

Need for an Action Plan in the Education Sector

What is the issue?

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- A committee has been constituted under the chairmanship of K Kasturirangan to formulate a new education policy.

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- But its time that India assesses the need for an action plan instead, given the challenges and differences in school education.

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How is the education sector at present?

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- The infrastructure (school buildings) has certainly shown remarkable improvement in the last few decades.

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- Also, the mid-day-meal scheme has made it possible to get the child to the school.

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- Besides, enormous amount of investments has gone into the school education sector.

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- Also, the number of teachers has gone up substantially and the average pupil-teacher ratio is close to the required levels.

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- However, the poor quality of education imparted in most of the government schools is the most worrying scenario.

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- Evidently, the learning outcomes have actually come down during the past decade.

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What are the drawbacks and challenges?

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- **Teachers** - A large number of teachers are not qualified to teach, yet they are teaching.

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- Roughly, out of 8 million teachers, around 1.4 million fall in this category.

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- Politics has played a key role, resulting in a skewed distribution of teachers in most of the states.

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- It's because the tendency is to hang in and around urban areas.

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- **RTE** - The Right to Education Act did little to address the quality issues.

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- In some cases, like the no-detention policy and the mandatory provision on qualification and number of teachers, it only created more problems than it solved.

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- A tedious process of amendment had to be resorted to correct some of the wrongs in the Act.

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- **Diversity** - Most of the action relating to education lies with the states.

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- In States like Kerala, a teacher not going to school would invite public criticism.

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- On the other hand, in some of the states of northern India, teachers consider it their right not to go to the School.

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- There are instances of these regular teachers employing a “substitute” to represent them and even teach on their behalf.

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- In any case, the country is too diverse to consider a single mandate by way of policy for the entire country.

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What is desired?

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- Given the regional differences, a national policy is less likely to be effective.

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- The sector actually requires an **action plan** clearly outlining what, how, who

and when things should be done.

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- The roles of respective entities should be clearly defined so as to assess their performance.

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- The entire value chain needs to be looked at, understood, and its interventions be clearly outlined.

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- The action plan needs to focus on the teacher who plays a pivotal role in imparting education, including:

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- i. the selection process

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- ii. pre-service and in-service trainings

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- iii. transfer and posting

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- iv. engagement of teachers in non-educational activities

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- v. promotional avenues and morale

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- An action plan for each state is essential, clearly outlining the roles of the Central government and the respective state government.

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- There will have to be sufficient flexibility in the central schemes to accommodate differences amongst states.

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- The whole approach has to be outcome-based rather than input-based as has been the case so far.

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Source: Financial Express

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