



PROGRESS OF EDUCATION SYSTEM IN INDIA: AN APPRAISAL THROUGH THE NATIONAL POLICIES ON EDUCATION

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Abstract

Human capital of a country constitute the major weapon for reaching the development targets set by the country's development agenda, of which education acquires the top priority as education is the sole factor that is capable of turning the unutilized and unnoticed capabilities of individuals into real life skills and competency. India has a long tradition that is characterized by sincere efforts to develop the human capital possibilities through careful and purposeful educational interventions right from the primary stages. Those interventions are underwired by the various national policies implemented in the country which intended to attain the Sustainable Development Goal to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" by 2030.

Keywords: *Human capital, education, Sustainable Development Goal.*

Introduction

A country's development propaganda is led by the education sector of that country. The education sector, particularly the elementary education sector, is the most determining area in which the growth of bottom-up approach of development find the real roots. Investment in education is considered as one of the most productive form of investment in human capital since the real returns of that investment will be realized after a lag of considerable years. The importance of education for all cannot be overemphasised as it is the foundation of every individual and society's development. As remarked by Dr. A.P.J Abdul Kalam – 'Learning gives creativity, creativity leads to thinking, thinking leads to knowledge, and knowledge makes you great !'.

India had always been in the forefront in developing a favourable education experience for the children right from the elementary stages. Since elementary stage of education is the most crucial phase in overall development of a child's personality, adequate care had been provided for that stage in every educational policies framed and implemented by the government. The educational policies were very much influential in creating a positive environment in educational institutions of the country.

History of National Policies on Education in India

The **National Policy on Education (NPE)** is a policy formulated by the Government of India to promote and regulate education in India. The policy covers elementary education to higher education in both rural and urban India. The first NPE was launched by the Government of India by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1968, the second by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1986, and the third by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2020.

Since Independence, one of the crux area of the development agenda of the government was removal of illiteracy in the country, particularly in rural areas. The first education minister of India, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, laid great stress on having a profound control of Central government over the education sector, with a uniform educational system. There were a number of education commissions set up by the government in order to develop proposals that could help in modernising the education stream of the country which included the University Education Commission (1948–1949), the Secondary Education Commission (1952–1953), University Grants Commission and the Kothari Commission (1964–66). The government led by Jawaharlal Nehru irrevocably advocated and enacted the Resolution of Scientific Policy as the base of education. The modern vision of the then government reflected in the foundation of the first IIT in the country at Kharagpur in 1951. The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) was formed in 1961 as an autonomous organisation entrusted with advising both the Union and state governments on formulating and implementing education policies.

National Policy on Education, 1968

An ad-hoc committee under the chairmanship of D S Kothari was formed in 1964, which was the very first commission mandated to present an evaluative picture of the educational sector of the country. It had almost 19 working groups that worked hard to bring about the significant document of the education sector. The main objective of the committee was to bring about reforms in the traditional Indian education system. The commission had recommendations with regard to syllabus, curriculum, women education, physical education, methods of teaching, training programmes, and defects of the then education system, teacher education and adult education, enrolment in primary education as well as higher education.

The National Policy on Education 1968, was formulated in accordance with the recommendations of Kothari Commission. The policy called for a "radical restructuring" of the present education system and proposed equal educational opportunities in order to achieve national integration and greater cultural and economic development. Free and compulsory education was envisaged to be accessible to all children of elementary stage. The Policy called for adoption of *three language formula* in which English, Hindi and regional

languages are to be taught. The policy demanded for better training facilities to be provided to teachers so that it gets reflected in the betterment of quality of education. Separate focus was laid on equalisation of educational opportunities, identification of talents, work experience and national service, promotion of science education and research, education for better understanding of agriculture and industry, standardising of examinations, space for part time courses and vocational courses and spreading of adult literacy programmes.

National Policy on Education, 1986

The second attempt to revitalize the education sector of the country was the National Policy on Education, launched in 1986 by the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. This policy had a focused approach on tackling the major issues in Indian education sector including disparities faced by women, SC/ST and minorities. Aiming at social integration, the policy had provisions for extending the number of scholarships, more pragmatic steps to popularize adult education, provision of incentives for families who belong to deprived class so that they could send their children to schools, establishment of new schools and development of existing institutions. It was in this policy time that the theme of *child centred approach* was popularised. *Operation Blackboard* was also launched in this period to revitalize the primary education sector of the country. The policy clearly laid emphasis on the access issue of school children throughout the country. The common educational structure of 10+2+3 was to be accepted by all the states and should act accordingly. Vocationalisation of education was given top priority in the NPE 1986. The necessary teaching learning materials were to be provided to the schools through the *Operation Blackboard* scheme. Modernization of education through improved use of computers and IT equipments in schools formed a major component in the policy prescriptions. In July 1991, CABE (Central Advisory Board of Education) was established to organize all education development programmes under one head. The Programme of Action (PoA) 1992 was enacted so as to implement the major measures of educational development among which a major change launched was the delinking of plus two from college level to schools. The policy also demanded to the government to allocate 6 % of the GDP to be earmarked for education.

Major initiatives in Indian education sector after 1986

- ❖ Operation Blackboard (1987)
- ❖ Teacher Education Scheme (1987)
- ❖ District Primary Education Programme (DPEP- 1994)
- ❖ National Mid – day Meal Scheme (1995)
- ❖ Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (2001)
- ❖ 86th Constitutional Amendment Act (2002)
- ❖ Right to Education Act (2009)
- ❖ National Education Policy (2020)

National Education Policy, 2020

The Committee for Draft National Educational Policy headed by Dr. K. Kasturirangan, former chairman of the ISRO prepared and submitted the latest National Policy on Education which was approved by the Government of India on July 2020. The National Education Policy document is composed of School Education (Part I); Higher Education (Part II); 'Other Key Areas of Focus' (Part III) such as adult education, promoting Indian languages and online education; and 'Making it Happen' (Part IV), which discusses the implementation strategy of the policy.

Major features of the National Education Policy, 2020

There are four outstanding pillars of the NEP 2020 which are access, equity, quality and accountability.

The most important features of the NEP 2020 are as follows:

- ❖ The whole education structure is to be restructured as a new 5+3+3+4 pattern with a 'Foundational Stage' (five years), a 'Preparatory Stage' (three years), a 'Middle Stage' (three years) and the 'High Stage' (four years, covering grades nine, 10, 11 and 12).
- ❖ A National Mission on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy was launched to achieve the goal of universal foundational literacy and numeracy in all primary schools by 2025.
- ❖ There shall be assessment and accreditation of public schools and private schools based on uniform criteria and benchmarks.
- ❖ The Gross Enrolment Ratio; which can be defined as the ratio of the total enrolment in education to the official population in a given school year, expressed in terms of percentage; from pre-school to secondary level to be increased to 100 per cent by 2030.
- ❖ Adequate measures to be taken up by the respective state governments to prevent the drop out ratio of the students and to provide opportunities to re-join the institution if found so.
- ❖ The medium of transaction shall be mother tongue or the regional language at least until grade 5 so as to ensure effective transaction of the curriculum to the students. The *three language formula* shall be continued in in schools where two of the three languages remain native to India.
- ❖ A Gender Inclusion Fund is to be constituted to protect the rights of girls and transgender community to free and compulsory education. The fund amount shall be dispersed to the state governments in order to implement the measures suggested by the central government including setting up of toilets and sanitation facilities, cash transfers etc.
- ❖ A cluster based approach is to be followed while setting up the school complexes in a radius of 5 km to 10 km. Such centres shall be the guiding lights of development of those areas.
- ❖ Common standards of administration shall be followed by each education institution with a not-for-profit aim. Generation of any types of surpluses shall be reinvested in the education sector itself.
- ❖ All the higher education institutions shall aim to become multidisplinary institutions by 2040. It is expected that every district shall have at least one multidisplinary higher education institution inside or nearby the geographical boundary by 2030.

- ❖ The duration of the UG degree courses shall be 4 years which shall be highly holistic and flexible. Permission of exit from the course shall also be permitted. There are two parts of the 4 year degree program; the first part comprising of 2 years focusing on the broad-based education in which students have the freedom to choose their subjects based on the interests and aptitude. This part mainly focus on skill development and vocationalized education that help them to acquire soft skills and professional ethics that would help them in job market. The second part mainly focus on the specialised major programmes chosen by the students. In-depth knowledge of the chosen subject and expertise in the selected area of study will be the prominent aspect of this part. Practical training, internship facilities, hands-on experience in projects etc. make this part highly attractive for students.
- ❖ The PG program shall also witness changes in which the 1 year PG program shall be a research based one with students getting the opportunity to understand about the new developments in their fields of research, while the 2 year PG program shall be a more specialized one aiming to provide research training as well as practical experience in the selected research area.
- ❖ The policy aims to improve the Gross Enrolment Ratio in higher education by 50 per cent by 2035 from the current rate of 26.3 per cent.
- ❖ Several benefits are expected to generate through the implementation of the NEP 2020 in higher education which include multidisciplinary education, academic flexibility, practical training, industry oriented relevant curriculum, proper research orientation, higher chances for employability and international recognition of courses.
- ❖ A coordinated effort is envisaged which will bring together the central government and state governments in increasing the public investment in education that will end up in an allocation of 6 per cent of GDP to the education sector.

Conclusion

There is a long trail in history with regards to efforts taken by the Government of India to universalize education by removing all sorts of barriers and disparities. All those efforts had common elements in their framework which include avoidance of inequality, solving the access issues, quality education for all and improved infrastructure. Through the various national policies aimed at improving the educational strata of the country, there has been a remarkable improvement in the literacy rates and educational attainment of children. In higher education also considerable interferences from the side of government had made positive repercussions. The new National Education Policy 2020 is the latest addition to the concentrated efforts by the government to revitalize education sector of the country. The reforms brought about by the national policies on education aim to modernize the education system of the country, to transform the existing syllabus and curriculum reach international standards, to make pupils capable to compete in the job markets, and to inculcate values that would turn them to capable human beings.

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