

RESOLUTION ADOPTED AT 31st AIFUCTO CONFERENCE HELD ON 7-9 JAN
2022 AT TIRUPATI (AP)

AIFUCTO's 31st Statutory Conference expressed deep concern about the current critical situation of Higher Education.

Background:

The crisis of higher education has intensified in India in recent years with the introduction of economic reform and its application in all sectors including both school and higher education. This phenomenon has come into existence since 1993 with the initiation of the market oriented economic reform in the country and gradually moved in the flow of private including foreign finance in education, with the simultaneous withdrawal of the decade's long subsidy in education as well as permitting the entry of foreign educational institutions in the country. Contradictorization of appointment of teachers was also introduced. Initiatives have been taken for withdrawing the existing system of education and create a new education system based on the principle of privatization and liberalization and finally globalization to suit the market- oriented reform.

Focus has been on the centralization of education utterly ignoring the fact that education is a state subject as per the Indian Constitution. This is a violation of the constitutionally created federal structure, ignoring the power and jurisdiction of the states. As a result, a conflict between the center and states has been growing.

The approach at the same time was on profit making from education, which is basic utility and largely should be provided by the government as was the previous system of education in the country introduced systematically since Independence.

The already critical situation in the field of education has assumed even more serious proportion with the onslaught of the global COVID-19 pandemic, bringing years long lockdown introduced since March 25, 2020 in India. Presently, the possibility of the third wave of the pandemic is looming large.

Obviously because of the long months of lockdown educational institutions have been closed almost for two years; they have started gradually opening, but not yet fully. There were no class room lectures, practical session, sit in examinations; students and teachers have been shut inside the house. To combat this situation, online classes have been introduced for both school and colleges.

Taking the advantage of the closure, Government of India introduced the New Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020). Prior to this, government made several attempts to introduce an earlier version of NEP in 2016 and 2019 but could not do that successfully because of the resistance from the people and Parliament.

With the introduction of NEP 2020 the hidden agenda of the government has come to the open. There are many aspects of the NEP 2020, which are anti-people, anti-student and anti-teachers, all of which need to be highlighted.

NEP2020 Highlights:

One of the major highlights of NEP2020 is the policy of consolidation as against the existing focus of fragmentation of colleges. Total number of existing colleges, are around 50,000 in the country. These colleges are now likely to be reduced to just 15,000 under NEP 2020 by bringing them into clusters. Number of students per colleges will be 3,000 and above. Each college should be multi-disciplinary and large institute like Nalanda and Takhashila university of the ancient time.

The principle of clustering is attempted to be introduced without taking into consideration the geographical location, physiographical setting, climate situation, social composition of the resident population and the overall economic developmental aspects of the area where such cluster will be made. There is no mention about the location, whether the cluster will be in rural or urban area. Presently, 60.35 % of colleges are located in rural areas, with many in interior part of rural areas where public transport is not easily available.

Thus, moving to large multi-disciplinary universities and colleges is one of the major recommendations of NEP2020. But the point is that such large cluster institutions are not feasible and the idea should be withdrawn.

Under NEP 2020 universities will be restructured

The overall higher educational sector will aim to be an integrated higher education system including existing professional and vocational educational

institutions, deemed to be universities, affiliating universities and stand-alone institutions like Nursing colleges, polytechnic colleges, etc., all will be merged with the big multidisciplinary universities.

It is further proposed that all branches of creative human endeavour including mathematics, science, vocational and professional subject should be considered as Liberal Arts. Thus, withdrawing the specialization and bringing new notion of Liberal Arts will create utter confusion and also require huge investment.

At present, just about 3.7% of GDP (in real term) is allocated for education, of which only 1.7% is allocated for higher education. Demand has been for 6% of GDP for education.

Number of autonomous colleges have been increasing by 2040 as per report all institute to be multi-disciplinary and autonomous. They are expected to be self-financing and creating new standard. Moreover by 2030 all districts, especially underdeveloped ones will get big multidisciplinary universities. This clearly indicates that existing colleges in backward class and remote rural areas will most likely be closed because of low enrolment and lack of infrastructure for the introduction of new technology based syllabus. It is far away from equity. Thus, the basic principle of NEP 2020 is not for creating excellence, equity and quality based multi-disciplinary large institutions. Student will get the flexibility of changing subjects. But this will neither be helpful for students nor for the development of the country.

There will be multiple points of 'entry' and 'exit.' There will be no time bound course, 50% to 60% of courses will be taught online. Thus, no campus will be required. Students will move from subject to subject and collect credits over a large period of time as desired by students. Ultimately the student will get a general bachelor of liberal arts degree. All specializations will be removed. Thus, employability will be considerably reduced.

The policy will promote 'blended learning', which is internet based and project-oriented mass learning through satellite and remotely handled examination.

Implementation of such a policy is impossible in the rural areas populated by tribals and other backward class people.

The policy will push out the backward class students. Already enrolment has fallen considerably, e.g., S C (14.9 %), ST (5.5%), OBC (5.2%), Muslim Minority (2.3%) are low and have fallen sharply during the lockdown period. With the

implementation of blended learning, access to higher education will be reduced further. Discrimination in the society will increase. Instead of being 'inclusive', education under NEP 2020 will be 'exclusive'. Many institutions in the rural and backward area will be closed with the sharp fall in enrolment.

Assault on Syllabus:

With the centralization of academic power there will be loss of states' power in the field of education, a state subject. Universities will lose autonomy. The syllabus has been in the hand of states, will now be shifted to center.

Centralized new model syllabus will be pushed through central institutions and states' role and power in higher education will be drastically reduced. Many subjects will be closed due to integration. Many teachers will be declared surplus, with the sharp fall in enrolment and massive reduction of work load. It has been estimated that the enrolment level will fall by almost 50% by 2040 if the present rate continues with the hasty implementation of NEP 2020 and also due to ongoing attack of COVID-19.

Besides, the implementation of NEP 2020 without substantive discussions with stake holders will certainly not be right approach in a democratic country.

Demands:

- Maintain the secular and democratic flavor as per the Constitution in higher educational institutions.
- Increase expenditure on education to at least 6 % of GDP in real term.
- Stop clustering of educational institutions.
- Prevent drop out of students from various courses.
- Fill up the vacant posts of teacher in states as well as central level universities.
- Implement the UGC regulation issued with 7th pay revision by states. Change of this regulation by any state to be challenged.
- Implementation of 7th pay recommended scale to all self-financing colleges and implementation of Supreme Court order for equal pay for equal work.
- Increment for Ph D in 7th pay scale to be continued. Benefit given should not to be withdrawn.
- All state governments should implement UGC's direction of the extension of date for RC/OC.
- No closure of subject, no closure of institution due to low enrolment.

- All contractual / ad hoc teachers should be absorbed in vacant positions following proper procedure.
- Blended learning policy introduced by UGC should be scrapped.
- Reservation policy to be continued as a constitutional provision.
- Special financial support to be given to female students especially from minority group.
- Tuition fee for SC, ST & OBC and girl students to be waived for creating better access for weaker section.
- Special stipend to be announced by the central as well as states governments to the COVID-19 victim students whose parents were adversely affected the pandemic.
- Democratic functioning of the state universities should continue.
- States should have full control on framing the syllabus of every subject.
- Federal structure in our education to be continued.
- Saffronisation of higher education and emphasis on revivalist tendency and mythology to be stopped. Scientific outlook to be strengthened.

Solidarity to be built up:

31st Conference of AIFUCTO has given a call for the building up of solidarity with the working class of all sectors. During the Kisan movement AIFUCTO stood by Sanyukta Kisan Morcha and many states level units of AIFUCTO also contributed their might for strengthening the movement.

Thus, it is necessary to build up solidarity with all sectors like kisan, labor and services sectors. This will help to build resistance against exploitation of people. In case of education front for building up solidarity students should be kept at the central focus. This should be the common thread for unifying many groups and ultimately creating a bigger force to fight the anti-people government policy. Further, it is of utmost important to build up solidarity teachers, students, non-teaching staff and NGOs for upholding the democratic principals in running educational institutions.

From its 31st Statutory Conference, AIFUCTO gives a call to build up a strong resistance against the implementation of NEP 2020.

It further emphasis to build up II level movements in state as well as in Centre
The AIFUCTO leadership should take an aggressive position to insist on its state level units to organize massive propaganda against the ill effects of NEP 2020.

it is further resolved that the state level units should continue to organize agitation, demonstration, submission of memorandum and strengthening joint platform of education.

State level movements ultimately to be merged with the national level demonstration during the Budget session of the Parliament. It is further suggested that demonstration should be continued for more than one day in Delhi.

With a loud voice of protest, AIFUCTO 31st Conference gives a call for the repeal of NEP 2020.

The Conference also calls upon all teachers and employees in high education sector to participate in/give active support to the nation wide Strike by Trade Unions on 23-24 February 2022
