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CHANGES IN EDUCATIONAL POLICIES: AFFECT ON STUDENTS

ANJALI TRIVEDI
CHAIRPERSON
KARL HUBER SCHOOL
NOIDA

ABSTRACT

One of the major functions of government in any country is to provide a good education system. The Indian constitution in its fundamental rights guarantees all children free and compulsory education till the age of 14. The government plays crucial role in formulating policies both for educational growth for the students as well as training for the teachers. The government formulates the format of the state & central education boards. Most of the changes introduced by the government in power is to bring about improvement in the existing system. The very recent changes brought about in the education system at the school level is the Elimination of class X Board, The new grading system & a compulsory third language in the school. Though not much research has been done in this field but this paper would try to find out from the perspective of the teachers & parents as to how are they affected from this frequently changing government policies & do they think that the performance of students is affected by the frequently changing government policies.

KEYWORDS

X board, mass promotion, grading system, reservation, state board, central board.

INTRODUCTION

Citizens of any country expect some basic reforms by the government in power, one amongst them is the provision of good quality education for their children. Our constitution in its fundamental rights guarantees free and compulsory education to all children till the age of 14. The government plays crucial role in formulating policies both for educational growth of the students as well as training for the teachers.

The government formulates the rules & regulations of the State & Central Education Boards. Most of the changes introduced by the government in power aims at improving the already existing policies. Some are for the improvement but some are unnecessary. It is not necessary to change an already existing Successful program. The government is elected for a period of 5 years. During this period the HRD ministry which is responsible for the Education department tries to introduce new reforms or different technique to do the same task. This confuses the students as well as Parents & Teachers. A feeling of uncertainty grows amongst them. The focus shifts from the actual study, to how the things have to be done. Speculations start whether the existing system is better or the reforms are going to benefit. Another concern is whether the new policy is permanent or is going to change with the change in government.

It cannot be argued that each political party has its own manifesto, which is prepared very seriously to bring about the best for the Education System of the country. Specially now in India when we are rapidly moving towards global recognition in all fields the transformation also has to be dynamic, the students who are the future citizens of our country have to be molded for global competition. Regular changes cannot be avoided. Anything happening Internationally or Nationally has its impact within.

One of the recent change brought about in the education policy was the elimination of Class 10TH Board & introduction of Grading System. The policy introduced by the HRD ministry in the year 2011 made it optional for the students to opt for/not for the board examinations. Great uncertainty & chaos was witnessed in the schools as to what was to be followed. With the formation of a new government in 2014 it was proposed to bring back the class X Board examinations from the following session (2017-2018). Again a sense of dismay amongst the parents & students was witnessed.

CBSE in 2011-12 had introduced the Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) system in which the Board Exams were made optional. This was done to relieve students from the fear and stress of Board Exams. It was left to the students whether they wanted to sit for these exams or opt for the school-based exam program. In 2012-13, the school-based program was made compulsory for all the students. Initial response towards this change was lukewarm, as less than 10% of students from Andhra Pradesh had opted for CCE and the rest sat for Board Exams. However, this percentage had gone up to 40% in the next year with more students opting for the CCE system. Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has ensured that to do a fair evaluation, answer sheets from various schools will be randomly checked and the question papers will be provided by the CBSE. It is just the evaluation that has been left to the schools, not the entire exam. The main motive to eliminate the board exams was to lower the stress level of students as increasing number of suicides by the students were being reported. However, there were other ways to find a solution to this problem, students should be taught to handle stress rather than expecting just the extreme. They should learn the value of time management, benefits of early exam preparation and scheduling rather than agonizing over Board Exams. The competitive streak which they will have to face later in life have to be induced in them at this level. Research has showed that not many students, parents & schools were in favor of this change. Abolition of Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) Grading System, introduced by CBSE in 2009, was pointed out by the students as they feel that the new system is more stressful, discourages innovation and promotes laid back attitude. As per the students, Board Exams were like the final judgment point for which they had put in genuine efforts and looked forward to the results. But now it is like any class test and not taken seriously. Students are also of the opinion that it is 'unfair' to put both bright and average students within the range of 10 percent in grades. Another controversial concept is that of the grading system in schools where the results are in the form of Grades. CBSE has introduced new grading pattern for class X students. It has nine grades. The highest is A1 with a grade point of 10 and a marks range of 91- 100%. Second grade is A2 with a grade point of 9 and marks in the range of 81-90%. Third grade is B1 with grade point of 8 and a marks range of 71-80%. The fourth grade is B2 with a grade point of 7 and marks range of 61-70%. Fifth grade is C1 with grade point of 6 and marks range of 51-60%. C2 is the sixth grade with grade point of 5 and marks range of 41-50%. D is the seventh grade with 4 grade points and marks range of 33-40%. E1 and E2 are the last two grades. Grading system based on continuous and comprehensive evaluation (CCE) is done in two terms (April-September, October-March). In a year, the school will conduct four formative and two summative assessments. The New Scheme of Grading has been introduced with the aim that:

- It will minimize classification of students on the basis of marks.
- It will eliminate unhealthy competition among high achievers.
- It will reduce societal pressure and will provide the learner with more flexibility.
- It will lead to a focus on a better learning environment.
- It will facilitate joyful and stress free learning.

The nine-point scale grading system will require students to get qualifying grades in four of the five subjects to get promoted to the next level. It had been decided not to carry pass or fail on the mark sheets of students, who will have four options to improve on their grades within a period of two years from their exam. The grading system will adopt a five-point scale, which means awarding students grades from A to E. This will eliminate the schools from showing raw scores on the evaluation report of each student. Mass promotion till class 8th is another feature which has been introduced in schools. Detention of students is discouraged in order to save the students from embarrassment or any form of psychological concern. This again results in an easy way out for the students & has adverse effect on them. These are few critical problems faced by the students & parents which affects the studies & causes confusion in the learning & performing pattern of the students. The consistency is not maintained & with each change in government doubts regarding change in polices create an environment of uncertainty & confusion. Recently, the government has proposed to start skill development for the students in which the students, who are not interested in studies will be encouraged to take up any skill based program in the school. The idea behind this is to prevent the students from wasting their time on the subject that they do not want to learn, instead focus on what they want to do later in life.

Here again a very careful planning is required to implement this new concept in schools. A format similar to the provision of sports quota, used during admission in graduation has to be formulated as the skill-based learning should have weightage at the higher level of education too. The government's role in recruiting teachers in schools has recently been criticized in many states. Many scams in recent days have disclosed the various loopholes in the process of recruitment which is not based on merit. This has resulted in untrained & inefficient teachers in the schools. The government has to take serious steps towards the recruitment of the teachers & has to make the recruitment process more transparent. Moreover, the inclusion of contract teachers in the rural areas is also an area of concern as imparting education by untrained teachers is disastrous for the students. On the other hand, the contract teachers recruited for a small period do not have any job security as well as recognition. A more recent topic taken up by the HRD ministry was to make it mandatory for the government officers to enroll their children in government schools. The proposal has received criticism from the officials because in comparison the infrastructure of the government schools is very poor. The government on the other hand wants to promote studies in government schools. All the above-mentioned problems are of serious nature the occurrence of which affect the students their parents & also create confusion amongst the school administration in the correct functioning of the schools. Finland is an innovative country when it comes to education. It is counted as one of the best education system in the world, and its innovation yields results. Education does not believe in regular examinations rather it conducts exams only once. Finnish critics claim constant testing doesn't make students any smarter but instead creates a "teaching to the test" environment in schools. The test known as "National Matriculation Examination" is taken at the end of high school & is graded by the teachers. The Finnish Government has some interesting & innovative policies which is to bring about equality amongst the students by having only public schools, uniformity in education with no examinations & better pay scales for teachers with less number of teaching hours has made the model very successful.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The research by Rajshree & Kumar (2013)¹ focuses on the grading system or ranking system versus the numerical marking of the results in the schools. It traces the marking system & its adequacies. The study reveals that the evaluation system lays an effect over the students on the level of examination stress¹. The numerical marking system (traditional system) has a direct effect on the examination stress of the students. Whereas on the contrary the grading system of evaluation puts minimum examination stress, and thus, the students can perform better and yields best results¹. A research by Mallikarjun (2001)² focuses on a discussion on the National Curriculum Framework for School Education in relation to the teaching of languages in Indian schools. Parent's perception is included in the discussion most of them are concerned about the number of languages being taught and the stage at which they are introduced in the school. Some others question why children should learn more languages. They feel strongly that learning one or two languages is more than enough. They feel that in their effort to learn more languages, the students are not learning any language properly since they have to concentrate on several languages and many subjects at the same time². Need of the day according to Anthony (2016)³ is that instead of glamorizing a formula that eludes effective implementation, a formula that has proven to be non-practicable, a viable alternative to the three language formula for language education in the school curriculum should be worked out. The CBSE insists that the third language to be included in the syllabus must be an Indian language rather than popular foreign languages³. According to the Board, the syllabus should include English, Hindi, and an Indian language, while foreign language should be the fourth, optional language subject for Class X board exams. The contention behind the CBSE's new policy is that many parents prefer their children learning foreign languages like French and German over regional languages like Marathi. This is so that their children will be equipped to participate on an international stage. The government's bid to downgrade foreign languages and upgrade Indian languages has however, not gone down well with the parents³. Another article on government policies impact⁴ discuss in detail the current education policies in India. How the frequent changes in the government policies affect the students & parents⁴. This report further covers the main government initiatives since independence and also provides a comparative study of the major Indian national boards of school education with global ones such as the International Baccalaureate and the Cambridge International Examinations.

NEED FOR THIS STUDY

This study underlines the area of how Government's intervention in the field of Education affects the performance of students. It tries to understand whether all the reforms or policies implemented by the government are beneficial for the students. Intensive Research has been done both nationally as well as Internationally regarding this topic, however this paper would carry forward the existing research & focus on the perspective of the Teachers & Parents as to what are their views on the frequent changes in the government policies on the students/children.

OBJECTIVES

1. To find out the views of Parents & Teachers regarding frequent changes in the Government policies.
2. To find out whether the frequent changes in the government policies affect the studies of the students.

METHODOLOGY

The Primary Data has been collected in the year 2016 from 86 qualified schools Teachers & 74 Parents. The Teachers were from Private as well as Government schools (both Rural & Urban). The Parents too were of the children from the same school where these teachers were teaching. The Parents & Teachers children/students were from secondary & senior secondary classes. A close-ended Questionnaire was handed over to them and they were asked to respond to the questions with the options provided to them.

DATA ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION

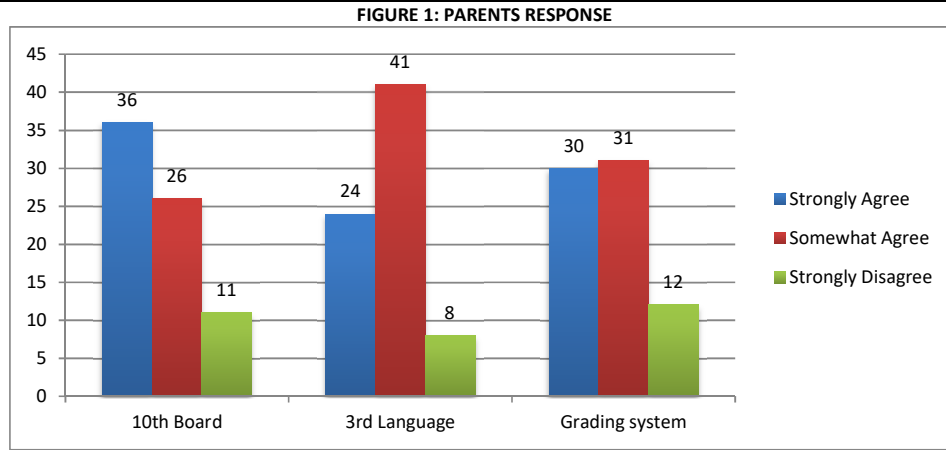
PARENTS RESPONSE

The Parents were asked three questions & were asked to rate their answers under three categories, "Strongly Agree", "Somewhat Agree" and "Strongly Disagree". The focus was on the view whether the changing Government policies were affecting the studies of the children. In the first question the Parents were asked what were their views on the Elimination of class X Board exams. Maximum number of Parents (36/74) **Strongly Agreed** that the Elimination of Class X Board exams was affecting the studies of their children. In the **Second question** the Parents were asked whether they agreed that compulsory third language should be a part of school curriculum? Maximum number of Parents (41/74) **somewhat Agreed** to the fact that third language should be a part of school curriculum. In the **final question** it was asked from the Parents whether their children were affected by the introduction of grading system? Maximum number (31/74) **Somewhat Agreed** & accepted that their children were affected by this change. In fact, (30/74) **Strongly Agreed** that grading system was not popular with the students. If we see in totality, majority of Parents have agreed to the fact that grading system has definitely affected the performance of their children in studies.

TABLE 1: PARENTS RESPONSE TO CHANGING GOVERNMENT POLICIES

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Disagree
Elimination of class 10 th Board	36	26	11
Compulsory 3 rd Language	24	41	8
Grading system	30	31	12

Source: Primary Data



Source: Primary Data

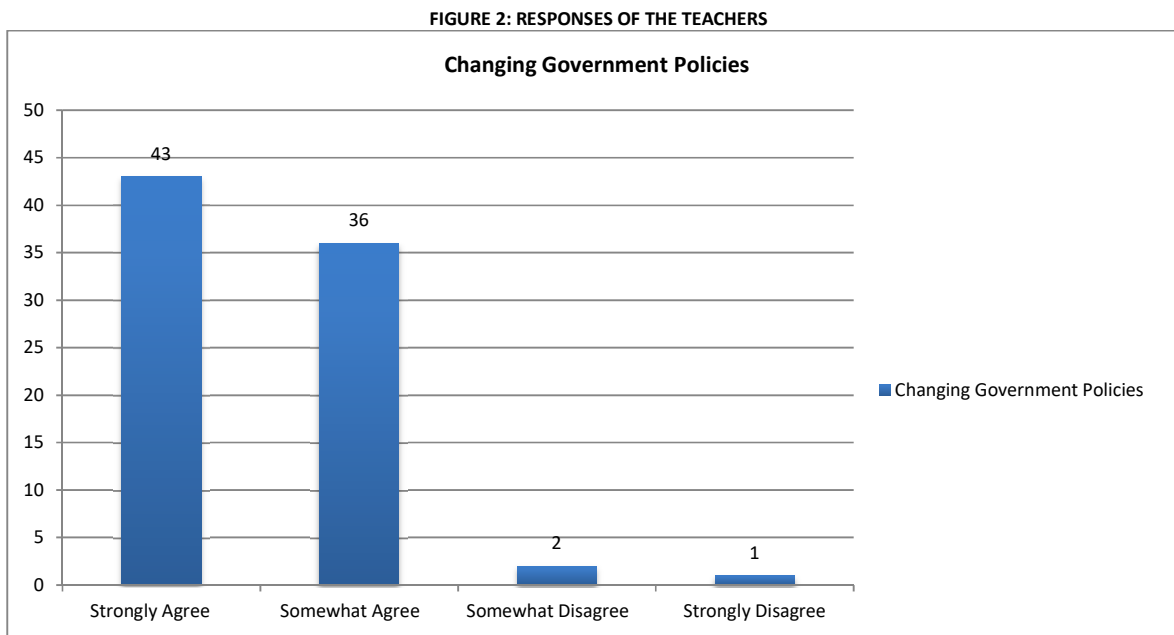
TEACHERS RESPONSE

The Teachers were directly asked whether they felt that frequently changing Government policies affect the Students in their studies? They were asked to rate their choice in the following categories:

TABLE 2

Category	Response
Strongly Agree	43
Somewhat Agree	36
Somewhat Disagree	2
Strongly Disagree	1

Maximum number of teachers **Strongly Agreed** that the changing Government policies affected in the performance & studies of the students.



Source: Primary Data

SUGGESTIONS

This survey was done keeping in mind the views of the parents as well as teachers. It can be assumed that like the parents & teachers the students are also bound to be affected by the constant changes in the educational policies. The school management again is uncertain & is bound by the education policies & the guidelines laid down by the board. It is not necessary for every new government to bring about changes or modify the process of education. Changes should be brought about only where required. Some traditional existing policies may be beneficial to the students. Before introducing any major changes, the government should keep in mind how it would affect the students. Similarly, frequent changes in the same policies are not welcomed by the parents, teachers & schools alike.

CHANGES, WHICH AFFECTED THE PARENTS & TEACHERS

- Elimination of class X Board:** This was one of the milestone change in the new education policy of the country which affected the students aversely. Not many students, parents & teachers are in favor of this elimination. There was a suggestion made by the current government to revert back to the old policy & start with class X board but it was declined. However, now it has been decided to go back to the old format. Elimination of class X board had created a confusing scenario, the students had the option to sit for boards or not, the schools were to be prepared for both the options; some schools had opted for open book examinations. This has resulted in a non-serious attitude of the students at the High School level.
- Grading system:** Yet another decision by the education ministry was to introduce grading system under which the students were graded rather than being given marks in percentage. This has killed the competition streak in the students. Having a competitive streak is a very positive quality in a student for the future where the fate of getting admission in college defers from a single percentage. Grading system is not justified & not many parents were in favor of this technique.

3. **Compulsory Third Language:** The Parents during the survey were strongly affected by the introduction of compulsory third language. There are also talks going on about the introduction of Sanskrit as a compulsory subject. India is a country with many languages; every region or state has its own language, which forms the mother tongue of the students. The state Government focuses that the regional language should be definitely taught to the students, second comes the National Language Hindi. All students are expected to learn this language in school. In some states it is mandatory to study Hindi along with the Regional Language. The point of conflict came when it was proposed to make Sanskrit a compulsory third language. The parents objected to it and suggested that any foreign language like French, German, Spanish, Chinese or Russian is going to be more beneficial for the students in future. This was a fairly good suggestion as Sanskrit could be introduced as an option along with other foreign languages & those students who desired to study Sanskrit could opt for it.

WHAT IS EXPECTED OUT OF THE GOVERNMENT POLICIES

- The government policies should be firm & constructive.
- Focus should be on developing the government schools, its Infrastructure & should be brought at par with the private schools.
- The gap between the government schools & private schools should be narrowed.
- Strict check should be maintained to see whether the board guidelines are being followed or not.
- Teachers in house training should be monitored.
- Better salaries for the teaching staff.
- Better conditions & status for para-teachers.
- A model should be created for the schools not performing well to restructure their functioning.
- Mentoring of government schools by the private schools-exchange programs for teachers & students both.

Government is already running successful schools/schemes like the Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya, Kendriya Vidyalaya, Vidyalaya Sangathan etc. Apart from this the government is also supervising the working of certain religion based schools like the Madrasas, Christian schools or other religion or region based schools. The government does not have much control over them but can still keep a strict vigil on these schools, to maintain the harmony in the country.

CONCLUSION

The above study gave the views of the parents & teachers on the affect that the government policies have on the students. It is not only difficult for the parents & students to frequently adjust to these reforms but is problematic for the teachers also who have to understand & adjust themselves to the changes. Other problem is faced by the school management who have to be continuously in touch with the changing format. This not only is responsible of loss of manpower & resources but it is very difficult to change the data frequently & train the staff both administrative as well as teaching to go along with the new trend. As far as possible the Government should introduce reforms to better the already existing policies. A complete elimination that too during the mid-session creates confusion & panic amongst everyone from the students to the staff. It is certainly important to keep in pace with the education system globally, but whatever good format/policy is being followed should be continued. Indian education system has been excepted & appreciated globally specially in Science, Maths & Technology. We should try to keep up this reputation. The Government should focus only on the reforms which are essential, globally in demand & do constructive work in the already existing policies.

LIMITATIONS

The limitations of this study is that the point of view of the students has not been considered. The reason was that the performance of the students could not be self-analyzed but it was considered from the point of view of the parents & teachers. The second limitation was that the area covered regarding government intervention was only the issue of elimination of class X board, compulsory third language & grading system. The study could have broadened its view and included topics like reservation, mass promotion etc. However, it was felt that the topic of reservation was of direct influence for students in higher education at university level. Similarly, the topic of mass promotion was directly related to students at Primary & Elementary level while the samples of our survey were parents & teachers from Secondary & Senior Secondary level.

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