

CULTURE OF INNOVATION IN OUR SCHOOLS

BACKGROUND NOTE

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INTRODUCTION

The generations have changed and so have the requirements, the world is moving at a breakneck speed and it is necessary not only to work hard but to work smart as well. For this reason, the schools need to have a culture of innovation where it is more relevant for the students to know what to do beyond what they know. In an era where people can Google most answers from their phones it is more important to not only be a problem identifier but a problem solver too. Many teachers long for a structure for their planning and a way to ensure that. While they are innovating their curriculum they are also meeting the requirements and standards of the day. The yearning for scaffolding to balance innovation and standardization helps to explain the rise in popularity of Project-Based Learning and Design Thinking. Both offer concrete strategies for teachers to gradually realign control of their instructions and provide scaffolding for what change may look like.

The education system in the 21st century has a big focus on innovation as a tool that revamps the traditional educational system. The need for quality improvement in the curriculum and the desire to produce students with 21st century competency skills has brought innovation at the core of the educational ecosystem. Hence, school cultures that support innovation should be developed and encouraged extensively. Pedagogical practices should be geared towards teaching children to think in ways that lead to innovation. Forming attitudes that are constructive to learning instead of test taking should be the goal of every school and the educational system.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF NEP-2020

According to NEP 2020 'creativity and critical thinking to encourage logical decision-making and innovation' is one of the fundamental principles that will guide both the education system at large, as well as the individual institutions within it. Teachers are the drivers of innovations in the schools and hence, to promote the culture of innovation in schools, it also emphasizes that teachers will be given continuous opportunities for self-improvement and to learn the latest innovations and advances in their professions. Educational leadership is the most

important internal factor of a school, to bring in this culture of change, *‘The presence of outstanding and enthusiastic institutional leaders that cultivate excellence and innovation is the need of the hour’* says NEP 2020.

The whole impetus of the newly emerged educational doctrine is to transform our passionate learners into enterprising young adults who are not only able to observe and absorb the constantly evolving times but are also prepared to think critically and are solution-oriented. It incubates a sense of an amiable environment wherein innovative ideas are promoted, divergent viewpoints are celebrated, and creativity is lauded.

The NEP fosters a new teaching-learning methodology that employs innovative tools and techniques to make the education experiential, holistic, integrated, learner-centered, inquiry-driven, discovery-oriented, discussion-based, and flexible. The fundamental principle of this paradigm shift is to facilitate the learners to inculcate the 21st Century skills that would enable them to stride ahead with grit and dauntless spirit. It also endeavors to create a pedagogy that invokes a problem-solving approach and out-of-the-box thinking and encourages the youngsters to emerge as individuals with discerning minds and firmness in decision-making.

Some of the recommendations of the NEP 2020 are:

✚ **Multidisciplinary Approach:** To foster the belief that no learning can take place in isolation, this policy gives a lot of significance to the multidisciplinary approach wherein the various subjects are not put in tight compartments. The learners are expected to explore the topics in the light of the various disciplines. Thus, it facilitates in harnessing the insights and assists in creating a wider perspective of the students.

✚ **Use of Technology & Innovation:** This educational doctrine has put a lot of emphasis on the use of technology and ICT-based learning tools to enhance the teaching-learning experience, education planning, and management. It firmly believes in incorporating innovative ways to make learning a stimulating experience. Fun, creative, collaborative, and exploratory activities are heavily promoted in the classroom for experiential learning and deeper student learning.

✚ **Critical Thinking and Problem Solving:** The focus has been given to critical thinking, inquiry, discovery, discussion, and analysis-based teaching and learning methods for holistic education. This educational framework also fosters firmness in the decision-

making and the ability to solve problems through their critical thinking and analysis of the situations.

- ✚ **Teamwork and Collaboration:** It promotes collaborative learning to inculcate a sense of team spirit and fosters leadership qualities. It aims at enhancing the social skills, collaboration, and creativity of the child.
- ✚ **Unique Capabilities:** Recognizing, identifying, and fostering the unique capabilities of each student has been one of the agendas of this policy. It facilitates them to realize their true potential and contribute effectively to nation-building.
- ✚ **Emphasize Conceptual Understanding:** It promotes a thorough understanding of the concepts rather than rote learning and learning-for-exams. It is a welcome change that discourages cramming and memorizing.
- ✚ **Continuous Review:** Based on sustained research and regular assessment by educational experts will help in preparing the leaders of the future who will be assessed in a comprehensive manner. Self and peer assessment will add a valuable dimension to the assessment.

WAY FORWARD (ACTION POINTS AND CHALLENGES)

The schools have a high innovation potential, which is yet to be harnessed. The challenge is that most of the schools need support for innovating. Also it is important to understand the influence of the Principal in teacher involvement with innovation, as a Principal's action is most valued by the teachers. They feel inclined towards innovation when they are involved in decision-making, given responsibly and considered capable of assuming challenges. It is important to make them feel that they are a core part of the institution. Promoting collaborative work within the school in a healthy environment of co-existence as well as the valuation and consideration of opinions paves way to constant motivation.

The actions of the school Principal are essential in the nurturing an innovative culture in a school organization. The Principals, thus, need training in leadership practices that contribute towards instilling a culture of innovation, and that have value including being responsible for results, the existence of clear goals, the search for creative solutions, the understanding that achievements are the result of collective efforts and the generation of opportunities for

reflection. Ensuring that the Principals assume the role of pedagogical leaders to provide conducive environment to nurture change is an essential task ahead of policy makers.

Further, no one can dispute that nurturing collaborative work culture by bringing all teachers together contributes towards generating an organizational culture that favours innovation, and in such an environment participative and democratic leadership is comfortably able to foster an organizational culture that produces innovative responses, processes and products. Teacher education and training need to be the essential core component around innovation, designing and developing it.

But, we cannot ignore some obvious challenges like: Are school Principals prepared to lead, assume and handle change processes? Are competent teachers available in schools to take up this challenge? Which government policies are needed to encourage innovative processes? How to create a base for large-scale innovations and their implementation at school level? How to increase effectiveness of existing innovative practices in education, particularly online learning etc. that are awaiting consideration?

School education should instruct students on how to tackle problems in societies both of today and tomorrow. It should equip them with the knowledge and skills that they can apply to overcome those obstacles. Unfortunately the current practices in education divest our youth of the opportunity to properly prepare for and deal with challenges that the world lays before them. The most glaring problem in today's education pan India is the use of outdated tools, methods and techniques in classes which are not in line with the progressive outlook propagated in our country.

Implementing novel approaches and technologies sounds impressive and exciting. However it is anything but an easy task. Innovation in schools requires a lot of consideration and careful planning. Before setting things in order there are several stakes and essential elements that need to be kept in mind, like the social context, Availability of teachers/educators, funds, Government Policies, access for all, etc. These factors are important to consider so that schools can make informed decisions about what innovations to introduce.

Schools can become significantly more successful both through technological and non-technological improvement but the choice lies with the schools to choose from the several options that they have which will entirely depend on their own ecosystem and is what their students need most to flourish.

CONCLUSION

For an individual, a nation, and humankind to survive and progress, innovation and evolution are essential. Lack of innovation can have profound economic and social repercussions. Innovations in education are of particular importance because education plays a crucial role in creating a sustainable future. It can be said that school innovation is must to improve school equality and quality, to develop 21st Century Skills among students, and create contributing citizens for the future.

Innovations in schools require going beyond the norms, collaborating and having blended learning. To achieve these newer pedagogies, tools and techniques supporting innovation have to be brought into the education system. It is central for us to make our education system consistently innovative and focus educational innovations on raising the quality of learning at all levels. It is indeed challenging but essential and cannot be ignored any further.

From a broader perspective, the NEP ameliorates the holistic development of happy youngsters who would emerge as enterprising individuals and would be able to contribute toward nation-building through their robust and invigorating efforts. It will empower the young thinkers to be the innovators, change-makers, and visionaries who would put in their assiduous efforts to add dynamism and new zest to the social fabric.

The multidisciplinary approach, art-integrated, and inquiry-based learning are some of the astounding facets of the NEP that would certainly revolutionize the future of the nation and would certainly make it a global hub of knowledge in the years to come. As teachers and students gain comfort with this shift in expectation of student driven active learning they also start to form new beliefs about the value of learning itself. Teachers begin to view their classrooms as communities of knowledge or construction rather than seeing themselves as content disseminators. When this happens then the students also start to view themselves as active learners rather than passive recipients of information.