

New Education Policy, Technology integration and the digital divide: Issues and Concerns

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Introduction

In the face of prevalent educational challenges, the right to education act, enacted in 2009, made education a fundamental right to make sure all children eligible for receiving an education are able to do so even if they do not have the means. The right to education act not only made it obligatory for the government to provide free and compulsory elementary education to all children in a neighbourhood School (within 1 km), without having to incur payment of fees, but also made provisions for free provisioning of textbooks uniforms, stationery, mid-day meals and special educational material for children with disabilities.

The act also laid down norms and Standards relating to Pupil teacher ratio classrooms separate toilets for boys and girls and drinking water facilities for all, In order to ensure minimum standards of both education and attendance. Not only this RTE, 2009 also prohibits all kinds of corporal punishment, mental harassment and discrimination based on gender, caste, religion and class, thus making a move towards zero tolerance against discrimination in education delivery. The new education policy, 2020 turns out to be contrary in spirit to the mandate of the Right to Education Act 2009 in this sense. In pushing for privatization of education and technological integration, NEP 2020 openly discriminates against all children from marginalised sections and lower and lower middle-income families who lack the means to afford quality private education.

Likewise, the Open Book Examination model, under the 'blended mode' of teaching-learning, proposed in the NEP, imposes undue technological and financial hardship on students on the less privileged side of the digital divide. The CUCET or centralized university common entrance test also makes it harder for students from backward states and vernacular educational training to secure admissions in universities even in their own states, as they now have to face an unfair higher level of competition from students

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