



Understanding Citizens Engagement in Public Policy Development in Context of New Education Policy in India

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Abstract:

After Independence, India has adopted representative democracy as form of Government. Public participation is a mainstay of democracy. A fundamental rethinking is under way about the roles of government, citizens, and community organizations in public policy. Can government be reconstructed to make public policies more responsive to citizens and thus more effective? During last six and a half decade the government has not directly involved citizens in Public Policy making Process. The approach of the Government was top to bottom for the implementation also. For the first time Government has involved various stakeholders in Public Policy formulation. The New Education Policy which still not declared but the draft was made after considering the suggestion from grassroots level to top level after consultation. This paper is aimed to understand new approach of government in making Indian democracy more people oriented and how people are engaged in drafting New Education Policy.

Key Words: New Education Policy, Citizen Engagement, Public Policy

Introduction:

In the post independent era the National Policy of 1968 was a stepping stone in the education system of India. It was targeted towards the radical change in the prevailed education system. It aimed to improve quality at all stages and improvement in the science and technological field. But it could not meet the desired goals and in 1986 new policy is framed.

The National Policy on Education was framed in 1986 and modified in 1992. Since then so many corrections have taken place that calls for a revision of the Policy. The Government of India would like to bring out a National Education Policy to meet the changing dynamics of the population's requirement with regards to quality education, innovation and research, aiming to make India a knowledge superpower by equipping its students with the necessary skills and knowledge and to eliminate the shortage of manpower in science, technology, academics and industry.

For the first time, the Government of India is embarking on a time-bound grassroots consultative process. This process will enable the Ministry of HRD to

reach out to individuals across the country through over 2.75 lakh direct consultations while also taking input from citizens online. This is very first of its kind experience for the government of India to Indulge Citizens in the Policy formulation process. In this study the researcher has tried to Understand Citizens Engagement in the Development of Public Policy in context of New Education Policy.

Objective of the Study:

- To explore the Citizens Engagement in Public Policy Development.
- To Explore the various levels of Citizen Engagement
- To understand the importance of Citizens in Development of New Education Policy in India.

What is Public Policy?

According to Friedrich, policies “are decision about what to do or not to do in given situations.’ Public Policies are governmental decisions, and are actually the result of activities which the government undertakes in the pursuance of certain goals and objectives. Public Policies are goal oriented and clearly spell out the programmes of Government. It is the outcome of the government’s collective actions. It can take variety of forms like law, ordinances, court decisions, executive orders, decisions, etc. Public Policy is positive in the sense that it depicts the concerns of the government and involves its action to a particular problem on which the policy is made.

Various Agencies involved in Policy Formulation:

Policy formulation process in the government is very complex. Different agencies and actors are playing important role in policy formulation. Some of them are as follows:

- i. Citizens:** The Citizens are the main player in the making of any public policy. Any policy which is formulated with the consent of the citizens will definitely survive long and executed effectively.
- ii. Interest Groups:** The pressure groups also play an important role in formulation of Public Policy. The pressure group can be considered as a group of citizens from the civil society.
- iii. Political Parties:** At the eve of Elections Political Parties present their programme of goals and values to the people with a view to gaining their support. The Manifestos of Political Parties are informal source of Public Policy Making.

Organs of Public Policy Making in India:

Two types of agencies which participate in policy-making process in India.

- 1. Constitutional Agencies** like Constitution of India, Parliament of India, Cabinet, NITI (National Institution for Transforming India) Aayog, Judiciary, Civil Services etc.,
- 2. Extra Constitutional Agencies** like Political Parties, Pressure and Interest Groups, Professional Associates, Voluntary Organizations and Media.

What is Citizen Engagement?

In the traditional type of Citizen Engagement there were two components – Communication and Consultation. The present Citizen Engagement is an interactive two way process that encourages participation, exchange of ideas and flow of conversation that reflects willingness on part of government to share information and make citizens a partner in decision making.

Ideally, citizen engagement requires governments to

- Allow Citizen in agenda-setting, and
- Ensure that policy or project proposals that are created after deliberation are taken into account while making a final decision.

Citizen engagement may be Considered at all stages of the policy or project development process and is an iterative process that continually infuses citizens' priorities in policy making/project implementation.

Kind of Citizen Engagement:

In processes of citizen engagement, citizens may be represented themselves as individuals and sometimes through interest groups such as civil society organizations, NGOs. Engagement has been understood and explained in a variety of ways. Engagement as

- Contributor
- Organization builder
- Empowering process¹

Framework for Engaging Citizen in New Education Policy:

The Current government has initiated to develop a New Education Policy. In formulating New Education Policy, the Ministry of Human Resource Development has asked the suggestions from the various stake holders, education institutes, NGOs etc. To develop the New Education Policy the government at the central level has started to consult people from Bottom to Top and engaged them at various levels. The objective of the consultation with the people in the process is to ensure that an inclusive, participatory and holistic approach is undertaken, which takes into consideration expert opinions, field experiences, empirical research, stakeholder feedback, as well as lessons learned from best practices.

Traditionally, previous Commissions for driving Education Policy have undertaken a common approach which included the following:

- Top down approach based on setting up expert task force, working groups and/or sub-committees.

¹ Draft of Department of Electronics & Information Technology Ministry of Communications & Information Technology Government of India access on 01/02/2018

- Each group was based on a thematic topic.
- Recommendations were made based on field visits, discussions, conferences/workshops, interviews, limited citizen outreach, special studies, meetings with constitutional leaders and elected officials.
- The consultation process involved multiple stakeholders including government, academia, industry, experts and media.
- The consultation time taken varied from six months to three years.

In the previous consultative processes have been extensive, they have taken a top-down approach, depending on limited feedback from field workers and stakeholders on the ground who are responsible implementing the Education Policy. Further, they have been thematic based, with discussions being held in silos.

Thus, it is recommended that a time-bound, bottom-up consultative process is undertaken which will be driven by a multi-stakeholder task force at the National Level. Such an approach will enable the Ministry of HRD to reach out to individuals across the country through over 2.75 lakh direct consultations while also taking input from citizens online. The proposed framework is as follows:

Gram Panchayat

- Village Education Committee across all 2.5 lakh Grampanchayat to meet on a select day to deliberate and provide recommendation on the New Education Policy consultation document
- 2.5 lakh meetings to be held

Block

- Block Development Officer to lead meeting of the Education Committee to drive compile and evaluate the recommendations made by the various Village Education Committees in the block. Further, members to provide inputs to be provided on the New Education Policy consultation document
- Approx. 6600 meetings to be held

District

- The District Collector/ Magistrate along with the Member of Parliament / Member of Legislative Assembly to hold a multi-stakeholder consultation workshop. Further, recommendations made by Block level teams to be incorporated into the district recommendations
- Approx. 676 meetings to be held

State/UTs

- Each State to hold thematic, multi stakeholder roundtable meetings (approve 3 per state) to deliberate the New Education Policy Consultation Document. State Teams will also synthesis recommendations made in district reports and provide a single comprehensive document.
- 100 meetings to be held

Regional

- Groups of States to meet to discuss regional requirements and provide input on the New Education Policy Document based on State recommendations
- 6-8 meetings to be held

National

- Multi stakeholder thematic roundtables to be held
- Online consultation through various forums including MyGov, HRD Ministry Website etc.
- 12 meetings to be held

National Education Task Force²

- Multi-stakeholder members with diverse backgrounds
- Identifying key themes and finalizing the New Education Policy Consultation Document
- Driving the time-bound consultation process at all levels
- Responsible for compiling and analyzing the recommendations from the Online Recommendations, Regional, State Reports and National Roundtable
- Evaluating international best practices and policies
- Submitting a final report for the New Education Policy

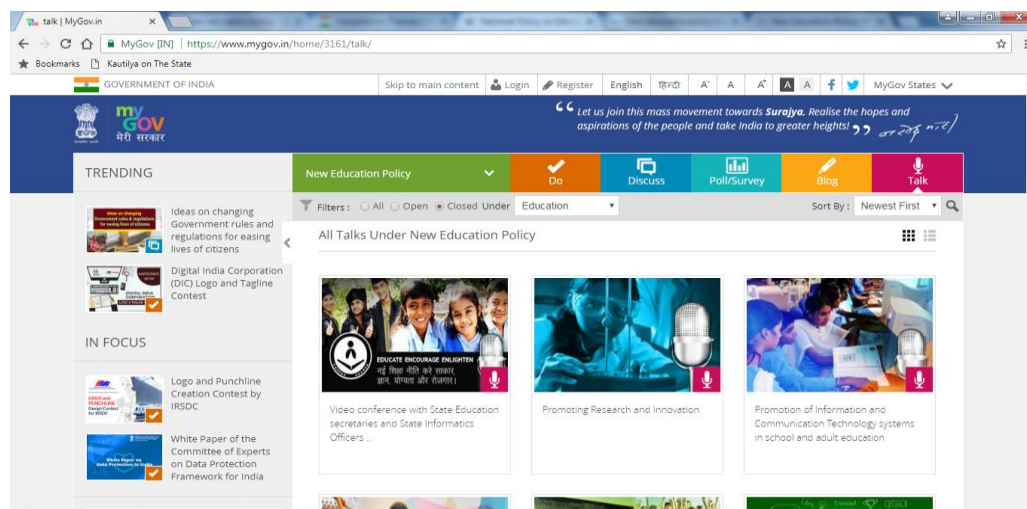
Consultation Theme:

The Government has decided to consult with the stakeholders in two broad categories;

- I. Consultation on Higher Education
- II. Consultation on Primary Education

In this two category the Ministry has decided to ask various themes based question to the stakeholders through various means and one of the means is:

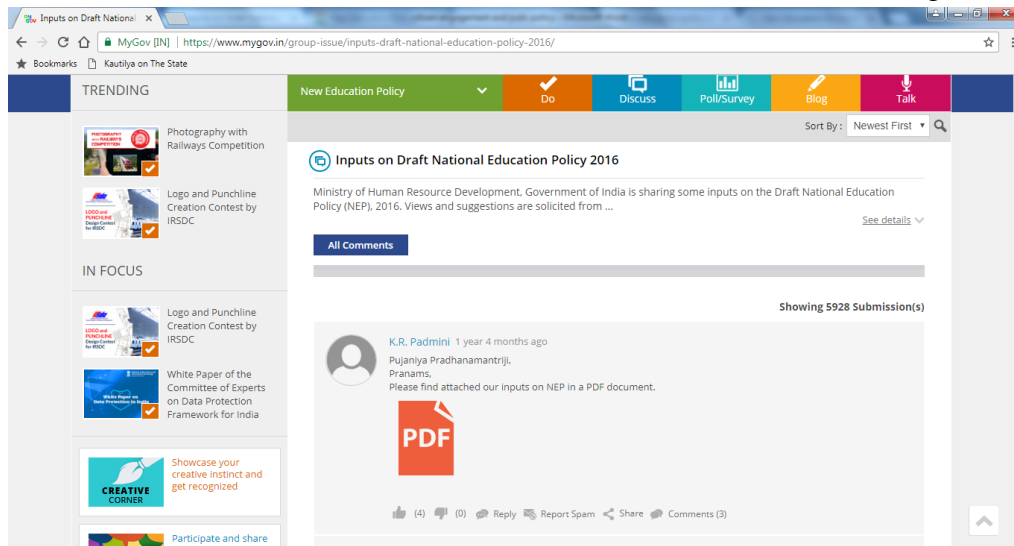
www.mygov.in Web Site



How the Citizen Engagement is done in New Education Policy through www.mygov.in :

² <http://mhrd.gov.in/consultation-framework> Accessed on 01/02/2018

- Do** : Means any topic or task is given to the members and the reply on that particular task
- Discussion** : On the Discussion Forum People from various parts of the country can give their feedback directly.
- Poll Survey** : Poll Survey they do survey about the policy.
- Via Blog** : On the blog the government has developed various questions and themes and on that particular theme the common man, the students and the teachers writes their views on various topic.
- Talk** : The ministry has arranged the video conferencing talk with the state secretary to discuss about the various level feedbacks. The Education Secretaries of the state involved in the video conferencing.



(Above is the Screen Shot of the page)

So far many individual and group have suggested many changes and development measurement in the New Education Policy and uploaded their views via PDF File on the www.mygov.in web site. This is how people directly participated in Making of New Education Policy Process.

Participation

- **Status of NEP Consultation Meet - School Education as on 29.02.2016**

State Level Consultation	- 18/36
District Level Consultation	- 340/669
Urban Local Body Level Consultation	- 725/4027
Block Level Consultation	- 3250/6620
Village Level Consultation	- 110623/244252 ³

Some Observations about Citizen Engagement in Public Policy:

- To Strengthen Democratic Processes, it is necessary to make democracy a participatory democracy.

³ <http://mhrd.gov.in/nep-new> access on 01/02/2018 Time 12:15 at Noon

- In India up till now the process of making Public Policy was top to bottom approach but now the new era has started and government has adopted bottom top approach.
- In India People are not participating in Public Policy Making but their representative are part of that.
- Participation through Electronic Media is limited to some people because in India everyone is not use to Electronic Media.
- The feedback process in making New Education Policy has given verities in making New Education Policy.
- Participation in formation of New Education Policy is done through individual, group of individuals, NGO's that is positive sign of healthy democracy.
- In the upcoming year the Ministry of HRD will announced New Education Policy for the New India.
- Citizen Engagement in Public Policy Making Will be ensured by the government only after considering the suggestions taken by government for making New Education Policy.
- The government has not met with the desirable number from the participants yet but the government will announce the policy soon.

Conclusion:

People's participation in the governance is a sign of the healthy democracy. But mere asking suggestions don't strengthen system. Suggestions of the stakeholders for making any public policy should be considered and should be given recognition. The New Education Policy is yet to announce, but there is no idea how much citizen's suggestions are considered. The new era is started in India for making its democracy participatory democracy.

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