

EDUCATION: PHILOSOPHY, POLICY & PRACTICE

Ahead of the cabinet ministerial shuffle, a motley group of educationists, academicians and journalists came forth to deliberate about the current education system and the strong need to bring about a tangible change. The two day workshop for the fifteen participants organized by Centre for Civil Society in Rishikesh emphasized the urgency of the matter. A strong inclination and root of the problem was identified in the way the Indian government works in terms of **politicization** and **cost efficiency** which are reasons behind the malfunctioning of education system.



Some interesting activities were undertaken to engage the participants, acquaint them with each other and to promote a freewheeling discussion on 'education.' The first day witnessed an interesting ice breaking activity to familiarize the participants. The pairing of individuals was done, on the basis of iPhone- MacBook, apple-mango, mountain- river, and then they were asked to come forth and introduce one's partner along with stating their expectations from the workshop. The interactive element of the workshop kept

the audience on their toes and facilitated discussion on a variety of issues.

The first session by Professor Geeta Kingdon on the **State of school education in India**, was full of empirical data. The highlights and consensus was to increase **teacher accountability** as commended in one of the instances when the Mexico government negotiated accountability with the teachers' association at the time of pay raise. The state of affairs in different states painted a sad picture of the education system.





The second session elaborated on the **Education Policy: Voice, Choice and Incentives** which was largely an interactive session defining the parameters of the policy. The takeaways indicated that competition and low entry barriers amongst schools may ensure better school education.

The third session speaker engaged the audience by transporting them to a fantasy world. Each one of the participants was asked to close their eyes and visualize their '**Dream School.**' Every individual spoke from their experiences and reminisced about their childhood. This system emphasized the **Minimum government and maximum governance** battle cry



which has gradually been applied by the current Modi government in sectors such as defence, railways, ease of doing business, and which consequently can be applied in the education sector via:

- **Values- Choice and competition-** competition in the number of schools hence giving an access of choice to parents and children;
- **Autonomy and accountability:** as two sides to the same coin, both these factors should be made available to schools and teachers
- **Innovations and communities:** largely giving entrée to social and civic communities to innovate and make a difference in the education sector.

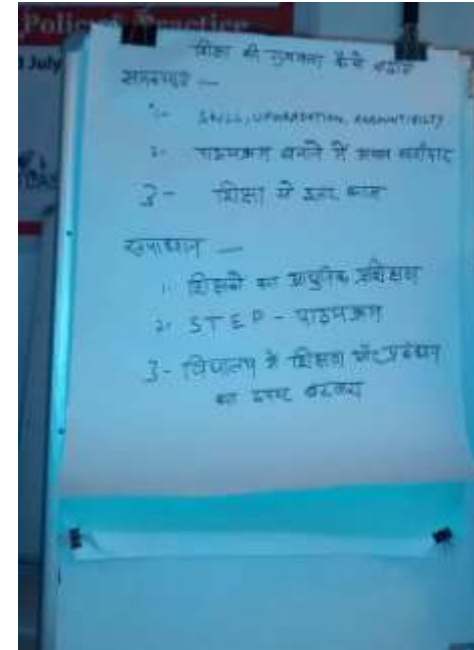
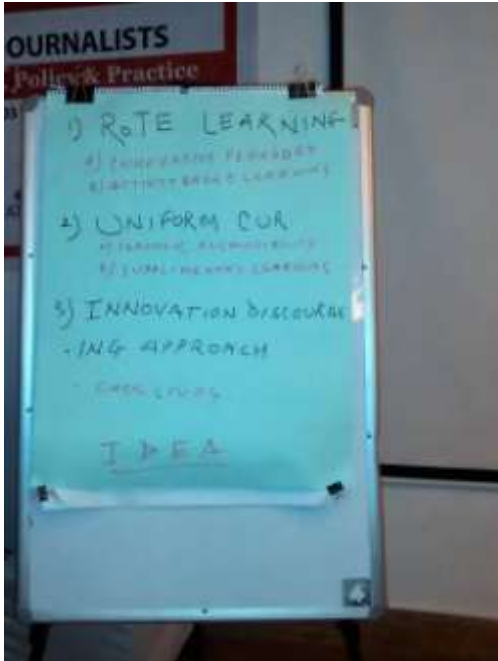
The **Principles** that were ruminated:

- **Fund students, not schools** through the [Voucher system](#) for the simple reason that the guardian of a child will most importantly and rationally spend on his child's education and future;
- **Promote autonomy, not control** so as to determine accountability accordingly;
- **Track outcomes,** not inputs so as to ensure a coherent approach in terms of measurability;
- **Reward performance, not compliance;**
- **Encourage innovation, not conformity**





This exercise also gave resolutions which were reflected in another activity the next day, where contestants were asked to formulate policies based on students, schools' governance and improving learning outcomes.



Student Centric Policy

Problems: Rote learning, Uniform curriculum, Innovation discouraging approach

Solutions: Innovative pedagogy, Activity based learning, Teacher responsibility, Supplementary learning, Case studies (IDEA)

School Education Governance

Problems: Accountability, Bureaucracy, Community involvement

Solutions: Financial power to child, Independent regulator, People participation

Improve Learning Outcome Smart Solution

Problems: Skill, Upgradation, Accountability, Real involvement while drafting curriculum, Education vs administration work

Solutions: Annual workshops for teachers' smart upgradation, STEP- Student/ Teachers/ Experts/ Parents, Clear distinctions between the roles of teachers and administrative work individuals



Other trending topics of discussion were **Principles of Public Policy** and **Social Change and Public Policy**. The journalists were influenced largely by the public policy norms and examples of other laws were cited like [Law of spending](#) to better understand the economics and furthermore which would help the journalists to write and initiate a positive change in the education policy. Some pertinent questions also came up like **why aren't schools listed on stock exchange?** For instance, before 2010,

buying rickshaws and giving them on rent was considered an illegal activity but the ban was lifted and now those rickshaws can be rented out; and that particular individual is now treated as a new entrepreneur, so similar analogy fits for the education sector and primarily for schools where they are accused of running shops.

The last session was dramatized in the form of the popular show 'Aap ki Adalat' where a quick tete-a-tete was conducted with Mr Kulbhushan Sharma, President, National Independent Schools Alliance ([NISA](#)) highlighting the plight of the government and private schools. The schools were imposed with the charge that they run shops at their own will and charge exorbitant fees in the name of uniforms, books and picnics. Donations have become a norm in big schools which is direct result of the demand vs inadequate supply theory. Mr Sharma advocated budget private schools and apprised the journalists that there are over 3-4 lakhs budget private schools in India which charge less money as compared to government schools and operate on thin margins.





The two day workshop ended on a positive note with the participants being given away certificates and literature on education policies. The last game of the workshop too highlighted that an individual can best understand his surroundings and take measurable steps as opposed to the government making decisions and policies for them.
