 2021, will be formulated by the NCTE - based on the principles of this National Education Policy 2020, and after discussions with all stakeholders including State Governments - and will be made available in all regional languages. The NCFTE will thereafter be revised once every 5-10 years by reflecting the changes in revised NCFs as well as emerging needs in teacher education.



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5.28. Finally, in order to fully restore the integrity of the teacher education system, all substandard stand-alone Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs) running in the country will be shut down.

6. Equitable and Inclusive Education: Learning for All

6.1. Education is the single greatest tool for achieving social justice and equality. Inclusive and equitable education - while indeed an essential goal in its own right - is also critical to achieving an inclusive and equitable society in which every citizen has the opportunity to dream, thrive, and contribute to the nation. Unfortunately, prejudice and bias, based on gender, social and economic status, and disabilities, among other factors, often affect people's capacity to benefit from the education system, compounding social cleavages that hold the nation back from growth, innovation, and progress. The education system must aim to benefit all of India's children so that no child loses any opportunity to learn and excel because of circumstances of birth or background.

6.2. While the Indian education system and successive government policies have made steady progress towards bridging gender and social category gaps in all levels of school education, large disparities still remain - especially at the secondary level - particularly for socio-economically disadvantaged groups that have been historically underrepresented in education. Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs) can be broadly categorised based on gender identities (particularly female and transgender individuals), socio-cultural identities (such as Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, OBCs, and linguistic and religious minorities), geographical identities (such as students from villages, small towns, and aspirational districts), disabilities (including learning disabilities), and socio-economic conditions (such as migrant communities, low income households, children in vulnerable situations, victims of or children of victims of trafficking, orphans including child beggars in urban areas, and the urban poor). While overall enrolments in schools decline steadily from Grade 1 to Grade 12 - a problem that must be addressed across the country among all groups as discussed in Chapter 3 - this decline in enrolments is significantly more pronounced for many of these SEDGs, with even greater declines for female students within each of these SEDGs. This decline in SEDGs' enrolment is often even steeper in higher education.

6.3. The critical problems and recommendations regarding early childhood education, foundational literacy/numeracy, and access/enrolment/attendance discussed in Chapters 1–3, respectively, are particularly relevant and important for underrepresented and disadvantaged groups; therefore, the measures from Chapters 1–3 will be targeted in a concerted way for SEDGs especially.

6.4. In addition, there have been various successful policies and schemes implemented over the past several years (such as targeted scholarships, conditional cash transfers to incentivise parents to send their children to school, providing bicycles for transport, etc.) that have significantly increased participation of SEDGs in the schooling system in certain areas. These successful policies and schemes of past years must be renewed and significantly strengthened across the country.

6.5. It will also be essential to take into account research that ascertains which measures are particularly effective for certain SEDGs. For example, providing bicycles and organising cycling and walking groups to provide access to school have been shown to be particularly powerful methods in increasing participation of female students - even at lesser distances - because of the safety benefits and comfort to parents that they provide. One-on-one teachers and tutors, peer tutoring, open schooling, appropriate infrastructure, and suitable



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technological interventions to ensure access can be particularly effective for certain children with disabilities. Schools having quality early childhood care and education reap the greatest dividends for children who come from families that are economically disadvantaged. Meanwhile, the hiring of counsellors and/or well-trained social workers that work with and connect students, parents, schools, and teachers in order to improve attendance and learning outcomes have been found to be especially effective for children in urban poor areas.

6.6. Data shows that certain geographical areas contain significantly larger proportions of SEDGs. Also, there are geographical locations that have been identified as aspirational districts which require special interventions for promoting their educational development. Hence, it is recommended that certain regions of the country with large populations from educationally-disadvantaged SEDGs should be declared Special Education Zones (SEZs), where all the above schemes and policies are implemented to the maximum through additional concerted efforts and funding from the Centre and States in order to truly change the educational landscape of these Zones.

6.7. It must be noted that women cut across all underrepresented groups, making up about one half of all other SEDGs - unfortunately, the exclusion and inequity that SEDGs face is only amplified for the women in these SEDGs. The policy additionally recognises the special and critical role that women play in society and in shaping social mores - not only in their own generation but in the next one; therefore, providing a quality education to girls is the best way to increase the education levels for these SEDGs, not just in the present but also in future generations. The policy thus recommends that the policies and schemes designed to include students from SEDGs should be especially targeted towards girls in these SEDGs.

6.8. In addition, the Government of India will constitute a 'Gender-Inclusion Fund' to build the nation's capacity to provide a quality and equitable education for all girls as well as transgender students. The fund will be available to States to implement priorities determined by the Central government critical for assisting female and transgender children in gaining access to education (such as the provisions of sanitation and toilets, bicycles, conditional cash transfers, etc.); funds will also enable states to support and scale effective community-based interventions that address local context-specific barriers to female and transgender children's access to and participation in a quality education. Similar 'Inclusion Fund' schemes shall also be developed to address analogous access issues for other SEDGs. In essence, this Policy aims to eliminate any remaining disparity in access to education (including vocational education) for children from any gender or other socio-economically disadvantaged group.

6.9. Free boarding facilities in the form of hostels will be built - matching the standard of Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas - in school locations where students may have to come from particularly far, and particularly for students who come from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, with suitable arrangements for the safety of all children, especially girls (e.g., girls' hostels would be separate and secure and have female wardens, security guards, and boundary walls). Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas will be strengthened and expanded to increase the participation in quality schools (up to Grade 12) of girls from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Additional Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas and Kendriya Vidyalayas will be built around the country, especially in aspirational districts, Special Education Zones, and disadvantaged areas, to increase high-quality educational opportunities in every area of India. Preschool sections covering at least one year of early childhood education will be added to Kendriya Vidyalayas and other primary schools around the nation, particularly in disadvantaged areas.

6.10. Ensuring the inclusion and equal participation of children with disabilities in the



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schooling system will also be accorded the highest priority. Children with disabilities will be enabled to fully participate in the regular schooling process from the Foundational Stage through higher education. The Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act 2016 defines inclusive education as a ‘system of education wherein students with and without disabilities learn together and the system of teaching and learning is suitably adapted to meet the learning needs of different types of students with disabilities.’ This Policy is in complete consonance with the provisions of the RPWD Act 2016 and endorses all its recommendations with regard to school education.

6.11. To this end, clear and efficient avenues for obtaining financial support will be provided to schools/school complexes for the integration of children with disabilities, including for the recruitment of special educators with cross-disability training to schools/school complexes, and for the establishment of resource centres at the village/block level, wherever needed, especially for children with severe or multiple disabilities. Physical access for all children with disabilities will be enabled through barrier-free structures as per the RPWD Act. Different categories of children with disabilities have differing needs - schools and school complexes will work and be supported towards providing all children with disabilities accommodations and support mechanisms tailored to suit the needs of each child and to ensure their full participation and inclusion in the classroom. In particular, assistive devices and appropriate technology-based tools, as well as adequate and language-appropriate teaching-learning materials (e.g., textbooks in accessible formats such as large print and Braille) will be made available to help children with disabilities integrate more easily into classrooms and engage with teachers and their peers. This will apply to all school activities including arts, sports, and vocational education. NIOS will develop high-quality modules to teach Indian Sign Language, and to teach other basic subjects using Indian Sign Language. Adequate attention will be paid to the safety and security of children with disabilities.

6.12. As per the RPWD Act 2016, children with benchmark disabilities shall have the choice of regular or special schooling. Resource centers in conjunction with special educators will support the rehabilitation and educational needs of learners with severe or multiple disabilities, and will assist parents/guardians in achieving high-quality home schooling and skilling for such students as needed. Home-based education will continue to be a choice available for children with severe and profound disabilities who are unable to go to schools. The children under home-based education must be treated as equal to any other child in the general system. There shall be an audit of home-based education for its efficiency and effectiveness using the principle of equity and equality of opportunity. Guidelines and standards for home-based schooling shall be developed based on this audit in line with the RPWD Act 2016. While it is clear that the education of all children with disabilities is the responsibility of the State, orientation of parents/caregivers along with wide-scale dissemination of learning materials to enable parents/caregivers to actively support their children’s learning needs will be accorded priority.

6.13. Most classrooms have children with specific learning disabilities who need continuous support. Research is clear that the earlier such support begins, the better the chances of progress. Teachers must be helped to identify such learning disabilities early and plan specifically for their mitigation. Specific actions (including with the use of appropriate technology) will include allowing and enabling children to work at their own pace, allowing and enabling flexible curricula to leverage each child’s strengths, and creating an ecosystem for appropriate assessment and certification. Assessment and certification agencies, including the proposed new National Assessment Centre, will formulate guidelines and recommend appropriate tools for conducting such assessment, from the foundational stage to higher education (including for entrance exams), in order to ensure equitable access and



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opportunities for all students with learning disabilities.

6.14. The awareness and knowledge of how to teach children with specific disabilities (including learning disabilities) will be an integral part of all teacher education programmes, as will gender sensitization and sensitization towards all underrepresented groups and the initiatives that must be taken to reverse their underrepresentation. As a part of the efforts to enhance participation in school education, scholarships for talented and meritorious students from all SEDGs will be offered on a larger scale, especially at the secondary stage of education, to facilitate their entry into higher education.

6.15. Alternative forms of schools, such as traditional or religious schools, will be encouraged to preserve their traditions or alternative pedagogical styles, but at the same time will be supported to integrate the subject and learning areas prescribed by the national curricular framework into their curricula in order to reduce and eventually eliminate the underrepresentation of children from these schools in higher education. In particular, financial assistance will be provided to introduce science, mathematics, social studies, Hindi, English, State languages, or other relevant subjects in the curriculum, as may be desired by these schools. This would enable children studying in traditional cultural or religious schools to attain the learning outcomes defined for Grades 1–12. Furthermore, students in such schools would be allowed and indeed encouraged to appear for State or other Board examinations and assessments by the National Testing Agency, and thereby enrol in higher education institutions. Capacities of teachers in teaching of science, mathematics, language, and social studies will be developed including orientation to new pedagogical practices. Libraries and laboratories will be strengthened and adequate teaching-learning materials made available.

6.16. Education of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes: Within SEDGs, and with respect to all the above policy points, special attention will be given to reduce the disparities in the educational development of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes through focused interventions. These may include the setting up of special hostels in dedicated regions, providing bridge courses, and providing financial assistance through fee waivers and scholarships.

6.17. All scholarships and other opportunities and schemes available to students from SEDGs – to participate more fully in the education system and promote equity - will be coordinated and announced by a single agency and website to ensure that all students are aware of, and may apply for in a simplified manner on such a ‘single window system’, any and all opportunities that are available to them.

6.18. All the above policies and measures are absolutely critical to attaining full inclusion and equity for all SEDGs - but they are not sufficient. What is also required is a change in school culture. All participants in the school education system, including teachers, principals, administrators, counsellors, and students, will be sensitised to the requirements of all students, the notions of inclusion and equity, and the respect, dignity, and privacy of all persons. Such an educational culture will provide the best pathway to help students become empowered individuals who, in turn, will enable society to transform into one that is responsible towards its most vulnerable citizens. Inclusion and equity will become a key aspect of teacher education (and training for all leadership, administrative, and other positions in schools); efforts will be made to recruit more high-quality teachers and leaders from SEDGs in order to bring in excellent role models for all students.

6.19. Students will also be sensitised through this new school culture, brought in by teachers and other school workers (such as trained social workers and counsellors) as well as through



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corresponding changes in the school curriculum. The school curriculum will include, early on, material on human values such as respect for all persons, empathy, tolerance, human rights, gender equality, nonviolence, global citizenship, inclusion, and equity. It would also include more detailed knowledge of various cultures, religions, languages, gender identities, etc. to sensitise and develop respect for diversity. Any biases and stereotypes in school curriculum will be removed, and more material will be included that is relevant and relatable to all communities, and that helps to develop these human values.

7. Efficient Resourcing and Effective Governance through School Complexes/Clusters

7.1. While the establishment of primary schools in every habitation across the country - driven by the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and other important efforts across the states - has helped to ensure near-universal access to primary schools, it has also led to the development of numerous very small schools. According to U-DISE 2016–17 data, nearly 28% of India's public primary schools and 14.8% of India's upper primary schools have less than 30 students. The average number of students per grade in the elementary schooling system (primary and upper primary, i.e., Grades 1–8) is about 14, with a notable proportion having below 6; during the year 2016–17, there were 1,19,303 single-teacher schools, the majority of them (94,028) being primary schools serving Grades 1–5.

7.2. These small school sizes have made it economically suboptimal and operationally complex to run good schools, in terms of deployment of teachers as well as the provision of critical physical resources. Teachers often must teach multiple grades at a time, and teach multiple subjects, including subjects in which they may have no prior background; key areas such as music, arts, and sports are too often simply not taught; and physical resources, such as lab and sports equipment and library books, are simply not available across schools.

7.3. The isolation of small schools also has a negative effect on education and the teaching-learning process. Teachers function best in communities and teams, and so do students. Small schools also present a systemic challenge for governance and management. The geographical dispersion, challenging access conditions, and the very large numbers of schools make it difficult to reach all schools equally. Administrative structures have not been expanded in accordance with the increases in the number of schools.

7.4. Although consolidation of schools is an option that is often discussed, it must be carried out very judiciously, and *only when it is ensured that there is genuinely no impact on access* (e.g., through the construction of quality roads and provision of appropriate bus services/transportation). Such measures are nevertheless likely to result only in limited consolidation, and would not solve the overall structural problem and challenges presented by the large numbers of small schools.

7.5. These challenges will, by 2025, be addressed by State/UT governments by adopting innovative mechanisms to group or rationalise schools. The objective behind this intervention would be to ensure that: (1) every school has adequate number of counsellors/trained social workers and teachers (shared or otherwise) for teaching all subjects including art, music science, sports, languages, vocational subjects, etc; (2) every school has adequate resources (shared or otherwise), such as a library, science labs, computer labs, skill labs, playgrounds, sports equipment and facilities, etc.; (3) a sense of community is built to overcome the isolation of teachers, students, and schools, through joint professional development programmes, sharing of teaching-learning content, joint content development, holding joint activities such as art and science exhibitions, sports meets, quizzes and debates, and fairs; (4) there is cooperation and support across schools for the education of children with disabilities;



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and (5) governance of the schooling system is improved by devolving all finer decisions, best made locally, to principals, teachers, and other stakeholders within each group of schools – and treating such a group of schools, which range from the foundational stage through the secondary stage, as an integrated semi-autonomous unit.

7.6. One possible mechanism for accomplishing the above would be the establishment of a grouping structure called the *school complex*, consisting of one secondary school together with all other schools offering lower grades in its neighbourhood in a radius of five to ten miles. This suggestion was first made by the Education Commission (1964–66) but was left unimplemented. This Policy strongly endorses the idea of the school complex/cluster, wherever possible.

7.7. The aim of the school complex/cluster will be to: a) build vibrant communities of teachers, school leaders, and other supporting staff; b) better integrate education across all school levels, from early childhood education through Grade 12, as well as vocational and adult education; c) share key material resources, such as libraries, science laboratories and equipment, computer labs, sports facilities and equipment, as well as human resources, such as social workers, counsellors, and specialised subject teachers - including teachers for music, art, languages, and physical education - across schools in the complex; and d) develop a critical mass of teachers, students, supporting staff, as well as equipment, infrastructure, etc. - resulting in greater resource efficiency and more effective functioning, coordination, leadership, governance, and management of schools in the schooling system.

7.8. The establishment of school complexes/clusters and the sharing of resources across complexes will have a number of other benefits as a consequence, such as significantly improved support for children with disabilities, more topic-centred clubs and academic / sports / arts / crafts events across school complexes, better incorporation of art, music, language, physical education, and other subjects in the classroom through the sharing of teachers in these subjects, better student support, enrolment, attendance, and performance through the sharing of social workers and counsellors, and School Complex Management Committees (rather than simply School Management Committees) for more robust and improved governance, monitoring, oversight, innovations, and initiatives by local stakeholders. Building such larger communities of schools, school leaders, teachers, students, supporting staff, parents, and local citizens would energise and enable the schooling system, and in a resource-efficient manner.

7.9. The governance of schools will also improve and become far more efficient with school complexes/clusters. First, the DSE will devolve authority to the school complex/cluster, which will be and act as a semi-autonomous unit. The District Education Officer (DEO) and the Block Education Officers (BEO) will interact primarily with each school complex/cluster as a single unit and facilitate its work. The complex itself will perform certain delegated tasks - tasks that would otherwise have been performed by the inspecting officers of the DSE - and will deal with the individual schools within it. The school complex/cluster will be given significant autonomy by the DSE to innovate towards providing integrated education and to experiment with pedagogies, curriculum, etc., while adhering to the National Curricular Framework (NCF) and State Curricular Framework (SCF). Under this organisation, schools will gain in strength, will be able to exercise greater freedom, and will contribute towards making the complex more innovative and responsive. Meanwhile, the DSE will be able to focus on the aggregate level goals that need to be achieved, improving overall system effectiveness.



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7.10. The culture of working to a plan, both short-term and long-term ones, will be developed through such complexes/clusters. Schools will develop their plans (SDPs) with the involvement of their SMCs. These plans will then become the basis for the creation of School Complex/Cluster Development Plans (SCDPs). The SCDP will also involve the plans of all other institutions associated with the school complex, such as vocational education institutions, and will be created by the principals and teachers of the school complex with the involvement of the SCMC – and will be made available publicly. The plans will include human resources, learning resources, physical resources and infrastructure, improvement initiatives, financial resources, school culture initiatives, teacher development plans, and educational outcomes. It will also include the teacher development plan. It will detail the efforts to leverage the teachers and students across the school complex to develop vibrant learning communities. The SDP and SCDP will be the primary mechanism to align all stakeholders of the school, including the DSE. The SMC and SCMC will use the SDP and SCDP for oversight of the functioning and direction of the school, and will assist in the execution of these plans. The DSE, through its relevant official, e.g., the BEO, will endorse and confirm the SCDP of each school complex. It will then provide the resources (financial, human, physical, etc.) necessary to achieve the SCDPs, both short-term (1-year) and long-term (3-5 years). It will also provide all other relevant support to the school complexes to achieve the educational outcomes. The DSE and the SCERT may share specific norms (e.g., financial, staffing, process) and frameworks for development of the SDP and SCDP with all schools, which may be revised periodically.

7.11. To further enhance cooperation and positive synergy among schools, including between public and private schools, the twinning/pairing of one public school with one private school will be adopted across the country, so that such paired schools may meet/interact with each other, learn from each other, and also share resources, if possible. Best practices of private schools will be documented, shared, and institutionalised in public schools, and vice versa, where possible.

7.12. Every State/District will be encouraged to establish “Bal Bhavans” where children of all ages may wish to go once a week (e.g., on weekends) or more often, as a special daytime boarding school, to partake in art-related, career-related, and play-related activities. Such Bal Bhavans too could be incorporated as a part of school complexes / clusters as may be possible.

7.13. The school should be a point of celebration and honour for the whole community. The dignity of the school as an institution should be restored and important dates, such as the foundation day of the school, will be celebrated along with the community and the list of important alumni may be displayed and honoured. Furthermore, the un-utilised capacity of school infrastructure could be used to promote social, intellectual, and volunteer activities for the community and to promote social cohesion during non-teaching / schooling hours and may be used as a “Samajik Chetna Kendra”.

8. Standard-setting and Accreditation for School Education

8.1. The goal of the school education regulatory system must be to continually improve educational outcomes; it must *not* overly restrict schools, prevent innovation, or demoralise teachers, principals, and students. All in all, regulation must aim to empower schools and teachers with trust, enabling them to strive for excellence and perform at their very best, while ensuring the integrity of the system through the enforcement of complete transparency and full public disclosure of all finances, procedures, and educational outcomes.



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8.2. At present, all main functions of governance and regulation of the school education system - namely, the provision of public education, the regulation of education institutions, and policymaking - are handled by a single body, i.e., the Department of School Education or its arms. This leads to harmful conflicts of interest and excessive centralised concentrations of power; it also leads to ineffective management of the school system, as efforts towards quality educational provision are often diluted by the focus on the other roles, particularly regulation, that the Departments of School Education also perform.

8.3. The current regulatory regime also has not been able to curb the rampant commercialisation and economic exploitation of parents by many for-profit private schools, yet at the same time it has all too often inadvertently discouraged public-spirited private/philanthropic schools. There has been far too much asymmetry between the regulatory approaches to public and private schools, even though the goals of both types of schools should be the same: to provide quality education.

8.4. The public education system is the foundation of a vibrant democratic society, and the way it is run must be transformed and invigorated in order to achieve the highest levels of educational outcomes for the nation. At the same time, the private/philanthropic school sector must also be encouraged and enabled to play a significant and beneficial role.

8.5. The key principles and recommendations of this Policy regarding the State school education system, the independent responsibilities within that system, and the approach to its regulation are thus as follows. Specifically,

- a) The Department of School Education, which is the apex state-level body in school education, will be responsible for overall monitoring and policymaking for continual improvement of the public education system; it will *not* be involved with the provision and operation of schools or with the regulation of schools, in order to ensure due focus on the improvement of public schools and to eliminate conflicts of interest.
- b) The educational operations and service provision for the public schooling system of the whole state will be handled by the Directorate of School Education (including the offices of the DEO and BEO, etc.); it will work to implement policies regarding educational operations and provision, but otherwise will be separated from and work independently of the apex body above.
- c) To ensure that all schools follow certain minimal professional and quality standards, States/UTs will set up an independent, State-wide, body called the State School Standards Authority (SSSA) for the State/UT. The SSSA will establish a minimal set of standards based on basic parameters (namely, safety, security, basic infrastructure, number of teachers across subjects and grades, financial probity, and sound processes of governance), which shall be followed by all schools. This will bring down significantly the heavy load of regulatory mandates currently borne by schools. The framework for these parameters will be created by the SCERT for each state in consultation with various stakeholders, especially teachers and schools. Accreditation and self-audit will be used by the SSSA to implement these frameworks.

Transparent public self-disclosure of all the basic regulatory information, as laid down by the SSSA, will be used extensively for public oversight and accountability. The dimensions on which information has to be self-disclosed, and the format of disclosure will be decided by the SSSA in accordance with global best practices for standard-setting for schools. This information will have to be made available and kept updated and



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accurate by all schools, on the aforementioned public website maintained by the SSSA and on the schools' websites. Any complaints or grievances from stakeholders or others arising out of the information placed in the public domain shall be adjudicated by the SSSA. Feedback from randomly selected students will be solicited online to ensure valuable input at regular intervals. Technology will be employed suitably to ensure efficiency and transparency in all work of the SSSA.

An effective quality self-regulation or accreditation system will be instituted for all stages of education. This regulatory system will also cover all pre-school education - private, public, and philanthropic - to ensure compliance with essential quality standards.

All new schools will need to ensure minimum prescribed norms, in terms of governance, infrastructure, safety, teachers, and other learning resources, which will have to be displayed through a transparent self-disclosure mechanism.

- d) Academic matters, including academic standards and curricula in the State, will be led by the SCERT (with close consultation and collaboration with the NCERT), which will be reinvigorated as an institution along with the other academic support structures such as the BRCs, BITEs, and DIETs. The SCERT will develop a School Quality Assessment and Accreditation Framework (SQAAF) through wide consultations with all stakeholders. The SCERT will also lead a “change management process” for the reinvigoration of CRCs, BRCs, BITEs, and DIETs which must change the capacity and work culture of these institutions in 3 years, developing them into vibrant institutions of excellence. Meanwhile, certification of competencies of students at the school-leaving stage will be handled by the Boards of Certification/Examination in each State.

8.6. The culture, structures, and systems that empower and adequately resource schools, institutions, teachers, officials, communities, and other stakeholders, will also build concomitant accountability. Each stakeholder and participant of the education system will be accountable to perform their role with the highest level of integrity, full commitment and exemplary work ethic. Each role of the system will have explicitly articulated role expectations and rigorous assessment of their performance vis-à-vis these expectations. The assessment system will ensure it to be objective and developmentally oriented, while ensuring accountability. It will have multiple sources of feedback and assessment, to ensure a full view of the performance. The assessment will not be ‘reductionist’ or ‘simplistic’ (e.g. will not be linked to ‘marks’ of students), recognizing the complexity of education and its multiple influences; individuals will be held accountable for their actions and directly related outcomes, while it will recognize that outcomes such as educational attainment of students and learning levels have multiple intervening variables and extraneous influences. It will also recognize that education requires team-work, particularly at the level of the school. The promotion and compensation increase of all individuals will be based on this performance assessment, as will be their development plans. All officials will be responsible to ensure that this ‘development, performance and accountability system’ is run with high integrity, and systematically, within their span of control.

8.7. Public and private schools (except the schools that are managed/aided/controlled by the Central government) will be assessed and accredited on the same criteria, benchmarks, and processes, emphasising online and offline public disclosure and transparency rather than mandates by the SSSA, so as to ensure that public-spirited private schools are encouraged and not stifled in any way. Private philanthropic efforts for quality education will be encouraged - thereby affirming the public-good nature of education - while protecting parents and communities from usurious commercial practices, including arbitrary increases in tuition fees. Public disclosure on the school website and on the SSSA website - for both public and private



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schools - would include (at the very least) information on the numbers of classrooms, students, and teachers, subjects taught, any fees, and overall student outcomes on standardised evaluations such as the NAS and SAS. For schools controlled/managed/aided by the central government, the CBSE in consultation with the MHRD shall prepare a regulatory framework. Building a robust educational system has to be a national effort, with both the public and private sectors participating for the public good with no scope for commercialisation or profiteering. Schools will thus be held to similar disclosure standards as Section 8 companies. The various mechanisms with checks and balances, as described above, will, in particular, function to combat and stop commercialisation of education. This will be a key priority of the regulatory system.

8.8. The standard-setting/regulatory framework and the facilitating systems for school regulation, accreditation, and governance shall be reviewed to enable improvements on the basis of the learnings and experiences gained in the last decade. This review will aim to ensure that all students, particularly students from underprivileged and disadvantaged sections, shall have free and compulsory access to high-quality and equitable schooling from early childhood education (age 3 onwards) through higher secondary education (i.e., until Grade 12), thereby leading to universalisation of education from early childhood education through the secondary levels. The overemphasis on inputs, and the mechanistic nature of their specifications – physical and infrastructural – will be changed and requirements made more responsive to realities on the ground, e.g., regarding land areas and room sizes, practicalities of playgrounds in urban areas, etc. These mandates will be adjusted and loosened, leaving suitable flexibility for each school to make its own decisions based on local needs and constraints, but without in any way compromising on the requirements of safety, security, and a pleasant and productive learning space. Educational outcomes and the transparent disclosure of all financial, academic, and operational matters will be given due importance and will be incorporated suitably in the assessment of schools. This will further improve India's progress towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) of ensuring free, equitable, and quality primary and secondary education for all children.

8.9. The aim of the public-school education system will be to re-attain quality levels so that no parent has any academic incentives to send their child to a private school rather than a public school.

8.10. For a periodic 'health check-up' of the overall system, a sample-based National Achievement Survey (NAS) of student learning levels will be carried out by the proposed new National Assessment Centre with suitable cooperation with other governmental bodies - such as the NCERT – that may assist in, e.g., assessment procedures as well as data analysis. The assessment will cover students across government as well as private schools. States will also be encouraged to conduct their own census-based State Assessment Survey (SAS), the results of which will be used only for developmental purposes, public disclosure by schools of their overall and anonymised student outcomes, and for continuous improvement of the school education system. Until the establishment of the proposed new National Assessment Centre, NCERT may continue to carry out NAS.

8.11. Finally, the children and adolescents enrolled in schools must not be forgotten in this whole process; after all, the school system is designed for them. Careful attention to their safety and rights - particularly girl children - and the various difficult issues faced by adolescents, such as substance or drug abuse and forms of discrimination and harassment, must be provided with the highest importance by the system, with clear, safe, and efficient mechanisms for reporting and for due process on any infractions against



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children's/adolescents' rights or safety. The development of such mechanisms that are effective, timely, and well-known to all students will be accorded high priority.

II. HIGHER EDUCATION

9. Quality Universities and Colleges: A New and Forward looking Vision for India's Higher Education System

9.1. Higher education plays an extremely important role in promoting human as well as societal well-being and in developing India as envisioned in the Constitution – as a democratic, just, socially-conscious, cultured, and humane nation with liberty, equality, fraternal spirit, and justice for all. Higher education also significantly contributes towards sustainable livelihoods and economic development of the nation. As India moves towards becoming a knowledge economy and society, more and more young Indians are likely to aspire to higher education.

9.2. Given the developmental requirements of the 21st century, the aim of a quality university or college education must be to develop good, thoughtful, well-rounded, and creative individuals. It must enable an individual to study one or more specialised areas of interest at a deep level, while at the same time develop character, ethical and Constitutional values, intellectual curiosity, scientific temper, creativity, spirit of service, and 21st-century capabilities across a range of disciplines including the sciences, social sciences, arts, humanities, languages, as well as professional, technical, and vocational subjects. A quality higher education must enable personal accomplishment and enlightenment, constructive public engagement, and productive contribution to society. It must prepare students for more meaningful and satisfying lives and work roles, and enable economic independence. Quality university and college education must therefore aim to be both a joy and an opportunity, to which all citizens must have access if they so desire.

9.3. At the level of society, the aim of higher education must be to enable the development of an enlightened, socially-conscious, knowledgeable, and skilled nation that can uplift its people and construct and implement robust solutions to its own problems. Higher education must, therefore, also form the basis for knowledge creation and innovation in the nation and thereby contribute deeply to a growing national economy. The purpose of quality higher education is, therefore, more than simply the creation of greater opportunities for individual employment; it represents the key to more vibrant, socially-engaged, and cooperative communities and a happier, cohesive, cultured, productive, innovative, progressive, and prosperous nation.

9.4. Some of the major problems currently plaguing the higher education system in India include:

- a severely fragmented higher educational ecosystem, with more than 50,000 higher education institutions (HEIs), a large proportion of which offer only a single programme and have fewer than 100 students;
- a lack of emphasis on learning outcomes and the development of cognitive skills of students;
- a rigid separation of disciplines, with too much early specialisation and streaming of students into narrow areas of study;
- a lack of access to higher education, especially in socio-economically disadvantaged areas, with few universities and colleges that teach in local languages;
- a lack of teacher and institutional autonomy to innovate and excel;



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- inadequate mechanisms for merit-based career management and progression of faculty and institutional leaders;
- a lack of research at most universities and colleges, and transparent and competitive peer-reviewed research funding across disciplines;
- suboptimal governance and leadership of HEIs;
- a regulatory system that is not empowered to close down fake colleges, while constraining excellent and innovative institutions; and
- multifarious problems associated with large affiliating universities resulting in poor undergraduate education in large numbers of colleges.

9.5. This policy envisions a complete overhaul and re-energising of the higher education system to overcome these challenges and thereby deliver high-quality higher education, with equity and inclusion, to all young people who aspire to it. The policy's vision includes the following key changes to the current system:

- moving towards a higher educational system consisting of large, multidisciplinary universities and colleges, with at least one in or near every district, and with more HEIs across India that offer medium of instruction or programmes in local/Indian languages;
- moving towards a more multidisciplinary undergraduate education;
- moving towards faculty and institutional autonomy;
- revamping curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, and student support for enhanced student experiences;
- reaffirming the integrity of faculty and institutional leadership positions through merit-appointments and career progression based on teaching, research, and service;
- establishment of a National Research Foundation to fund outstanding peer-reviewed research and to actively seed research in universities and colleges;
- governance of HEIs by highly-qualified independent boards having academic and administrative autonomy;
- “light but tight” regulation by a single regulator for all of higher education, including professional education; and
- increased access, equity, and inclusion through a range of measures, including: greater opportunities for outstanding public education; substantial increases in scholarships by private/philanthropic universities for disadvantaged and underprivileged students; open schooling, online education, and Open Distance Learning (ODL); and all infrastructure and learning materials accessible and available to learners with disabilities.

10. Institutional Restructuring and Consolidation

10.1. The main thrust of this policy regarding higher education is to end the fragmentation of higher education by transforming higher education institutions into large multidisciplinary universities, colleges, and HEI clusters / Knowledge Hubs, each of which will aim to have 3,000 or more students. This would help build vibrant communities of scholars and peers, break down harmful silos, enable students to become well-rounded across disciplines (including artistic, creative, and analytic subjects as well as sports), develop active research communities across disciplines (including cross-disciplinary research), and increase resource efficiency, both material and human, across higher education.

10.2. Moving to large multidisciplinary universities and HEI clusters is thus the highest recommendation of this policy regarding the structure of higher education. The ancient Indian universities Takshashila, Nalanda, Vallabhi, and Vikramshila, which had thousands of



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students from India and the world studying in vibrant multidisciplinary environments, and modern universities such as the Ivy League Universities/Stanford/MIT in the United States today, amply demonstrate the type of great success that such large multidisciplinary research and teaching universities can bring. It is time that India bring back this great Indian tradition which is needed more today than ever to create well-rounded and innovative individuals, and which is already transforming other countries educationally and economically.

10.3. This vision of higher education will require, in particular, a new vision for what constitutes a higher education institution (HEI), i.e., a university or a college. A university will mean a multidisciplinary institution of higher learning that offers undergraduate and graduate programmes, with high quality teaching, research, and community engagement. The definition of *university* will thus allow a spectrum of institutions that range from those that place equal emphasis on teaching and research (Research-intensive Universities - RUs) to those that place greater emphasis on teaching but still conduct significant research (Teaching-intensive Universities - TUs). Meanwhile, an Autonomous degree-granting College (AC) will refer to a large multidisciplinary institution of higher learning that grants undergraduate degrees and is indeed primarily focused on undergraduate teaching - though it would not be restricted to that - and it would generally be smaller than a typical university.

10.4. A stage-wise mechanism for granting graded autonomy to colleges, through a transparent system of graded accreditation, will be established. Colleges will be encouraged, mentored, supported, and incentivised to attain gradually the minimum benchmarks required for each level of accreditation. Over a period of time, it is envisaged that every college would develop into either an autonomous degree-granting college (AC), or a constituent college of a university - in the latter case, it would be fully a part of the university. With appropriate accreditations, Autonomous degree-granting Colleges could evolve into Research-intensive or Teaching-intensive Universities if they so aspire.

10.5. It must be made clear that these three broad categories of institutions are not in any natural way a sharp, exclusionary categorisation, but are along a continuum. HEIs will have the autonomy and freedom to move gradually from one category to another, based on their plans, actions, and effectiveness. The most salient marker for these types of institutions will be the focus of their goals and work. The Accreditation System will develop and use appropriately different and relevant norms across this range of categories of HEIs. However, the expectations of high quality of education, and therefore of teaching-learning, across all categories and all HEIs will be the same.

10.6. In addition to teaching and research, HEIs will also have other crucial responsibilities, which they will discharge through appropriate resourcing, incentives, and structures; these include supporting other HEIs in their development, community engagement and service, contribution to various fields of practice, faculty development for the higher education system, and support to school education.

10.7. By 2040, all higher education institutions (HEIs) shall aim to become multidisciplinary institutions, and shall aim to have student enrolments in the thousands, if not tens of thousands, for optimal use of infrastructure and resources, and for the creation of vibrant multidisciplinary communities. Since this process will take time, all HEIs will firstly plan to become multidisciplinary by 2030, and then gradually increase student strength to the desired levels. HEIs - especially those with large land areas - will be strongly supported to substantially increase their student intake, multidisciplinary capacity, and residential facilities.



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10.8. More HEIs shall be established and developed in underserved regions to ensure full access, equity, and inclusion. There shall, by 2030, be at least one large multidisciplinary HEI in or near every district. Concrete steps shall be taken towards developing high-quality higher education institutions (both public and private) that have medium of instruction or that offer high-quality programmes in local/Indian languages or bilingually - with the aim to thereby substantially increase GER and access across the country and across every type of institution. The aim will be to increase the Gross Enrolment Ratio in higher education (including vocational education) from 26.3% (2018) to 50% by 2030. While a number of new institutions may be developed to attain these goals, a large part of the capacity creation will be achieved by consolidating and significantly expanding and improving existing HEIs.

10.9. Growth will be in both public and private institutions, with a strong emphasis on developing a large number of outstanding public institutions. There will be a fair and transparent system for determining (increased) levels of public funding support for public HEIs. This system will give an equitable opportunity for all public institutions to grow and develop, and will be based on transparent, pre-announced criteria from within the accreditation norms of the Accreditation System. HEIs delivering the very highest quality as per the parameters of this Policy will be helped in expanding their capacity through additional funds and resources and the procurement of additional land as may be needed.

10.10. Institutions will have the option to run Open Distance Learning (ODL) and online programmes, provided they are specifically accredited to do so, in order to enhance their offerings, improve access, increase GER, and provide increased opportunities for lifelong learning (SDG4). All ODL programmes (and their components) leading to any diploma or degree will be of standards and quality equivalent to the highest quality programmes run by the HEIs on their campuses. Top institutions accredited for ODL will be encouraged and supported to develop high-quality online courses. Such quality online courses will be suitably integrated into curricula of HEIs, and blended mode will be preferred.

10.11. Single-stream HEIs will be phased out over time, and will all move towards becoming vibrant multidisciplinary institutions or parts of vibrant multidisciplinary HEI clusters, in order to enable and encourage high-quality multidisciplinary and cross disciplinary teaching and research across fields. Single-stream HEIs will, in particular, add departments across different fields that would strengthen the single stream that they currently serve. Through the attainment of suitable accreditations, all HEIs will gradually move towards full autonomy - academic and administrative – in order to enable this vibrant culture. The autonomy of public institutions will be backed by adequate public financial support and stability. Private institutions with a public-spirited commitment to high-quality equitable education will be encouraged and treated on par.

10.12. The new regulatory system envisioned by this Policy will foster this overall culture of empowerment and autonomy to innovate, including by gradually phasing out the system of ‘affiliated colleges’ over a period of fifteen years through a system of graded autonomy, and to be carried out in a challenge mode. Each existing affiliating university will be responsible for mentoring its affiliated colleges so that they can develop their capabilities and achieve minimum benchmarks in: academic and curricular matters; teaching and assessment; governance reforms; financial robustness; and administrative efficiency. All colleges currently affiliated to a university shall attain the required benchmarks over time to secure the prescribed accreditation benchmarks and eventually become autonomous degree-granting colleges; this will be achieved through a concerted national effort including suitable mentoring and governmental support for the same.



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10.13. The overall higher education sector will aim to be integrated into one unified higher education system, including professional and vocational education. This Policy and its approach will be equally applicable to all HEIs across all current streams, which would eventually merge into one coherent ecosystem of higher education.

10.14. A university has only one definition worldwide, namely, a multidisciplinary institution of higher learning that offers undergraduate, graduate, and Ph.D. programmes, and engages in high-quality teaching and research. The present complex nomenclature of HEIs in the country such as 'deemed to be university', 'affiliating university', 'affiliating technical university', 'unitary university' shall be replaced simply by 'university'.

11. Towards a More Holistic and Multidisciplinary Education

11.1. India has a long tradition of holistic and multidisciplinary learning, from universities such as Takshashila and Nalanda, to the extensive literatures of India combining subjects across fields. Ancient Indian literary works such as Banabhatta's *Kadambari* described a good education as knowledge of the 64 *Kalaas* or arts; and among these 64 'arts' were included not only subjects such as singing and painting, but also more 'scientific' fields such as chemistry and mathematics, more 'vocational' fields such as carpentry and clothes-making, more 'professional' fields such as medicine and engineering, as well as 'soft skills' such as communication, discussion, and debate. The very idea that all branches of creative human endeavour - including mathematics, science, vocational subjects, professional subjects, and soft skills - should be considered 'arts' indeed has distinctly Indian origins. This notion of a 'knowledge of many arts' – or what in modern times is often called the 'liberal arts' (i.e., a liberal notion of the arts) - must be brought back to Indian education, as it is exactly the kind of education that will be required for the 21st century.

11.2. Assessments of educational approaches in undergraduate education that integrate the humanities and arts with STEM have consistently showed positive learning outcomes, including increased creativity and innovation, critical thinking and higher-order thinking capacities, problem-solving abilities, teamwork, communication skills, more in-depth learning and mastery of curricula across fields, increases in social and moral awareness, etc., besides general engagement and enjoyment of learning. Research is also improved and enhanced through a holistic and multidisciplinary education approach.

11.3. A holistic and multidisciplinary education would aim to develop all capacities of human beings - intellectual, aesthetic, social, physical, emotional, and moral - in an integrated manner. Such an education will help develop well-rounded individuals that possess: critical 21st century capacities in fields across the arts, humanities, languages, sciences, social sciences, and professional, technical, and vocational fields; an ethic of social engagement; soft skills, such as communication, discussion and debate; and rigorous specialisation in a chosen field or fields. Such a holistic education shall be, in the long term, the approach of all undergraduate programmes, including those in professional, technical, and vocational disciplines.

11.4. A holistic and multidisciplinary education, as described so beautifully in India's past, is indeed what is needed for the education of India to lead the country into the 21st century and the fourth industrial revolution. Even engineering schools, such as the IITs, will move towards more holistic and multidisciplinary educations with more arts and humanities, while arts and humanities students will aim to learn more science - while all will make an effort to incorporate more vocational subjects and soft skills. India's rich legacy in the arts as well as



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in the sciences and beyond will help significantly in making the move towards such an education an easy and natural transition.

11.5. Imaginative and flexible curricular structures will enable creative combinations of disciplines for study, and would offer multiple entry and exit points, thus removing currently prevalent rigid boundaries and creating new possibilities for life-long learning. Graduate-level (master's and doctoral) education in large multidisciplinary universities, while providing rigorous research-based specialisation, would also provide opportunities for multidisciplinary work, including in academia, government, and industry.

11.6. Large multidisciplinary universities and colleges will facilitate the move towards high-quality holistic and multidisciplinary education. Flexibility in curriculum and novel and engaging course options will be on offer to students, in addition to rigorous specialisation in a subject or subjects. This will be encouraged by increased faculty and institutional autonomy in setting curricula. Pedagogy for courses will strive for significantly less rote learning and an increased emphasis on communication, discussion, debate, research, and opportunities for cross-disciplinary and interdisciplinary thinking.

11.7. Departments in Languages, Literature, Music, Philosophy, Indology, Art, Dance, Theatre, Education, Mathematics, Statistics, Pure and Applied Sciences, Sociology, Economics, Sports, Translation and Interpretation, and other such subjects needed for a multidisciplinary, stimulating Indian education and environment will be established and strengthened at HEIs across the country. Courses from such departments (or courses in ODL mode in these subjects when they are not offered in-class at the HEI) will be available as credits in all Bachelor's degree programmes.

11.8. Towards the attainment of such a holistic and multidisciplinary education, the flexible and innovative curricula of all HEIs shall include credit-based courses and projects in the areas of community engagement and service, environmental education, and value-based education. Value-based education will include the development of humanistic, ethical, Constitutional, and universal human values of truth (satya), righteous conduct (dharma), peace (shanti), love (prem), nonviolence (ahimsa), scientific temper, citizenship values, and also life-skills; lessons in seva/service and participation in community service programmes will be considered an integral part of a holistic education. Finally, as part of a holistic education, students at all HEIs will be provided with opportunities for internships with local industry, businesses, artists, craftspersons, etc., as well as research internships with faculty and researchers at their own or other HEIs/research institutions, so that students may actively engage with the practical side of their learning and, as a by-product, further improve their employability.

11.9. The structure and lengths of degree programmes shall be adjusted accordingly. The undergraduate degree will be of either 3-or 4-year duration, with multiple exit options within this period, with appropriate certifications, e.g., a certificate after completing 1 year in a discipline or field (including vocational and professional areas), or a diploma after 2 years of study, or a Bachelor's degree after a 3-year programme. The 4-year multidisciplinary Bachelor's programme, however, shall be the preferred option since it allows the opportunity to experience the full range of holistic and multidisciplinary education in addition to a focus on the chosen major and minors as per the choices of the student. An Academic Bank of Credit (ABC) shall be established which would digitally store the academic credits earned from various recognised HEIs so that the degrees from an HEI can be awarded taking into account credits earned. The 4-year programme may also lead to a degree 'with Research' if



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the student completes a rigorous research project in their major area(s) of study as specified by the HEI.

11.10. HEIs will have the flexibility to offer different designs of Master's programmes: (a) there may be a 2-year programme with the second year devoted entirely to research for those who have completed the 3-year Bachelor's programme; (b) for students completing a 4-year Bachelor's programme with Research, there could be a 1-year Master's programme; and (c) there may be an integrated five-year Bachelor's/Master's programme. Undertaking a Ph.D. shall require either a Master's degree or a 4-year Bachelor's degree with Research. The M.Phil. programme shall be discontinued.

11.11. Model public universities for holistic and multidisciplinary education, at par with IITs, IIMs, etc., called MERUs (Multidisciplinary Education and Research Universities) will be set up and will aim to reach the global status of, e.g., the Ivy League Universities in the U.S. They will help set the highest standards for multidisciplinary education across India.

11.12. HEIs as part of multidisciplinary education will focus on research and innovation by setting up start-up incubation centres, technology development centres, centres in frontier areas of research, greater industry-academic linkages, and interdisciplinary research including humanities and social sciences research. The NRF will function to help enable and support such a vibrant research and innovation culture across HEIs, research labs, and other research organisations.

12. Optimal Learning Environments and Support for Students

12.1. Effective learning requires a comprehensive approach that involves appropriate curriculum, engaging pedagogy, continuous formative assessment, and adequate student support. The curriculum must be interesting and relevant, and updated regularly to align with the latest knowledge requirements and to meet specified learning outcomes. High-quality pedagogy is then necessary to successfully impart the curricular material to students; pedagogical practices determine the learning experiences that are provided to students - thus directly influencing learning outcomes. The assessment methods must be scientific, designed to continuously improve learning and test the application of knowledge. Last but not least, the development of capacities that promote student wellness - such as fitness, good health, psycho-social well being, and sound ethical grounding - are also critical for high-quality learning. Often, higher education represents the first time in students' lives when they are living and working independently, and the resulting stress and pressures of student life can sometimes form a serious threat to their wellness. Robust care and support systems are thus vital for maintaining beneficial conditions for student wellness, and form an important precondition for effective learning.

12.2. Curriculum, pedagogy, continuous assessment, and student support are thus the cornerstones for quality learning. Along with providing suitable resources and infrastructure (such as quality libraries, classrooms, labs, technology, sports/recreation areas, student discussion spaces, and dining areas) to support these necessary ingredients, a number of initiatives will be required on these matters to ensure that learning environments are engaging and supportive, and enable all students to succeed.

12.3. First, in order to enable creativity, institutions and faculty will have the autonomy to innovate on matters of curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment within a broad framework of higher education qualifications that ensures consistency across institutions and programmes and across the ODL, online, and the traditional 'in-class' modes. Accordingly, curriculum and



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pedagogy will be designed by institutions and motivated faculty to ensure a stimulating and engaging learning experience for all students, and continuous formative assessment will be used to further the goals of each programme. All assessment systems shall also be decided by the HEI, including those that lead to final certification. The Choice Based Credit System (CBCS) will be revised leaving plenty of room for innovation and flexibility. HEIs shall move to a criterion-based grading system that assesses student achievement based on the learning goals for each programme, making the system fairer and outcomes more comparable. HEIs shall also move away from high-stakes examinations towards more continuous and comprehensive evaluation.

12.4. Second, each institution will integrate its academic plans - ranging from curricular improvement to quality of classroom transaction - into its larger Institutional Development Plan (IDP). Each institution will be committed to the holistic development of students, and create strong internal systems for supporting diverse student cohorts in academic and social domains - both inside and outside formal academic interactions in the classroom. For example, all HEIs will have mechanisms and opportunities for funding of topic-centred clubs and activities organised by students (with the help of faculty and other experts as needed), such as clubs and events dedicated to science, mathematics, poetry, language, literature, debate, music, table tennis, etc. Over time, such activities could be incorporated into the curriculum once appropriate faculty expertise and campus student demand is developed. Faculty will have the capacity and training to be able to approach students not just as teachers in the classroom, but also as mentors and guides.

12.5. Third, students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds require particular encouragement and support to make the transition to higher education successfully. Providing access is only the first step; continuous support must also be provided. Universities and colleges will thus be required to set up high-quality support centres and will be given adequate funds and academic resources to carry this out effectively. There will be professional academic and career counselling available to all students, as well as counsellors to ensure physical and emotional well being.

12.6. Fourth, ODL and online education provide a natural path to increase access to high-quality higher education. In order to leverage its potential completely, ODL will be renewed through concerted, evidence-based efforts towards expansion while ensuring adherence to clearly articulated standards of quality. ODL programmes will aim to be equivalent to the highest quality in-class programmes available. Norms, standards, and guidelines for systemic development, regulation, and accreditation of ODL will be prepared, and a framework for quality of ODL that will be recommendatory for all HEIs will be developed.

12.7. Finally, all programmes, courses, curricula, and pedagogy across subjects, including those in in-class, online, and ODL modes - as well as student support - will aim to achieve global standards of quality.

Internationalisation

12.8. The various initiatives mentioned above will also help in having larger numbers of international students studying in India, and provide greater mobility to students in India who may wish to visit, study at, transfer credits to, or carry out research at institutions abroad, and vice versa. Courses and programmes in subjects such as Indology, Indian languages, yoga, arts, music, history, culture, and modern India, internationally relevant curricula in the sciences, social sciences, and beyond, meaningful opportunities for social engagement,



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quality residential facilities and on-campus support, etc. will be fostered to attain this goal of global quality standards, attract greater numbers of international students, and achieve the goal of 'internationalisation at home'.

12.9. India will be promoted as a global study destination providing premium education at affordable costs - thereby helping to restore its role as a Vishwa Guru. An International Students Office at each HEI hosting foreign students will be set up to coordinate all matters relating to welcoming and supporting students arriving from abroad. Research/teaching collaborations and faculty/student exchanges with high-quality foreign institutions will be facilitated, and relevant mutually-beneficial MOUs with foreign countries will be signed. High performing Indian universities will be encouraged to set up campuses in other countries, and similarly, select universities (e.g., those from among the top 100 universities in the world) will be permitted to operate in India. A legislative framework facilitating such entry will be put in place, and such universities will be given special dispensation regarding regulatory, governance, and content norms on par with other autonomous institutions of India. Furthermore, research collaboration and student exchanges between Indian institutions and global institutions will be promoted through special efforts. Credits acquired in foreign universities will be permitted, where appropriate as per the requirements of each HEI, to be counted for the award of a degree.

Student Activity and Participation

12.10. Students are the prime stakeholders in the education system. Vibrant campus life is essential for high-quality teaching-learning processes. Towards this end, students will be given plenty of opportunities to be involved in sports, culture/arts clubs, activity clubs, community service projects, etc. In every education institution, there shall be counselling systems for handling stress and emotional adjustments. Furthermore, a systematised arrangement shall be created to provide the requisite support to students from rural backgrounds, including increasing hostel facilities as needed. All HEIs will ensure quality medical facilities for all students in their institutions.

Financial support for students

12.11. Financial assistance to students who need such financial support shall be made available. No student will be deprived of higher education because of financial inability. The National Scholarship Portal will be expanded to ensure that all students who require financial support to attend a public HEI will receive it, covering stipends, boarding, and lodging, and not just waivers of tuition fees. Private HEIs will offer freeships to at least one fifth of their students, and significant scholarships for at least half of their students.

13. Motivated, Energised, and Capable Faculty

13.1. The most important factor in the success of higher education institutions is the quality and engagement of its faculty. Acknowledging the criticality of faculty in achieving the goals of higher education, various initiatives have been introduced in the past several years to systemise recruitment and career progression, and to ensure equitable representation from various groups in the hiring of faculty. Compensation levels of permanent faculty in public institutions have also been increased substantially. Various initiatives have also been taken towards providing faculty with professional development opportunities. However, despite these various improvements to the status of the academic profession - and the existence of so many model faculty members who truly inspire us all - on average, faculty motivation in terms of teaching, research, and service in HEIs remains far lower than would be truly desired



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and needed for the higher educational system to thrive and reach the high levels that are expected of it. The various factors that lie behind low faculty motivation levels must be addressed to ensure that each faculty member is happy, enthusiastic, engaged, and motivated towards advancing her/his students, institution, and profession. To this end, the policy recommends the following initiatives to achieve the very best, motivated, and capable faculty in HEIs.

13.2. As the most basic step, all HEIs will be equipped with the basic infrastructure and facilities necessary to carry out good work in higher education, including clean drinking water, clean working toilets, blackboards, offices, teaching supplies, libraries, labs, and pleasant classroom spaces and campuses. Every classroom shall have access to the latest educational technology that enables better learning experiences.

13.3. Teaching duties also will not be excessive, and student-teacher ratios not too high, so that the activity of teaching remains pleasant and there remains adequate time for interaction with students, conducting research, and other university activities. The student-teacher ratio will range from 10:1 to 20:1 depending on the programme. Faculty will be appointed to individual institutions and not be transferable across institutions, so that they may feel truly invested in, connected to, and committed to their institution and community.

13.4. Faculty will be trusted and empowered to maximise their motivation; they will be given the freedom to creatively design their own curricular and pedagogical approaches within the approved framework, including textbook selections, assignments, and assessments. Empowering the faculty to conduct innovative teaching, research, and service as they see best will be a key motivator and enabler for faculty to do truly outstanding, creative work.

13.5. Excellence will be further incentivised through appropriate rewards, promotions, recognitions, and movement into institutional leadership. Meanwhile, faculty who do not deliver on basic norms will be held to account.

13.6. In keeping with the vision of autonomous institutions empowered to drive excellence, HEIs will have clearly defined, independent, and transparent processes and criteria for faculty recruitment. Whereas the current recruitment process will be continued, a 'tenure-track' – i.e., suitable probation - period shall be put in place to further ensure excellence. There shall be a fast-track promotion system for recognising very high impact research and contribution. A system of multiple parameters for proper assessment of performance, for the purposes of 'tenure' (i.e., confirmed employment after probation), promotion, salary increases, recognitions, etc., including peer reviews, student reviews, innovations in teaching and pedagogy, quality and impact of research, professional development activities, and other forms of service to the institution and the community, shall be developed by each HEI and clearly enunciated in the institution's Institutional Development Plan (IDP).

13.7. The presence of outstanding and enthusiastic institutional leaders that cultivate excellence and innovation is the need of the hour. High-quality institutional leadership is extremely important for the success of an institution and of its faculty. Various outstanding faculty with high academic and service credentials as well as demonstrated leadership and management skills will be identified early, and trained through a ladder of leadership positions. Leadership positions shall not remain vacant, but rather an overlapping time period during transitions in leadership shall be the norm to ensure the smooth running of institutions. Institutional leaders will aim to create a culture of excellence that will motivate and incentivise outstanding and innovative teaching, research, institutional service, and community outreach from faculty members and all HEI leaders.



14. Equity and Inclusion in Higher Education

14.1. Entry into quality higher education experiences can open up a vast array of possibilities that can lift both individuals as well as communities out of cycles of disadvantage. For this reason, making high-quality higher education opportunities available to all individuals must be among the highest priorities. This Policy envisions ensuring equitable access to quality education to all students, with a special emphasis on SEDGs.

14.2. Many of the reasons for, and the dynamics of, exclusion of SEDGs from the education system are common across school and higher education sectors. Therefore, the approach to equity and inclusion must be common across school and higher education; furthermore, there must be continuity across the stages to ensure sustainable reform. Thus, the policy initiatives required to meet the goals of equity and inclusion in higher education must be read in conjunction with those for school education.

14.3. There are of course certain facets of exclusion, both causal and in their effect, that are particular to or substantially more intense in higher education. These must be addressed specifically for higher education, and include: lack of knowledge of higher education opportunities, economic opportunity cost of pursuing higher education, financial constraints, admission processes, geographical barriers, language barriers, poor employability potential of many higher education programmes, and lack of appropriate student support mechanisms.

14.4. For this purpose, the additional actions that are specific to higher education shall be adopted by all Governments and HEIs:

Steps to be taken by Governments

- Earmark suitable Government funds for the education of SEDGs;
- Set clear targets for higher GER for SEDGs;
- Enhance gender balance in admissions to HEIs;
- Enhance access by building more high-quality HEIs in aspirational districts and Special Education Zones containing larger numbers of SEDGs;
- Develop and support high-quality HEIs that teach in local/Indian languages or bilingually;
- Provide more financial assistance and scholarships to SEDGs in both public and private HEIs;
- Conduct outreach on higher education opportunities and scholarships among SEDGs;
- Develop and support technology tools for better participation and learning outcomes.

Steps to be taken by all HEIs

- Mitigate opportunity costs and fees for pursuing higher education;
- Provide more financial assistance and scholarships to socio-economically disadvantaged students;
- Conduct outreach on higher education opportunities and scholarships;
- Make admissions processes more inclusive;
- Make curriculum more inclusive;
- Increase employability potential of higher education programmes;
- Develop more degree courses taught in Indian languages and bilingually;
- Ensure all buildings and facilities are wheelchair-accessible and disabled-friendly;
- Develop bridge courses for those students that may come from disadvantaged educational backgrounds;



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- Provide socio-emotional and academic support and mentoring for all such students through suitable counselling and mentoring programmes;
- Ensure faculty, counselor, and student gender and gender-identity sensitisation and inclusion in all aspects of the HEI, including in curricula;
- Strictly enforce all no-discrimination and anti-harassment rules;
- Develop Institutional Development Plans that contain specific plans for action on increasing participation from SEDGs, including but not limited to the above items.

15. Teacher Education

15.1. Teacher education is truly vital in creating a team of school teachers that will shape the next generation. Teacher preparation is an activity that requires multidisciplinary perspectives and knowledge, the formation of dispositions and values, and the development of practice under the best mentors. Teachers must be grounded in Indian values, languages, knowledge, ethos, and traditions, while also being well-versed in the latest advances in education and pedagogy.

15.2. Heartbreakingly, the teacher education sector has been beleaguered with mediocrity as well as rampant corruption due to commercialisation. According to the Justice J S Verma Commission (2012) constituted by the Supreme Court, a majority of stand-alone teaching institutes - over 10,000 in number - are not even attempting serious teacher education, but are essentially selling degrees for a price. Regulatory efforts so far have neither been able to curb the corruption rampant in the system, nor enforce basic standards for quality, and in fact have had the negative effect of curbing the growth of excellence and innovation in the sector. The sector and its regulatory system are therefore in urgent need of revitalisation through radical action, in order to raise standards and restore integrity, credibility, efficacy, and high quality to the teacher education system.

15.3. In order to improve and reach the levels of integrity and credibility required to restore the prestige of the teaching profession and thereby attain a successful school system, the Regulatory System shall be empowered to shut down substandard and dysfunctional teacher education institutions (TEI) that do not meet basic educational criteria. All TEIs will be held accountable to adherence to the basic criteria for approval of their programmes; after giving one year for remedy, if any breaches are found, they will be shut down if the breaches are not remedied. By 2025, only educationally-sound, multidisciplinary, and integrated teacher education programmes shall be in force.

15.4. Because teacher education requires multidisciplinary inputs, and education in high-quality content as well as pedagogy, all teacher education programmes must be conducted within composite multidisciplinary institutions. To this end, all large multidisciplinary universities - including all public universities as well as large multidisciplinary colleges - will aim to establish, develop, and house outstanding education departments which, aside from carrying out cutting-edge research in various aspects of education, will also run B.Ed. programmes to educate future teachers, in collaboration with other departments such as psychology, philosophy, sociology, neuroscience, Indian languages, arts, music, history, and literature, as well as various other specialised subjects such as science and mathematics. Moreover, all stand-alone TEIs will be required to convert to multidisciplinary institutions by 2030, since they will have to offer the 4-year integrated teacher preparation programme.

15.5. The 4-year integrated B.Ed. offered by such multidisciplinary HEIs will, by 2030, become the minimal degree qualification for school teachers. The 4-year integrated B.Ed. will



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be a dual-major holistic Bachelor's degree, in Education as well as a specialised subject (such as a language, or history, music, mathematics, computer science, chemistry, economics, etc). Beyond the teaching of cutting-edge pedagogy, the teacher education will include grounding in sociology, history, science, psychology, early childhood education, foundational literacy and numeracy, knowledge of India and its values/ethos/art/traditions, and more. Each HEI offering the 4-year integrated B.Ed. may also design a 2-year B.Ed. on its campus, for outstanding students who have already received a Bachelor's degree in a specialised subject and wish to pursue teaching. A 1-year B.Ed. may be designed for particularly outstanding candidates who have received a 4-year undergraduate degree in a specialised subject. Scholarships for meritorious students will be established for the purpose of attracting outstanding candidates to the 4-year, 2-year, and 1-year B.Ed. programmes.

15.6. Multidisciplinary higher education institutions will work towards establishing high-quality education departments and teacher education programmes, and stand-alone TEIs will work towards becoming multidisciplinary and offer the 4-year integrated B.Ed. programme; both will be strongly supported to achieve these goals. Such HEIs will ensure the availability of a range of experts in education and related disciplines as well as specialised subjects. Each higher education institution will have a network of government and private schools and school complexes to work with in close proximity, where potential teachers will student-teach (among other synergistic activities between HEIs and school complexes, such as community service, adult and vocational education, etc).

15.7. In order to maintain uniform standards for teacher education, the admission to pre-service teacher preparation programmes shall be through suitable subject and aptitude tests conducted by the National Testing Agency, and shall be standardised keeping in view the linguistic and cultural diversity of the country.

15.8. The faculty profile in Departments of Education will necessarily aim to be diverse. Not everyone would be required to have a Ph.D., but teaching/field/research experience will be highly valued. Faculty with training in areas of social sciences that are directly relevant to school education (e.g., psychology, child development, linguistics, sociology, philosophy, economics, and political science) as well as from science education, mathematics education, social science education, and language education programmes will be attracted and retained in teacher education institutions, to strengthen multidisciplinary education of teachers and provide rigour in conceptual development.

15.9. All fresh Ph.D. entrants, irrespective of discipline, will be required to take credit-based courses in teaching/education/pedagogy/writing related to their chosen Ph.D. subject during their doctoral training period. Exposure to pedagogical practices, designing curriculum, credible evaluation systems, communication, and so on will be ensured since many research scholars will go on to become faculty or public representatives/communicators of their chosen disciplines. Ph.D. students will also have a minimum number of hours of actual teaching experience gathered through teaching assistantships and other means. Ph.D. programmes at universities around the country will be re-oriented for this purpose. Opportunities for Ph.D. students to assist faculty as teaching assistants will be created as part of all Ph.D. programmes.

15.10. In-service continuous professional development for college and university teachers will continue through the existing institutional arrangements and ongoing initiatives; these will be strengthened and substantially expanded to meet the needs of enriched teaching-learning processes for quality education. The use of technology platforms such as SWAYAM/DIKSHA for online training of teachers will be encouraged, so that standardised



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training programmes can be administered to large numbers of teachers within short spans of time.

15.11. A National Mission for Mentoring shall be funded and established, with a large pool of outstanding senior/retired faculty – including those with the ability to teach in Indian languages – who would be willing to provide short and long-term mentoring/professional support to university/college teachers.

16. Reimagining Vocational Education

16.1. The 12th Five-Year Plan (2012–2017) estimated that only a very small percentage of the Indian workforce in the age group of 19–24 (less than 5%) received formal vocational education; this may be compared to other countries such as the USA where the number is 52%, Germany 75%, and South Korea as high as 96%. These numbers only underline the urgency of the need to hasten the spread of vocational education in India.

16.2. One of the primary reasons for the small numbers of students receiving vocational education is the unfortunate fact that vocational education has in the past focused largely on dropouts (Grade 8 and upwards) and on Grades 11–12. Moreover, students passing out from Grades 11–12 with vocational subjects often did not have well-defined pathways to continue with their chosen vocations in higher education. The admission criteria for general higher education were also not designed to provide openings to students who had vocational education qualifications, leaving them at a disadvantage relative to their compatriots from ‘mainstream’ or ‘academic’ education. This led to a complete lack of vertical mobility for students from the vocational education stream, an issue that has only been addressed recently through the announcement of the National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF) in 2013.

16.3. The lack of planning and the poor delivery of vocational education in the past has contributed to the creation of a social status hierarchy in which vocational education is perceived to be inferior to mainstream education, and meant largely for students who are unable to cope with the latter. This is a perception that persists even today, and affects the choices students make. It is a serious concern that can only be dealt with by a complete re-imagination of how vocational education is offered to students in the future.

16.4. This policy aims to overcome the social status hierarchy associated with vocational education through requiring that ALL education institutions - schools, colleges and universities - integrate vocational education programmes into mainstream education in a phased manner, beginning with vocational exposure at early ages, quality vocational education through middle and secondary school and smoothly into higher education. Integrating vocational education in this way will ensure that every child learns at least one vocation and is exposed to several more, thereby emphasising the dignity and importance of labour and exciting students about various vocations including those involving local/Indian arts and artisanship.

16.5. By 2025, at least 50% of learners through the school and higher education system shall have exposure to vocational education. This is in alignment with Sustainable Development Goal 4.4, and will help to realise the full potential of India’s demographic dividend. The number of students in vocational education will be considered while arriving at the GER targets. The development of vocational capacities will go hand-in-hand with development of ‘academic’ or other capacities. Vocational education will be integrated in the educational offerings of all secondary schools in a phased manner over the next decade. Towards this, secondary schools will collaborate with ITIs, polytechnics, local industry, etc. Higher



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education institutions will offer vocational education either on their own or in partnership with industry and NGOs. The B.Voc. degrees introduced in 2013 will continue to exist, but vocational courses will also be available to students enrolled in all other Bachelor's degree programmes, including the 4-year multidisciplinary Bachelor's programmes. HEIs will also be allowed to conduct short-term certificate courses in various skills including soft skills. 'Lok Vidya,' i.e., important vocational knowledge developed in India, will be made accessible to students through integration into vocational education courses. The possibility of offering vocational courses through ODL mode will also be explored in programmes, wherever possible.

16.6. Vocational education will be integrated into all school and higher education institutions in a phased manner over the next decade. Focus areas will be chosen based on skills gap analysis and mapping of local opportunities, and technical and vocational education will become part of the larger vision of holistic and multidisciplinary education. MHRD will constitute a National Committee for the Integration of Vocational Education (NCIVE), consisting of experts in vocational education and representatives from across ministries, in collaboration with industry, to oversee this effort and will also earmark funds for promoting this critical integration.

16.7. Individual institutions that are early adopters must innovate to find models and practices that work and then share these with other institutions through mechanisms set up by NCIVE, so as to help extend the reach of vocational education. Models of offering vocational education, and apprenticeships, will also be experimented with by higher education institutions. Incubation centres will be set up in higher education institutions in partnership with industries.

16.8. The National Skills Qualifications Framework will be detailed further for each discipline vocation / profession. Further, Indian standards will be aligned with the International Standard Classification of Occupations maintained by the International Labour Organisation. This Framework will provide the basis for Recognition of Prior Learning. Through this, dropouts from the formal system will be reintegrated by aligning their practical experience with the relevant level of the Framework. The Framework will also facilitate mobility across 'general' and vocational education.

17. Professional Education

17.1. Preparation of professionals must involve an education in the ethic and importance of public purpose, an education in the discipline, and an education for practice. Like all higher education, it must centrally involve critical and interdisciplinary thinking, discussion, debate, research and innovation. For this to be achieved, professional education should not take place in the isolation of one's specialty.

17.2. Professional education will thus become an integral part of the overall higher education system. Stand-alone agricultural universities, legal universities, health science universities, technical universities, and stand-alone institutions in other fields, shall aim to become multidisciplinary institutions offering holistic and multidisciplinary education. All institutions offering either professional or general education will aim to organically evolve into institutions/clusters offering both seamlessly and in an integrated manner by 2030.

17.3. Agricultural education with allied disciplines will be revived. Although Agricultural Universities comprise approximately 9% of all universities in the country, enrolment in agriculture and allied sciences is less than 1% of all enrolment in higher education. Both



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capacity and quality of agriculture and allied disciplines must be improved in order to increase agricultural productivity through better skilled graduates and technicians, innovative research, and market-based extension linked to technologies and practices. The preparation of professionals in agriculture and veterinary sciences through programmes integrated with general education will be increased sharply. The design of agricultural education will shift towards developing professionals with the ability to understand and use local knowledge, traditional knowledge, and emerging technologies while being cognizant of critical issues such as declining land productivity, climate change, food sufficiency for our growing population, etc. Institutions offering agricultural education must benefit the local community directly; one approach could be to set up Agricultural Technology Parks to promote technology incubation and dissemination and promote sustainable methodologies.

17.4. Legal education will be restructured to become competitive globally, adopting best practices and embracing new technologies for wider access to and timely delivery of justice. At the same time, it must be informed and illuminated with Constitutional values of Justice - Social, Economic, and Political - and directed towards national reconstruction through instrumentation of democracy, rule of law, and human rights. The curricula for legal studies must reflect socio-cultural contexts along with, in an evidence-based manner, the history of legal thinking, principles of justice, the practice of jurisprudence, and other related content appropriately and adequately. State institutions offering law education must consider offering bilingual education for future lawyers and judges - in English and in the language of the State in which the law programme is situated. This is to alleviate delay in legal outcomes consequent to need for translation.

17.5. Healthcare education shall be re-envisioned so that the duration, structure, and design of the educational programmes are as required for the roles that graduates will play. For example, every healthcare process/intervention (e.g., taking/reading an ECG) does not necessarily need a fully qualified doctor. All MBBS graduates must possess: (a) Medical skills, (b) Diagnostic skills, (c) Surgical skills, and (d) Emergency skills. Students will be assessed at regular intervals on well-defined parameters primarily for the skills required for working in primary care and in secondary hospitals. The quality of nursing education will be improved; a national accreditation body for nursing and other substreams will be created. Given that our people exercise pluralistic choices in healthcare, our healthcare education system must be integrative - this would mean, illustratively, that all students of allopathic medical education must have a basic understanding of Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, and Homeopathy (AYUSH), and vice versa. There shall also be a much greater emphasis on preventive healthcare and community medicine in all of healthcare education.

17.6. Technical education includes degree and diploma programmes in, for example, engineering, technology, management, architecture, town planning, pharmacy, hotel management, and catering technology. Many of these sectors are critical to India's overall development. Not only will these sectors continue to demand well-qualified individuals for several decades, but there will be a greater need for closer collaborations between industry and higher education institutions to drive innovation and research in these fields. Furthermore, as the influence of technology on all human endeavours grows, the silos between technical education and other disciplines are expected to erode. Technical education will thus also aim to be offered within multidisciplinary education institutions and programmes, and have a renewed focus on opportunities to engage deeply with other disciplines. India must also take the lead in preparing professionals in cutting-edge areas that are fast gaining prominence, such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), 3-D machining, big data analysis, and machine learning, in addition to genomic studies, biotechnology,



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nanotechnology, neuroscience, with important applications to health, environment, and sustainable living. These topics, and many others like them, must be woven into undergraduate education at the earliest.

18. Catalysing quality academic research in all fields through a new National Research Foundation

18.1. Knowledge creation and research are critical in growing and sustaining a large and vibrant economy, uplifting society, and continuously inspiring a nation to achieve even greater heights. Indeed, some of the most prosperous civilisations throughout history, from ancient times (such as India, Mesopotamia, Egypt, China, and Greece) to the modern era (such as the United States, Germany, Israel, South Korea, and Japan), were/are strong knowledge societies that attained their intellectual and material wealth in large part through celebrated and fundamental contributions to new knowledge - in the realm of science as well as art, language, and culture - that enhanced and uplifted not only their own civilisations but those around the globe.

18.2. A robust ecosystem of research is perhaps more important than ever with the rapid changes occurring in the world today, e.g., in the realm of climate change, population dynamics and management, biotechnology, an expanding digital marketplace, and the rise of machine learning and artificial intelligence. If India is to become a leader in these disparate areas, and truly achieve the potential of its vast talent pool to again become a leading knowledge society in the coming years and decades, the nation will require a significant expansion of its research capabilities and output across disciplines. Research has never been more essential for the economic, intellectual, societal, environmental, and technological health and progress of a nation.

18.3. Despite this critical importance, research and innovation (R&I) investment in India is, at the current time, only 0.69% of GDP. For the sake of comparison, the levels of R&I investment as a proportion of GDP in some other countries are: United States (2.8%), China (2.1%), Israel (4.3%), and South Korea (4.2%); i.e., all invest at least three times as much as a proportion of GDP.

18.4. The societal challenges that India needs to address today, such as access for all its citizens to clean drinking water and sanitation, quality education and healthcare, improved transportation, air quality, energy, and infrastructure, will require the implementation of approaches and solutions that are not only informed by top-notch science and technology but are also rooted in a deep understanding of the social sciences and humanities and the various socio-cultural and environmental dimensions of the nation. Facing and addressing these challenges will require high-quality interdisciplinary research across fields that must be done in India and cannot simply be imported; the ability to conduct one's own research also enables a country to much more easily import and adapt relevant research from abroad.

18.5. Furthermore, in addition to their value in solutions to societal problems, any country's identity, upliftment, spiritual/intellectual satisfaction and creativity is also attained in a major way through its history, art, language, and culture. Research in the arts and humanities, along with innovations in the sciences and social sciences, are therefore extremely important for the progress and enlightened nature of a nation.

18.6. Research and innovation at education institutions in India, particularly those that are engaged in higher education, is critical. Evidence from the world's best universities throughout history shows that the best teaching and learning processes at the higher education



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level occur in environments where there is also a strong culture of research and knowledge creation; conversely, much of the very best research in the world has occurred in multidisciplinary university settings.

18.7. India has a long historical tradition of research and knowledge creation, in disciplines ranging from science and mathematics to art and literature to phonetics and languages to medicine and agriculture, and it is time India reclaimed this tradition, at the earliest, to be ready to lead research and innovation in the 21st century, as a strong and enlightened knowledge society and one of the three largest economies in the world.

18.8. This Policy envisions a comprehensive approach to transforming the quality and quantity of research in India. This includes definitive shifts in school education to a more play- and discovery-based style of learning - with a key emphasis on the scientific method and critical thinking, career counselling in schools towards identifying student interests and talents, the institutional restructuring of the higher educational system to promote research in universities, the multidisciplinary nature of all HEIs and the emphasis on holistic education, the inclusion of research and internships in the undergraduate curriculum, faculty career management systems that give due weightage to research, and the governance and regulatory changes that encourage faculty and institutional autonomy and innovation - all of these aspects are extremely critical for a research mindset in the country and have been elaborated on in other parts of this policy.

18.9. To build on these various elements in a synergistic manner, and to thereby truly grow and catalyse quality research in the nation, this policy envisions the establishment of a National Research Foundation (NRF). The overarching goal of the NRF will be to enable a culture of research to permeate through our universities. In particular, the NRF will provide a reliable base of merit-based but equitable peer-reviewed research funding, helping to develop a culture of research in the country through suitable incentives for and recognition of outstanding research, and by undertaking major initiatives to seed and grow research at State Universities and other public institutions where research capability is currently limited. The NRF will competitively fund research in all disciplines. Successful research will be recognised, and where relevant, implemented through close linkages with governmental agencies as well as with industry and private/philanthropic organisations.

18.10. Institutions that currently fund research at some level, such as DST, DAE, DBT, ICAR, ICMR, ICHR, and UGC, as well as various private and philanthropic organisations, will continue to independently fund research according to their priorities and needs. Many of the leading research-producing nations in the world have multiple public and private funding agencies, and India would benefit from the same. However, NRF will carefully coordinate with other funding agencies – and will work with science, engineering, and other learned academies - to ensure synergy of purpose and lack of duplication of efforts. The NRF will be governed, independently of the government, by a rotating Board of Governors consisting of the very best researchers and innovators across fields.

18.11. The primary activities of the NRF will be to

- (a) fund competitive peer-reviewed grant proposals of all types and across all disciplines;
- (b) seed, grow, and facilitate research at academic institutions, particularly at universities and colleges where research is currently in a nascent stage, through mentoring of such institutions (e.g., by hiring eminent and active research scholars that are retired or near retirement from high-quality research institutions), hiring excellent young research students and faculty, and strengthening existing high-quality programmes at such institutions;



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- (c) act as a liaison between researchers and relevant branches of government as well as industry, so that research scholars are constantly made aware of the most urgent national research issues of the day, and so that policymakers are constantly made aware of the latest research breakthroughs; this would allow breakthroughs to be brought into policy and/or implementation in an optimal fashion; and
- (d) recognise outstanding research and progress achieved via NRF funding/mentoring across subjects, through prizes and special seminars recognising the work of the researchers.

19. Transforming the Regulatory System of Higher Education

19.1. Regulation of higher education has been too heavy-handed for decades; too much has been attempted to be regulated with too little effect. The mechanistic and disempowering nature of the regulatory system has been rife with very basic problems, such as heavy concentrations of power within a few bodies, conflicts of interest among these bodies, and a resulting lack of accountability. India also has some of the toughest requirements in the world for setting up higher education institutions; these requirements are largely input-centric, focusing on land and space norms, endowment funds and their sources, etc. Such excessive input mandates, together with centralised, outdated, and rigid requirements with respect to faculty qualifications and curriculum implementation, have resulted in an inspectorial regime instead of an effective regulatory system that promotes innovation and the pursuit of excellence. Ironically, this rigid inspectorial regime has also had a consistently poor record of weeding out poor practises and institutions. The regulatory system is thus in need of a complete overhaul in order to re-energise the higher education sector and enable it to thrive.

19.2. To address the above-mentioned issues, the most basic principle in the regulatory system of higher education will be that the distinct functions of regulation, accreditation, funding, and academic standard setting will be performed by distinct, independent, and empowered organisations/structures. This is considered essential to create checks-and-balances in the system, minimise conflicts of interest, and eliminate concentrations of power. To ensure that the four institutional structures carrying out these four essential functions work independently - yet at the same time talk to each other and work in synergy towards common goals - these four structures will be set up as four independent verticals within one umbrella institution, the Higher Education Commission of India (HECI).

19.3. The first vertical of HECI will be the National Higher Education Regulatory Council (NHERC) – it will function as the common, single point regulator for the entire higher education sector, thus eliminating the duplication and disjunction of regulatory efforts by the multiple regulatory agencies that exist at the current time. NHERC will be set up to regulate in a ‘light but tight’ and facilitative manner, meaning that a few important matters - particularly financial probity, good governance, and the full online and offline public self-disclosure of all finances, audits, procedures, infrastructure, faculty/staff, courses, and educational outcomes - will be very effectively regulated. This information will have to be made available and kept updated and accurate by all higher education institutions on a public website maintained by NHERC and on the institutions’ websites. Any complaints or grievances from stakeholders and others arising out of the information placed in the public domain shall be adjudicated by NHERC. Feedback from randomly selected students at each HEI will be solicited online to ensure valuable input at regular intervals.

19.4. The primary mechanism to enable such regulation will be accreditation. The second vertical of HECI will, therefore, be a ‘meta-accrediting body’, called the National Accreditation Council (NAC). Accreditation of institutions will be based primarily on basic norms, public self-disclosure, good governance, and outcomes, and it will be carried out by



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an independent ecosystem of accrediting institutions supervised and overseen by NAC. The license to function as an accreditor shall be awarded to an appropriate number of institutions by NAC. In the short term, a robust system of graded accreditation shall be established, which will specify phased benchmarks for all HEIs to achieve set levels of quality, self-governance, and autonomy. In turn, all HEIs will aim, through their Institutional Development Plans (IDPs), to attain the highest level of accreditation over the next 15 years, and thereby eventually aim to function as self-governing degree-granting institutions/clusters. In the long run, accreditation will become a binary process, as per the extant global practice.

19.5. The third vertical of HECI will be the Higher Education Grants Council (HEGC), which will carry out funding and financing of higher education based on transparent criteria, including the IDPs prepared by the institutions and the progress made on their implementation. HEGC will be entrusted with the disbursement of scholarships and on developmental funds for launching new focus areas and expanding quality programme offerings at HEIs across disciplines and fields.

19.6. The fourth vertical of HECI will be the General Education Council (GEC), which will frame expected learning outcomes for higher education programmes, also referred to as 'graduate attributes.' A National Higher Education Qualification Framework (NHEQF) will be formulated by the GEC and it shall be in sync with the National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF) to ease the integration of vocational education into higher education. Higher education qualifications leading to a degree/diploma/certificate shall be described by the NHEQF in terms of such learning outcomes. In addition, the GEC shall set up facilitative norms for issues, such as credit transfer, equivalence, etc., through the NHEQF.

19.7. The professional councils, including ICAR, VCI, NCTE, etc., referred to as Professional Standard Setting Bodies (PSSBs), will continue to play a key role in the higher education system and will be invited to be members of the GEC. As members of the GEC, they would help in specifying the curriculum framework, against which HEIs may prepare their own curricula. The PSSBs would also set the standards or expectations in particular fields of learning and practice while having no regulatory role. All HEIs will decide how their educational programmes respond to these standards, among other considerations, and would also be able to reach out for support from these standard-setting bodies or PSSBs if needed.

19.8. Such a system architecture will bring to life the principle of functional separation to ensure due focus and eliminate conflicts of interests between different roles; it will also aim to empower HEIs, while ensuring that the few key essential matters are given due attention. This would, therefore, mean no external interference in HEIs, including from funding agencies. The autonomy attained over time by HEIs shall be backed with adequate public funding. Responsibility and accountability shall devolve to the HEIs (and its Board of Governors) concomitantly. No distinction in such expectations shall be made between public and private HEIs.

19.9. Such a transformation will require existing structures and institutions to reinvent themselves and undergo an evolution of sorts. The separation of functions would mean that each vertical within HECI would take on a new, single role which is relevant, meaningful, and important in the new regulatory scheme.

19.10. The functioning of all the independent verticals for Regulation (NHERC), Accreditation (NAC), Funding (HEGC), and Academic Standard Setting (GEC) - and the overarching autonomous umbrella body (HECI) itself - will be based on transparent public disclosure, and use technology extensively to reduce human touch points to ensure efficiency



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and transparency in their work and reduce any scope for corruption. The underlying principle will be that of a faceless and transparent regulatory intervention using technology, with powers for punitive action to shut down or penalise HEIs for dishonesty in self-disclosures or for not conforming to basic minimum norms and standards. HECI itself will be an adjudicating body for any disputes among the four verticals. Each vertical in HECI will be overseen and monitored by small, independent Boards consisting of persons having high expertise in the relevant areas along with integrity, commitment, and a demonstrated track record of public service. HECI itself will have a small, independent Board of eminent public-spirited experts in higher education, which will oversee and monitor the integrity and effective functioning of HECI. Responsibility and accountability for the functioning and actions of HECI and its four verticals would lie with their respective Boards.

19.11. Setting up new quality HEIs will also be made far easier by the regulatory regime, while ensuring with great effectiveness that these are set up with the spirit of public service and with due financial backing for long-term stability. HEIs performing exceptionally well will be helped by Central and State governments to expand their institutions, and thereby attain larger numbers of students and faculty as well as disciplines and programmes; in particular, governments will help in securing more contiguous or nearby land for outstanding institutions to expand. Public Philanthropic Partnership models for HEIs may also be piloted with the aim to further expand access to high-quality higher education.

Curbing commercialization of education

19.12. Multiple mechanisms with checks and balances will combat and stop the commercialization of higher education. This will be a key priority of the regulatory system. All education institutions will be audited as per standards of audit for a Section 8 (not for profit) company. The Institute of Chartered Accountants of India may refine the norms for education institutions – including ensuring that related party transactions, services, or charges by any other names are not used to profit from the institution by the promoters/sponsors/management while leaving the institution nominally ‘not-for-profit’. Surpluses if any will be reinvested in the institution. There will be transparent public disclosure of all these financial matters with recourse to grievance-handling mechanisms to the general public. The BoG of the HEI will be held accountable for the HEI not being a commercial entity – with consequences for members of the Board in the event of failure to do so. The accreditation system developed by NAC will provide a complementary check on this system, and NHERC will consider this as one of the key dimensions of its regulatory objective.

19.13. All HEIs - public and private - shall be treated on par within this regulatory regime. The regulatory regime shall encourage private philanthropic efforts in education; at the same time, it shall closely monitor and eliminate commercialisation of education. There will be common national guidelines for all legislative Acts that will form private HEIs. These common minimal guidelines will enable all such Acts to establish private HEIs, thus enabling a common regulatory regime for private and public HEIs. These common guidelines will cover Good Governance, Financial Stability & Security, Educational Outcomes, and Transparency of Disclosures.

19.14. Private HEIs having a philanthropic and public-spirited intent will be encouraged through a progressive regime of fees determination. Transparent mechanisms for fixing of fees with an upper limit, for different types of institutions depending on their accreditation, will be developed so that individual institutions are not adversely affected, while at the same time curbing commercialisation. This regime will empower private HEIs to set fees for their



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programmes independently, though within the laid out norms and the broad applicable regulatory regime - ensuring that at least 20% of students are able to attend through freeships and an additional 30% through significant scholarships. All fees and charges set by private HEIs will be transparently and fully disclosed, and there shall be no arbitrary increases in these fees/charges during the period of enrolment of any student. This fee regime will ensure reasonable recovery of cost while ensuring that HEIs discharge their social obligations.

20. Effective Governance and Leadership for Higher Education Institutions

20.1. It is effective governance and leadership that enables the creation of a culture of excellence and innovation in higher education institutions. The common feature of all world-class institutions globally – including in India - has indeed been the existence of strong self-governance and outstanding merit-based appointments of institutional leaders, which has truly enabled and nurtured such a culture.

20.2. Through a suitable system of graded accreditation and graded autonomy, and in a phased manner, all higher education institutions in India will aim to become independent self-governing institutions pursuing innovation and excellence. Measures will be taken at all HEIs to ensure leadership of the highest quality and promote an institutional culture of excellence. Upon receiving the appropriate accreditations, a Board of Governors (BoG) shall be established for each HEI consisting of a group of highly qualified, competent, and dedicated individuals having proven capabilities and a strong sense of commitment to the institution. The BoG of each institution will be empowered to govern the institution free of any political or external interference, make all appointments including that of head of the institution, and take all decisions regarding governance. There shall be overarching legislation that will supersede any contravening provisions of other earlier legislation and would provide for constitution, appointment, modalities of functioning, rules & regulations, and the roles and responsibilities of the BoG. New members of the Board shall be identified by an expert committee appointed by the Board; and the selection of new members shall be carried out by the BoG itself. Equity considerations will also be taken care of while selecting the members. All HEIs will be incentivised, supported, and mentored during this process, and shall aim to become autonomous and have such an empowered BoG by 2035.

20.4. The BoG shall be responsible and accountable for the outcomes of the HEI to the stakeholders through transparent self-disclosures of all relevant records. It will be responsible for meeting all regulatory guidelines mandated by the National Higher Education Regulatory Council (NHERC).

20.5. All leadership positions (not only the Head) in institutions will be offered to persons with high academic qualifications and demonstrated administrative and leadership capabilities along with abilities to manage complex situations. Leaders of an HEI will demonstrate strong alignment to Constitutional values and the overall vision of the institution, along with attributes such as a strong social commitment, belief in teamwork, pluralism, ability to work with diverse people, and a positive outlook. The selection shall be carried out by the BoG through a rigorous, impartial, merit-based, and competency-based process led by an Eminent Expert Committee (EEC) constituted by the BoG. While stability of tenure is important to ensure the development of a suitable culture, at the same time leadership succession will be planned with care to ensure that good practices that define an institution's processes do not end due to a change in leadership; leadership changes will come with sufficient overlaps, and not remain vacant, in order to ensure smooth transitions. Outstanding leaders will be identified and developed early, working their way through a ladder of leadership positions.



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20.6. While being provided with adequate funding, legislative enablement, and autonomy in a phased manner, HEIs, in turn, will display commitment to institutional excellence, engagement with their local communities, and the highest standards of financial probity and accountability. The BoG of each HEI will anchor preparation and implementation of a strategic plan of action namely: Institutional Development Plan (IDP). The IDP shall be the basis on which institutions will develop initiatives, assess their own progress, and reach the goals set therein, which could then become the basis for further public funding. The IDP shall be prepared with the joint participation of Board members, institutional leaders, faculty, students, and staff.

III. OTHER KEY AREAS OF FOCUS

21. Adult Education and Lifelong Learning

21.1. The abilities to attain foundational literacy, obtain an education, and pursue a livelihood must be viewed as fundamental rights of every citizen. Literacy and basic education open up whole new worlds of personal, civic, economic, and lifelong-learning opportunities for individuals that enable them to progress personally and professionally. At the level of society and the nation, literacy and basic education are powerful force multipliers which greatly enhance the success of all other developmental efforts. Worldwide data on nations indicate extremely high correlations between literacy rates and per capita GDP.

21.2. Meanwhile, being a non-literate member of a community has innumerable disadvantages, including the inability to: carry out basic financial transactions; compare the quality / quantity of goods purchased against the price charged; fill out forms to apply for jobs, loans, services, etc.; comprehend public circulars and articles in the news media; use conventional and electronic mail to communicate and conduct business; make use of the internet and other technology to improve one's life and profession; comprehend directions and safety directives on the street, on medicines, etc.; help children with their education; be aware of one's basic rights and responsibilities as a citizen of India; appreciate works of literature; and pursue employment in medium or high-productivity sectors that require literacy. The Centre and State/UT governments may treat the abilities listed here as an illustrative list of outcomes to be achieved through adoption of innovative measures for implementing Adult Education.

21.3. Extensive field studies and analyses, both in India and across the world, clearly demonstrate that volunteerism and community involvement and mobilisation are key success factors of adult literacy programmes, in conjunction with political will, organisational structure, proper planning, adequate financial support, and high-quality capacity building of educators and volunteers. Successful volunteer-based literacy programmes result not only in the growth of literacy among adults in the community, but also result in increased demand for education for all children in the community, as well as greater community contributions to positive social change. The National Literacy Mission, when it launched in 1988, was indeed largely based on the voluntary involvement and support of the people, and resulted in significant increases in national literacy during the period of 1991–2011, including among women, and also initiated dialogue and discussions on pertinent social issues of the day such as alcoholism.

21.4. Strong and innovative Centre and State/UT government initiatives for adult education - in particular, to facilitate and encourage community involvement and the smooth and beneficial integration of technology - will be effected as soon as possible to truly expedite this all-important aim of achieving 100% literacy, including the various measures outlined below.



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21.5. First, an outstanding adult education curriculum framework will be developed by a new and well-supported constituent body of the NCERT that is dedicated to adult education, so as to develop synergy with and build upon NCERT's existing expertise in establishing outstanding curricula for literacy, numeracy, basic education, vocational skills, and beyond. The curriculum framework for adult education will include at least five types of programmes, each with clearly define outcomes: (a) foundational literacy and numeracy; (b) critical life skills (including financial literacy, digital literacy, commercial skills, health care and awareness, child care and education, and family welfare); (c) vocational skills development (with a view towards obtaining local employment); (d) basic education (including preparatory, middle, and secondary stage equivalency); and (e) continuing education (including engaging holistic adult education courses in arts, sciences, technology, culture, sports, and recreation, as well as other topics of interest or use to local learners, such as more advanced material on critical life skills). The framework would keep in mind that adults in many cases will require rather different teaching-learning methods and materials than those designed for children.

21.6. Second, suitable infrastructure will be ensured so that all interested adults will have access to adult education and lifelong learning. A key initiative in this direction will be to use schools and school libraries (after school hours and on weekends) and public library spaces for adult education courses (which will be ICT-equipped when possible) and for other community engagement and enrichment activities. The sharing of infrastructure for school, higher, adult, and vocational education, and for other community and volunteer activities, will be critical for ensuring efficient use of both physical and human resources as well as for creating synergy among these four types of education and beyond. For these reasons, Adult Education Centres (AECs) could also be included as an integral part of school complexes, or within other public institutions such as HEIs, public libraries, vocational training centres, etc.

21.7. Third, the existing structures of dedicated instructors/educators/preraks will be required to deliver the curriculum framework to mature learners. Instructors for all five types of adult education as described in the Adult Education Curriculum Framework will be trained by the National-, State-, and district-level resource support institutions to organise and lead learning activities at Adult Education Centres, as well as coordinate with volunteer instructors and tutors. Qualified community members (including from HEIs as part of each HEI's mission to engage with their local communities) will be encouraged and welcomed to take a short training course and volunteer, on a large scale, as adult literacy instructors, or to serve as one-on-one volunteer tutors, and will be recognised for their critical service to the nation.

21.8. Fourth, all efforts will be undertaken to ensure the participation of community members in adult education. Social workers / counselors travelling through their communities to track and ensure participation of non-enrolled students and dropouts will also be requested, during their travels, to gather data of parents, adolescents, and others interested in adult education opportunities (both as learners and as teachers/tutors); the social workers / counselors will then connect them and provide their information to local Adult Education Centres (AECs). Opportunities for adult education will also be widely publicised, through advertisements and announcements and through events and initiatives of NGOs and other local organisations.

21.9. Fifth, improving the availability and accessibility of books is essential to inculcating the habit of reading within our communities and educational institutions. This Policy recommends that all communities and education institutions - schools, colleges and universities - will ensure an adequate supply of books that cater to the needs and interests of all students, including persons with disabilities and other differently-abled persons. The



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Central and State governments will take steps to ensure that books are made accessible and affordable to all across the country including socio-economically disadvantaged areas as well as those living in rural and remote areas. Both public and private sector agencies / institutions will devise strategies to improve the quality and attractiveness of books published in all Indian languages. Public libraries and libraries within schools and higher education institutions will be strengthened and modernised to improve their collections of books and services. Steps will be taken to enhance online accessibility of library books and further broad-basing of digital libraries. For ensuring vibrant libraries in communities and educational institutions, it will be imperative to make available adequate library staff and also devise appropriate career pathways and career management for promotion of library staff and librarians and further provide for their continuous professional development. Other steps will include strengthening all existing libraries, setting up rural libraries and reading rooms in disadvantaged regions, making widely available reading material in Indian languages, opening children's libraries and mobile libraries, establishing social book clubs across India and across subjects, and fostering greater collaborations between education institutions and libraries.

21.10. Finally, any national literacy mission must mobilise community organisations and volunteers in order to achieve large-scale adult literacy and education outcomes. Qualified community members who wish to volunteer as adult education instructors or as one-on-one tutors - as a service to their communities and to the nation - will be welcomed to teach foundational literacy and numeracy, and other adult education course material, under the guidance and coordination of Adult Education Centres. Governments will work closely with NGOs and other community organisations, and support them as necessary, in order to enhance efforts towards literacy and adult education. If every literate member of the community could commit to helping/teach one person how to read, it would change the country's landscape very quickly; this mission will be highly encouraged, supported, and funded.

22. Promotion of Indian Languages, Arts, and Culture

22.1. India is a treasure trove of culture - developed over thousands of years and manifested in the form of arts, works of literature, customs, traditions, linguistic expressions, artefacts, heritage sites, and more. Crores of people from around the world partake in, enjoy, and benefit from this cultural wealth daily, in the form of visiting India for tourism, experiencing Indian hospitality, purchasing India's beautiful handicrafts and handmade textiles, reading the classical literature of India, practicing yoga and meditation, being inspired by Indian philosophy, participating in India's unique festivals, appreciating India's diverse music and art, and watching Indian films, amongst many other aspects. It is this cultural and natural wealth that truly makes India, "**Incredible India**", as per India's tourism slogan. The preservation and promotion of India's cultural wealth must be considered a high priority for the country, as it is truly important for the nation's identity as well as for its economy.

22.2. The promotion of Indian arts and culture is important not only for the nation but also for the individual. Cultural awareness and expression are among the major competencies considered important to develop in children, in order to provide them with a sense of identity, belonging, as well as an appreciation of other cultures and identities. It is through the development of a strong sense and knowledge of their own cultural history, arts, languages, and traditions that children can build a positive cultural identity and self-esteem. Thus cultural awareness and expression are important contributors both to individual as well as societal well-being.



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22.3. The arts form a major medium for imparting culture. The arts - besides strengthening cultural identity and awareness, and uplifting societies - are well known to enhance cognitive and creative abilities in individuals and increase individual happiness from early childhood and through adulthood. The happiness/well-being, cognitive development, and cultural identity of individuals are important reasons that Indian arts of all kinds must be offered to students at all levels of education, starting with early childhood education.

22.4. Language, of course, is inextricably linked to art and culture. Different languages ‘see’ the world differently, and the structure of a language, therefore, determines a native speaker’s perception of experience. In particular, languages influence the way people of a given culture speak with others, including with family members, authority figures, peers, and strangers, and influence the tone of conversation. The tone, perception-of-experience, and familiarity/‘apnapan’ inherent in conversations among speakers of a common language are a reflection and record of a culture. Culture is thus encased in our languages. Art, in the form of literature, plays, music, film, etc. cannot be fully appreciated without language. In order to preserve and promote culture, one must preserve and promote a culture’s languages.

22.5. Unfortunately, Indian languages have not received their due attention and care, with the country losing over 220 languages in the last 50 years alone. UNESCO has declared 197 Indian languages as ‘endangered’. Various unscripted languages are particularly in danger of becoming extinct. When a senior member(s) of a tribe or community that speak such languages pass away, these languages often perish with them; too often, no concerted actions or measures are taken to preserve or record these rich languages / expressions of culture.

22.6. Moreover, even those languages of India that are not officially on such endangered lists - such as the 22 Schedule 8 languages - are facing serious difficulties on many fronts. For languages to remain relevant and vibrant, there must be a steady stream of high-quality learning and print materials in these languages - including textbooks, workbooks, videos, plays, poems, novels, magazines, etc. Languages must also have consistent official updates to their vocabularies and dictionaries, widely disseminated, so that the most current issues and concepts can be effectively discussed in these languages. Enabling such learning materials, print materials, and translations of important materials from world languages, and constantly updating vocabularies, are carried out by countries around the world - for languages such as English, French, German, Hebrew, Chinese, Korean, and Japanese - but India has remained quite slow in producing such learning and print materials and dictionaries to help keep its languages optimally vibrant and current with integrity.

22.7. Additionally, there has been a severe scarcity of skilled language teachers in India, despite various measures being taken. Language-teaching too must be improved to be more experiential and to focus on the ability to converse and interact in the language and not just on the literature, vocabulary, and grammar of the language. Languages must be used more extensively for conversation and for teaching-learning.

22.8. A number of initiatives to foster languages, arts, and culture in children at the foundational through secondary school levels have already been discussed in Chapter 4, including: a greater emphasis on music, arts, and crafts throughout all levels of school; early implementation of the three-language formula to promote multilingualism, including teaching in the home/local language whenever possible, and conducting more experiential language learning; the hiring of outstanding local artists, writers, craftspersons, and other experts as specialised instructors in various subjects of local expertise; accurate inclusion of traditional Indian knowledge (including tribal and other local knowledge) throughout the curriculum,



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across the humanities, sciences, arts, crafts, and sports, whenever relevant; and a much greater flexibility in the curriculum, especially in high school and in higher education, so that students can choose the ideal balance among courses for themselves to develop their own creative, artistic, cultural, and academic paths.

22.9. To enable the key latter initiatives, a number of further actions will be taken in tandem at the higher education level and beyond. First, to develop and teach many of the courses of the type mentioned above, an excellent team of teachers and faculty will have to be developed. Strong departments and programmes in Indian languages, comparative literature, creative writing, arts, music, philosophy, etc. will be launched and developed across the country, and degrees (including dual 4-year B.Ed. dual degrees) will be developed in these subjects. These departments and programmes will, in particular, help to develop a large cadre of high-quality language teachers - as well as teachers of art, music, philosophy and writing - who will be urgently needed around the country to carry out this Policy. The NRF will fund quality research in all these areas. Outstanding local artists and craftspersons will be hired as guest faculty to promote local music, art, languages, and handicraft, and to ensure that students are aware of the culture and local knowledge where they study. Every higher education institution and even every school or school complex will aim to have Artist(s)-in-Residence to expose students to art, creativity, and the rich treasures of the region/country.

22.10. More HEIs, and more programmes in higher education, will make use of the mother tongue/local language as a medium of instruction, and/or offer programmes bilingually, in order to both increase access and GER as well as promote the strength, usage, and vibrancy of all Indian languages; private HEIs too will be encouraged and incentivised to use Indian languages as media of instruction and/or offer bilingual programmes. Four-year B.Ed. dual degree programmes offered bilingually will also help, e.g., in training cadres of science teachers to teach science bilingually at schools across the country.

22.11. High-quality programmes and degrees in Translation and Interpretation, Art and Museum Administration, Archaeology, Artefact Conservation, Graphic Design, and Web Design within the higher education system will also be created. Advanced countries the world over all have strong programmes in these areas; India must urgently develop such programmes as well - in order to preserve and promote its art and culture, develop high-quality materials in various Indian languages, conserve artefacts, develop highly qualified individuals to curate and run museums and heritage/tourist sites - thereby also vastly strengthening the tourism industry.

22.12. Creating such programmes and degrees in higher education, across the arts, languages, and humanities, will also come with expanded high-quality opportunities for employment that can make effective use of these qualifications. There are already hundreds of Academies, museums, art galleries, and heritage sites in dire need of qualified individuals for their effective functioning. As positions are filled with suitably qualified candidates, and further artefacts are procured and conserved, additional museums, galleries, and heritage sites may open to expanding this important component of India's tourism industry and its heritage conservation efforts.

22.13. India will also urgently expand its translation and interpretation efforts in order to make high-quality learning materials and other important written and spoken material available to the public in various Indian and foreign languages. For this, a proposed Indian Institute of Translation and Interpretation (IITI) will be established. Such an institute would provide a truly important service for the country, as well as employ numerous multilingual language and subject experts, and experts in translation and interpretation, which will help to



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promote all Indian languages. The IITI shall also make extensive use of technology to aid in its translation and interpretation efforts. The IITI could naturally grow with time, and be housed in multiple locations across the country (including in HEIs to facilitate collaborations with other research departments) as demand and the number of qualified candidates grows.

22.14. Due to its vast and significant contributions and literature across genres and subjects, its cultural significance, and its scientific nature, rather than being restricted to single-stream Sanskrit Pathshalas and Universities, Sanskrit will be mainstreamed with strong offerings in school -- including as one of the language options in the three-language formula -- as well as in higher education, and will be taught not in isolation, but in interesting and innovative ways, and connected to other contemporary and relevant subjects such as mathematics, astronomy, philosophy, linguistics, dramatics, yoga, etc. Thus, in consonance with the rest of this policy, Sanskrit Universities too will move towards becoming large multidisciplinary institutions of higher learning; Departments of Sanskrit that conduct teaching and outstanding interdisciplinary research on Sanskrit and Sanskrit Knowledge Systems will be established/strengthened across the new multidisciplinary higher education system. Sanskrit will become a natural part of a liberal arts higher education if a student so chooses. Sanskrit teachers in large numbers will be professionalised across the country in mission mode through the offering of 4-year integrated multidisciplinary B.Ed. dual degrees in education and Sanskrit.

22.15. India will similarly expand its institutes and universities studying all classical languages and literature, with strong efforts to collect, preserve, translate, and study the tens of thousands of manuscripts that have not yet received their due attention. Sanskrit and all Indian language institutes and departments across the country will be significantly strengthened, with adequate training given to large new batches of students to study, in particular, the large numbers of manuscripts and their interrelations with other subjects. Classical language institutes will aim to be affiliated or merged with universities, while maintaining their autonomy, so that faculty may work and students too may be trained as part of robust and rigorous multidisciplinary programmes. Universities dedicated to languages will become multidisciplinary, towards the same end; where relevant, they may then also offer B.Ed. dual degrees in education and a language to develop outstanding language teachers in that language. Further, it is also proposed that a new institution for Languages will be established. National Institute (or Institutes) for Pali, Persian and Prakrit will also be set up within a university campus (or campuses). Similar initiatives will be carried out for institutes and universities studying Indian arts, art history, and Indology. Research for outstanding work in all these areas will be supported by the NRF.

22.16. Finally, efforts to preserve and promote all Indian languages will be taken on more seriously and with new vigour, including Schedule 8 languages, all other currently spoken Indian languages (including tribal languages), endangered languages, and classical languages. Technology and crowdsourcing, with extensive participation of the people, will play a crucial role in these efforts.

22.17. First and foremost, Academies will be established for each of the Schedule 8 languages - consisting of some of the greatest scholars and native speakers of each language - to determine simple yet accurate vocabulary for the latest concepts, and to release the latest dictionaries on a regular basis (analogous to the successful efforts for many other languages around the world). The Academies would also consult with each other, and in some cases take the best suggestions from the public, in order to construct these dictionaries - attempting to adopt common words whenever possible (e.g., if an excellent word for an emerging concept exists in Tamil, multiple languages could adopt it to optimise communication in and across



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Indian languages). These dictionaries would be widely disseminated, for use in education, journalism, writing, speechmaking, and beyond, and would be available on the web as well as in book form. These Academies for Schedule 8 languages will be established by the Central Government in consultation or collaboration with State Governments. Academies for other highly-spoken Indian languages may also be similarly established by the Centre and/or States.

22.18. Second, all languages in India, and their associated arts and culture will be documented via a web-based platform/portal/wiki, in order to preserve endangered and all Indian languages and their associated rich local arts and culture. The platform will contain videos, dictionaries, recordings, and more, of people (especially elders) speaking the language, telling stories, reciting poetry, and performing plays, folk songs and dances, and more. People from across the country will be invited to and able to contribute to these efforts by adding relevant material onto these platforms/portals/wikis. Universities and their research teams will work with each other and with communities across the country towards attaining rich such platforms. These preservation efforts, and their associated research projects, e.g., in history, archaeology, linguistics, etc., will be funded by the NRF.

22.19. Scholarships for people of all ages to study Indian Languages, Arts, and Culture with local masters and/or within the higher education system will be established. The promotion of Indian languages is possible only if they are used regularly and if they are used for teaching-learning. Incentives, such as prizes for outstanding poetry and prose in Indian languages across categories, will be established to ensure vibrant poetry, novels, nonfiction books, textbooks, journalism, and other works in all Indian languages. Proficiency in Indian languages will be included as part of qualification parameters for employment opportunities. Finally, every higher education institution, and even every school or school complex, will aim to have Artist(s)-in-Residence in order to expose students to art, creativity, and the rich treasures of the country.

23. Technology Use and Integration

23.1. India is a global technology leader in information and communication and in other cutting-edge domains such as space. The Digital India Campaign is helping to transform the entire nation into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy. While education will play a critical role in this transformation, technology itself will play an important role in the improvement of educational processes and outcomes; thus, the relationship between technology and education (at all levels) is bi-directional.

23.2. Given the explosive pace of technological development allied with the sheer creativity of tech-savvy teachers and entrepreneurs (including student entrepreneurs), it is certain that technology will impact education in multiple ways, only some of which can be foreseen at the present time. New technologies involving artificial intelligence, machine learning, block chains, smart boards, handheld computing devices, adaptive computer testing for student development, and other forms of educational software and hardware will not just change what students learn in the classroom but how they learn, and thus these areas and beyond will require extensive research both on the technological as well as educational fronts.

23.3. All use and integration of technology to improve multiple aspects of education will be supported and adopted, provided these interventions are rigorously and transparently evaluated in relevant contexts before they are scaled up. An autonomous body, the National Educational Technology Forum (NETF), will be created to provide a platform for the free exchange of ideas on the use of technology to enhance learning, assessment, planning, administration, and so on, both for school and higher education. The aim of the NETF will be



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to facilitate decision making on the induction, deployment, and use of technology, by providing to the leadership of education institutions, State and Central governments, and other stakeholders the latest knowledge and research as well as the opportunity to consult and share best practices with each other. The NETF will have the following roles:

- (a) provide independent evidence-based advice to Central and State Government agencies on technology-based interventions;
- (b) build intellectual and institutional capacities in educational technology;
- (c) envision strategic thrust areas in this domain; and
- (d) articulate new directions for research and innovation.

23.4. To remain relevant in the fast-changing field of educational technology, the NETF will maintain a regular inflow of authentic data from multiple sources including educational technology innovators and practitioners, particularly at the grassroots level, and will engage with a diverse set of researchers to analyse this data. It will act as a forum for harnessing the distributed energy that democratising technology can unleash, particularly among the youth of the country who continually prove their capacity to innovate and lead, while also bringing a scholarly emphasis to ensure that the overall impact of these efforts is positive. To support the development of a vibrant body of knowledge and practice, the NETF will organise multiple regional and national conferences, workshops, etc. to solicit inputs from national and international educational technology researchers, entrepreneurs, and practitioners.

23.5. The thrust of technological interventions will be for the purposes of improving teaching-learning and evaluation processes, supporting teacher preparation and professional development, enhancing educational access, and streamlining educational planning, management, and administration including processes related to admissions, attendance, assessments, etc.

23.6. A rich variety of educational software, for all the above purposes, will be developed and made available for students and teachers at all levels. All such software will be available in all major Indian languages and will be accessible to a wide range of users including students in remote areas and students with disabilities. Teaching-learning e-content will continue to be developed by all States in all regional languages, as well as by the NCERT (including CIET), CBSE, NIOS, and other bodies/institutions, and will be uploaded onto the National Teacher's Portal, DIKSHA. This platform may also be utilised for e-content related to Teacher's Professional Development, etc. CIET will be strengthened to promote and expand DIKSHA as well as other education technology initiatives. Video-viewing equipment will be made available to teachers at all schools so that teachers can suitably integrate open educational videos into teaching-learning practices. Technology-based education platforms, such as DIKSHA/SWAYAM, will be better integrated across school and higher education, and will include ratings/reviews by users, so that users are able to choose their content wisely and so that content developers may continuously improve content.

23.7. Particular attention will need to be paid to emerging disruptive technologies that will necessarily transform the education system and what it teaches to students. When the 1986/1992 National Policy on Education was formulated, it was difficult to predict the disruptive effect that the internet would have brought. Our present education system's inability to cope with these rapid and disruptive changes places us (individually and nationally) at a perilous disadvantage in an increasingly competitive world. For example, while computers have largely surpassed humans in leveraging factual and procedural knowledge, our education at all levels excessively burdens students with such knowledge at the expense of developing their higher-order competencies.



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23.8. This policy has been formulated at a time when an unquestionably disruptive technology - Artificial Intelligence (AI) - has emerged. As the cost of AI-based prediction falls, AI will be able to match or outperform - and therefore be a valuable aid to - even skilled professionals such as doctors in certain predictive tasks. AI's disruptive potential in the workplace is clear, and the education system must be poised to respond quickly. One of the permanent tasks of the NETF will be to categorise emergent technologies based on their potential and estimated time-frame for disruption, and to periodically present this analysis to MHRD. Based on these inputs, MHRD will formally identify those technologies whose emergence demands responses from the education system. The NITI Aayog's timely discussion paper, "National Strategy for Artificial Intelligence: #AIForAll" - endorsed by this Policy - models one way in which MHRD may propose technology-specific policy changes.

23.9. In response to MHRD's formal recognition of a new disruptive technology, the National Research Foundation will initiate or expand research efforts in the technology, including fundamental research in the domain, development of the technology (including possible mega-projects), and assessment of its socio-economic impact. In the context of AI, NRF may consider a three-pronged approach: (a) advancing core AI research, (b) developing and deploying application-based research, and (c) establishing international research efforts to address global challenges in areas such as healthcare, agriculture, and climate change using AI.

23.10. HEIs will play an active role not only in conducting research on disruptive technologies but also in creating initial versions of instructional materials and courses (including online courses) in cutting-edge domains and assessing their impact on specific areas such as professional education. Once the technology has attained a level of maturity, HEIs with thousands of students will be ideally placed to scale these teaching and skilling efforts, which will include targeted training for job readiness. Disruptive technologies will make certain jobs redundant, and hence approaches to skilling and deskilling that are both efficient and ensure quality will be of increasing importance to create and sustain employment. Institutions will have autonomy to approve institutional and non-institutional partners to deliver such training, which will be integrated with skills and higher education frameworks.

23.11. Universities will aim to offer Ph.D. and Masters programmes in core areas (such as Machine Learning) as well as multidisciplinary fields ("AI + X") and professional areas (healthcare, agriculture, and law). They may also develop and disseminate courses in these areas via platforms, such as SWAYAM. For rapid adoption, HEIs may blend these online courses with traditional teaching in undergraduate and vocational programmes. HEIs may also offer targeted training in low-expertise tasks for supporting the AI value chain such as data annotation, image classification, and speech transcription. Efforts to teach languages to school students will be dovetailed with efforts to enhance Natural Language Processing for India's diverse languages.

23.12. As disruptive technologies emerge, schooling and continuing education will assist in raising the general populace's awareness of their potential disruptive effects and will also address related issues. This awareness is necessary to have informed public consent on matters related to these technologies. In school, the study of current affairs and ethical issues will include a discussion on disruptive technologies such as those identified by NETF/MHRD. Appropriate instructional and discussion materials will also be prepared for continuing education.



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23.13. Data is a key fuel for AI-based technologies, and it is critical to raise awareness on issues of privacy, laws, and standards associated with data handling and data protection, etc. It is also necessary to highlight ethical issues surrounding the development and deployment of AI-based technologies. Education will play a key role in these awareness-raising efforts. Other disruptive technologies that are expected to change the way we live, and therefore change the way we educate students, include those relating to clean and renewable energy, water conservation, sustainable farming, environmental preservation, and other green initiatives; these will also receive prioritised attention in education.

IV. MAKING IT HAPPEN

24. Strengthening the Central Advisory Board of Education

24.1. Achieving successful implementation of this policy demands a long-term vision, availability of expertise on a sustained basis, and concerted action from all concerned actors encompassing national, state, institutional, and individual levels. In this context, the Policy recommends strengthening and empowering the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE), which will have a much greater mandate and not be only a forum for widespread consultation and examination of issues relating to educational and cultural development. The remodelled and rejuvenated CABE shall be responsible for developing, articulating, evaluating, and revising the vision of education in the country on a continuous and sustained basis, in close collaboration with MHRD and the corresponding apex bodies of States. It shall also create and continuously review the institutional frameworks that shall help attain this vision.

24.2. To bring the focus back on education and learning, it is desirable that the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) be re-designated as the Ministry of Education (MoE).

25. Financing: Affordable and Quality Education for All

25.1. The Policy commits to significantly raising educational investment, as there is no better investment towards a society's future than the high-quality education of our young people. Unfortunately, public expenditure on education in India has not yet even come close to the recommended level of 6% of GDP, as envisaged by the 1968 Policy, reiterated in the Policy of 1986, and which was further reaffirmed in the 1992 review of the Policy. The current public (Government - Centre and States) expenditure on education in India has hovered around 4.43% of GDP (Analysis of Budgeted Expenditure 2017-18), and only around 10% of the total Government spending goes towards education (Economic Survey 2017-18). These numbers are far smaller than most developed and developing countries.

25.2. In order to attain the goal of world-class education in India, and the corresponding multitude of benefits to this Nation and its economy, this Policy unequivocally endorses and envisions an increase in public investment in education - by both the Central government and all State Governments - to reach 6% of GDP at the earliest, and reach 20% of all public expenditure over a 10-year period. This is considered extremely critical for achieving the high-quality and equitable public education system that is truly needed for India's future economic, social, cultural, intellectual, and technological progress and growth.

25.3. In particular, financial support will not be compromised on the various critical elements and components of education, such as ensuring universal access, learning resources, nutritional support, matters of student safety and well-being, adequate numbers of teachers



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and staff, teacher development, and support for all key initiatives towards equitable high-quality education for underprivileged and socio-economically disadvantaged groups.

25.4. In addition to one-time expenditures, primarily related to infrastructure and resources, this Policy identifies the following key longer-term thrust areas for financing to cultivate a world-class education system: (i) expanding and continually improving early childhood education; (ii) ensuring foundational literacy and numeracy; (iii) providing adequate and appropriate resourcing of school complexes/clusters; (iv) providing food and nutrition (breakfast and midday meals); (v) investing in teacher education and continuing professional development of teachers; (vi) revamping colleges and universities to foster excellence; and (vii) cultivating research.

25.5. Even the low level of funding on education in India is too frequently not spent in a timely manner at the District/institution level, thus hampering the achievement of the intended targets of those funds. Financial governance and management will focus on the smooth, timely, and appropriate flow of funds, and their usage with probity; bureaucratic processes will be suitably amended and streamlined. The new suggested regulatory regime, with clear separations of roles and transparent self-disclosures, empowerment and autonomy to institutions, and the appointment of outstanding and qualified experts to leadership positions will help to enable a far smoother, quicker, and more transparent flow of funds.

25.6. The Policy also calls for the rejuvenation, active promotion, and support for private philanthropic activity in the education sector. In particular, to incentivise such philanthropic participation, any public institution taking initiatives towards raising private philanthropic funds to enhance educational experiences (such as through Development Offices and Alumni Associations, etc.) will never have any public funds cut as a result.

25.7. Education is a public good and must not be a commercial activity or a source of profit. The matter of commercialisation of education has been dealt with by the Policy through multiple relevant fronts, including: the 'light but tight' regulatory approach that mandates full public self-disclosure of finances, procedures, course and programme offerings, and educational outcomes; the substantial investment in public education; and mechanisms for good governance of all institutions, public and private.

26. Implementation

26.1. Any policy is only as good as its implementation. Such implementation will require multiple initiatives and actions, which will have to be taken by multiple bodies in a synchronised and systematic manner. Therefore, the implementation of this Policy will be led by various bodies (including MHRD, CABE, Union and State Governments, education-related Ministries, State Departments of Education, Boards, NTA, the regulatory bodies of school and higher education, NCERT, SCERTs, schools, and HEIs) along with timelines and a plan for review, in order to ensure that the policy is implemented in its spirit and intent, through coherence in planning and synergy across all these bodies involved in education.

26.2. Implementation will be guided by the following principles. First, implementation of the spirit and intent of the Policy will be the most critical matter. Second, it is important to implement the policy initiatives in a phased manner, as each policy point has several steps, each of which requires the previous step to be implemented successfully. Third, prioritisation will be important in ensuring optimal sequencing of policy points, and that the most critical and urgent actions are taken up first, thereby enabling a strong base. Fourth, comprehensiveness in implementation will be key; as this Policy is interconnected and



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holistic, only a full-fledged implementation, and not a piecemeal one, will ensure that the desired objectives are achieved. Fifth, since education is a concurrent subject, it will need careful planning, joint monitoring, and collaborative implementation between the Centre and States. Sixth, timely infusion of requisite resources - human, infrastructural, and financial - at the Central and State levels will be crucial for the satisfactory execution of the Policy. Finally, careful analysis and review of the linkages between multiple parallel implementation steps will be necessary in order to ensure effective dovetailing of all initiatives. This will also include early investment in some of the specific actions (such as the setting up of early childhood education infrastructure) that will be imperative to ensuring a strong base and a smooth progression for all subsequent programmes and actions.

26.3. Subject-wise implementation committees of experts in cooperation and consultation with other relevant Ministries will be set up at both the Central and State levels to develop detailed implementation plans for each aspect of this Policy in accordance with the above principles to achieve the goals of the Policy in a clear and phased manner. Yearly joint reviews of the progress of implementation of the policy, in accordance with the targets set for each action, will be conducted by designated teams constituted by MHRD and the States, and reviews will be shared with CAGE. By 2030, it is expected that the past decade would have provided ample opportunities for evaluation, fine-tuning, as well as major changes, if called for, to be effected. Thereafter, a comprehensive review of the status of the implementation of the policy in its entirety will be undertaken. In the decade of 2030-40, the entire policy will be in an operational mode, following which another comprehensive review will be undertaken. It is, of course, expected that annual reviews will continue throughout.
