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The New Education Policy, 2020 and the future of Indian Education

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ABSTRACT :

"Education is simply the soul of a society as it passes from one generation to another"- G. K. Chesterton. Education plays a very pivotal role in the development of a person in particular and society in general. It can provide enough opportunities to the people and open the windows for prospects. As Helen Keller said "a well-educated mind will always have more questions than answers", education helps to develop new ideas in our minds which are key that are key for innovations. The growth and development of a nation or society heavily rely on education so the policy-making body always attempts to increase the literacy rate. A literate society is very much necessary for a nation to become economically, politically, scientifically, or intellectually powerful. So the education system of a nation is indeed a determining factor behind its success. India is a developing country having a massive amount of issues it has witnessed since its independence. As per the provision of the constitution and abiding by the principle of a welfare nation, several Governments have been trying to eradicate those issues by taking necessary steps to ensure a good livelihood for its citizens to make a better India for the near future. Likewise, the Government of India also brought several reforms in the education sector by initiating several educational policies at different points in time. Those were all aimed at bringing structural and other changes to the education system in the country. After 34 long years, the Central Government has once again brought a huge amendment to the Indian education system by the introduction of the New Education Policy, 2020 which aims to revamp all aspects of the Indian education structure, to create a new system that is aligned with the aspirational goals of 21st-century education, while remaining consistent with India's traditions and values. The policy is based on five pillars; access, equity, accountability, affordability, and quality and is expected to transform India into a vibrant knowledge hub and prepare the Indian students to compete at the global level. This paper will analyze the key aspects of the New Education Policy, 2020, and try to critically examine the prospects and challenges which are purely based on the study of secondary literature and data.

KEY-WORDS: Education, Educational Reform, Information-technology, New Education Policy, Digital Education, Equity.

INTRODUCTION :

Education plays a very powerful role in changing the society which is the key to building a nation and decides the fate of the people. Education can drive a nation towards the path of development and indeed contribute to its overall growth. Any society can bring change if its people are literate enough and aware to examine the workings of the governmental authority and also criticize the things that are against the interest of the people if needed. Education can only bring socio-economic upliftment to the people by eradicating issues like poverty, unemployment, poor public health, etc, and can be the most powerful weapon that molds the whole society. Any society which is below the minimum level of literacy will never witness empowerment. The growth of a nation and its proper utilization of human resources and its progress heavily relies on the education system it follows. The western developed countries have given importance to an education system mostly driven by the information-technology and skill-based inclusive education they have arranged in such a way they can use their technology, infrastructures, most importantly their human resources to the maximum level of productivity and encourage them to engage more in innovative and creative works. Hence these countries have seen major progress in each field and have become economically, militarily, or technologically strong and rich among all. A good and quality education leads to a better lifestyle with higher standards of living. It has the potential to transform a person's outlook and provide a perspective to see their lives from a different view. Educated kids today will develop a very civilized and moral society tomorrow. India is a developing country having too many challenges which are yet to be solved. It is a country with abundant natural and human resources and can become one of the most powerful countries shortly. Just what India needs to do is utilize its resources to the best possible by making a system familiar to the ICT-dominated world of today. Then the country will overcome those challenges before it and move towards the developmental path. Although the literacy rate of the country has been rapidly increasing since the independence and India has contributed its human resources very remarkably to each field, the education system is! still proved to be inadequate to compete at the global level. It needs to be reformed as much as earlier complying with the global aspirations so that India would be able to create such a knowledge society that will play a leading role in the world and prepare the students to face any challenge before them. Keeping because of this fact, the Government of India has come out to remodel and upgrade the whole education system by implementing the New Education Policy, 2020.

INDIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM AND EDUCATIONAL REFORMS :

India is a country having the richest history of education from the very ancient period. It was in the early period Gurukul system of education was followed in the Vaidik society. The education system continued for a long period. Although no major changes took place during the medieval era of the Mughal reign in India however the entry of European colonizers paved the way for western liberal education in the country. India witnessed a vast number of educational reforms during the colonial period under the hand of the Britishers. The Charter Act of 1813 was the first step by the Colonial Government that made education an objective of the Government. “Wood’s Dispatch of 1854” is considered to be the “Magna Carta” of English education in India contained a comprehensive plan for spreading education in India which popularised western liberal education in the country by recommending English as the medium of instruction for higher studies and Vernacular at school level. Later, the Hunter Commission of 1882-83 outlined the state’s role in promoting primary and secondary education in India. It also recommended two divisions of secondary education- literary up to University and vocational education for a commercial career.

Right after the independence, the constitution of India was enacted by the constituent assembly that includes some major provisions regarding education in the country to achieve national progress and human development. Article 45 of the directive principle of state policy enumerates “ the state shall endeavor to provide within ten years from the commencement of the constitution, free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years. Article 30 of the constitution relates to certain cultural and educational rights to establish and administer educational institutions. Article 15, 17, and 46 of the Indian constitution safeguards the educational interests of the weaker sections of the Indian community who belong to socially and educationally backward classes of citizens so that education will not be the privilege of the rich class. Under Article 42 of the constitution of India, an amendment was made in 1976 by which education was made a subject of the concurrent list which enables both the Central and State governments to legislate the Acts in the manner suited to it. In the post-independence period, India has undergone significant changes in the education sector through the adoption of several commissions, policies, and so on. The first education minister of independent India MoulanaAbulKalam Azad took significant steps in education that strengthened the Union Government to control the education system in the country. They sought to centralize the whole education system by constituting University Grant Commission, University Education Commission (1948-49), and the Secondary Education Commission (1952-53). The Central Government also appointed Kothari Commission in the year 1964 to develop proposals and modernize India’s education system. The Nehru government initiated the development of high-quality scientific-educational institutes such as the Indian Institute of Technology. The foundation of NCERT in 1961 as an autonomous organization that would advise both the Union and State Government in the formulation and implementation of education policies was also a landmark beginning in the history of educational reform in the post-independence period.

The first National Education Policy was brought in the year 1968 by the Indira Gandhi Government after the recommendation of the Kothari Commission (1964-66). The National Policy, 1968 called for a “radical restructuring” and proposed equal educational opportunities intending to achieve greater cultural and economic development. The policy made compulsory education for all the children up to the age of 14 as envisaged in the constitution and specialized training and qualifications of teachers. The policy called for the implementation of the “three language formula” in secondary education- English, the official regional language of the concerned state, and Hindi as the common language for all Indians to achieve greater integration among the people. Besides, the NEP also encouraged Sanskrit to be taught in schools as the language is an integral part of our culture and heritage. The National Education Policy, of 1968 was intended towards facilitating all sections of people belonging to each corner of the country promoting equal opportunities for education among all the people. It tried to increase educational spending by up to 6% of the national income. In the year 1986, Rajiv Gandhi led Congress Government introduced a new education policy that emphasized the removal of disparities in education by giving importance socially backward class sections of people like women, scheduled tribe, scheduled caste, etc. The basic objectives of this new National Education Policy were building new educational institutes and providing housing and services, expanding scholarships, financial support to poor families to send their children to schools, etc. The National Education Policy, 1986 was based on a “child-centered approach” to primary education and launched a new scheme called “operation blackboard”. The creation of the Indira Gandhi National Open University in 1985 was also a landmark beginning that expanded the scope of open learning in India and the national education policy further extended the system. As Mahatma Gandhi dreamt of a strong village with socio-economic, cultural, and moral development from the grass-root level, especially in rural India, the policy went a step forward to achieve such purposes with the concept of “rural university” in India. Again the policy was modified in 1992 by P. V. Narasimha Rao-led Government. The Government adopted a program of action in 1992 under the National Education Policy, 1986 which envisaged conducting a

common entrance examination for professional and technical courses in the country. The Government of India brought a resolution in 2001 through which JEE and AIEEE for central-level institutions and a state-level Engineering entrance exam for admission into state-level institutions were introduced. This innovative idea in professional education solves the overlap problems and reduces the physical, mental, and financial burdens on students and their parents due to the multiplicity of entrance examinations.

NEW EDUCATION POLICY, 2020 :

As time changes, the need of the people also changes accordingly and it is the eternal and unwavering reality of the universe. No society can escape from the process of change so a variety of changes have taken place from time to time with new demands and needs. Indian society has also seen several changes in almost every field in different periods till today. The massive impact of globalization and the advancement of science and information technology has a huge impact on developing countries like India. To address global needs, India had to make certain structural changes to facilitate the process of rapid development. Education is the key to the development of any society so if India expects rapid overall growth and to become a powerhouse of knowledge and information technology, the education system is the first to be changed through necessary policy-making and proper arrangements. Education should be the priority of any country or any form of government and its importance in socio-economic development must be realized. India is on the verge of reforming the education system once again after 34 years and is going to implement the new education policy of 2020 with certain purposes for the near future. Keeping in view the development objective of the country, the government of India decided to appoint a committee in 2017 under the chairmanship of K. K. Kasturirangan to formulate a new education policy. The committee drafted the NEP in 2019 and after a year it was approved by the central government. It was also clarified under the new education policy that the Ministry of Human Resource Development will be renamed “Ministry of Education” once again after 34 years.

The New Education Policy has focused on the need for a knowledge-based economy in the changing global scenario of today. The main principles behind the formulation of the policy are to enhance the quality of education, promote research and innovation, and ensure global access to the Indian education system which is pathbreaking and has a futuristic approach. The New Education Policy has brought a structural change to the Indian education system which called for replacing the earlier 10+2 formula with 5+3+3+4. It has been made mandatory for all the Government and non-government institutions to follow the new education policy. Four stages of school education are envisaged under the new education policy A) Foundation stage which includes 3 years of Anganwadi up to class 2. B) Preparatory stage begins from class 3 to class 8 that includes children from 8 to 12 years of age. In this stage, special attention will be given to strengthening the numerical skills of the students. Knowledge of regional language will be given to children at this age. C) Middle stage includes the children from class 8 to class 12 where the primary focus will be on teaching subject-based curriculum and also coding. Students will be facilitated the vocational training and internships during this stage to make them eligible for employment only during school education. D) The last stage of school education, the Secondary stage begins from the class 9th standard till 12th standard. The students will be taught all the subjects and alternative courses. Students can choose their preferred subjects and not within a specified stream whereas the existing system restricts students within a specified stream. Now it will depend on their choice that they can study subjects of Arts, Science and Commerce simultaneously. The New Education Policy underlines that the examination of students will be conducted by the board twice a year and it would cover both multiple-choice and descriptive patterns of questions to test the knowledge of the students. A National Assessment Center will be established to assess the credits and

marks of the students and an Artificial Intelligence software will be developed to evaluate the progress of the students.

The New Education Policy tries to outlook the Indian education system through an experimental dimension right from the root level. It aims to make the children realize their inner potential from the very beginning. It paves the way for students to think about their future in varied fields and to achieve this objective education system will facilitate students in such a way that will enhance their capabilities and generate multiple employment opportunities with a view to proper utilization of human resources for the upcoming future. In terms of primary and secondary education, the policy is going to introduce vocational training and skill-based courses in the schools in which students can build their careers. The introduction of courses like Information-technology in schools is aimed at assisting students with technical education and knowledge of using digital devices from the early stage that will help students to meet with the future perspectives and orientations. Moreover, the New Education Policy, 2020 prioritizes subjects like Fine Arts, Sports, Music, Art & crafts to be introduced in all Govt. and Private schools with a futuristic objective of entrepreneurship development in the country. The last secondary stage of school education to be flexible to such an extent that the students unlike the earlier system, will not be restricted within the specified stream rather they will be allowed to study varied subjects of different streams in the same course. It will help students to build a multi-dimensional perspective of their minds with the knowledge of different fields. The assessment procedure of the students' credits or marks is supposed to be an organized one with the evaluation of the overall progress of a particular student such as numerical skills, logical reasoning, mental ability, analytical strength, extracurricular activities, technical knowledge, moral strength, etc. The policy is intended for remodeling the traditional marks-oriented approach and incomprehensible evaluation process of the Indian education system that hardly fulfills the needs of the 21st century and for bringing necessary measures to modernize the education with a global perspective of making students prepare to compete in the global stage. The target of investment of the Central Government and the State Governments has been also been set for the New Education Policy, 2020 in which both Governments will invest 6% of the GDP of the country in the education sector which is currently 4.43%.

In the higher education sector, the New Education Policy has targeted to increase the gross enrolment ratio up to 50% from the current 26.3% and more than 3 crores of new seats will be added to the higher educational institutions. A National Higher Education Commission will be set up in the country which is going to replace the existing UGC. The new policy has come out with a holistic approach where there will be no rigid division of streams as the students can study humanities along with technical education. A multidisciplinary institute equivalent to the level of IITs and IIMs will be set up where students could study any subjects of their choice and a general entrance examination will be conducted for admission into this institution. Bodies like UGC (University Grant Commission), AICTE (All India Council for Technical Education), and NCTE (National Council for Teacher Education) will be merged into the Higher Education Commission which will regulate all the institutions of higher education in India, Colleges, and Universities. Apart from the regulatory council under this commission, three other bodies i.e the General Council for restructuring framework, the National Accreditation Council for the evaluation of such institutes, and lastly a Grant Commission for providing financial assistance to higher education institutes will be there. The undergraduate curriculum includes the 4 years degree course with a certificate of research. The students who complete only 1 year of this course will be given a diploma certificate. One who completes 4 years of course with research will be eligible to do a master's degree in 1 year and a Ph.D. later on in their preferred subjects or topics. M.Phil program has been abolished under the new education policy. The credit score or marks of students right from the first year will be stored digitally.

The New Education Policy gives priority to e-education to address the needs of today's technology-oriented world. Under the policy, the Ministry of Education will try to build up digital infrastructures, make access to e-contents for students and focus on capacity building to cater to the needs of e-education in the country. The policy will try to make education easily accessible for anyone anywhere and will target to increase the literacy rate up to 80-90% by 2030. The policy will facilitate the Indian students to study foreign languages along with their regional languages from the secondary level. Traditional classic ancient languages like Sanskrit will be taught to make students realize the rich cultural heritage of our country. The New Education Policy of 2020 is intended towards providing education in Yoga, Music, Sports, Horticulture, Sculpture, etc with a broader holistic approach to bring about comprehensive development to the students that may lead to a better society and the real purpose of education can be accomplished.

The policy has arranged the process of teachers' promotion completely based on performance level. National level education for teachers will be prepared following the NCERT course and 4 years of B.ed will be made mandatory for teaching by 2030. National Scholarship Portal will be arranged and bolstered to provide scholarships to those meritorious students based on their progress. Socially backward classes like ST, SC, OBC students, and other economically weaker categories of students will be encouraged through necessary measures.

The policy has come out with a global perspective by reconfiguring the education system in the country that will encourage the students and foster learning to achieve educational development at the global level which is one of the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. With the massive expansion of information technology all around the world, rapid changes have taken place in the knowledge landscape. The scientific advancement of today's world such as machine learning, artificial intelligence, etc has created such a situation that soon many jobs worldwide will be taken by machines. Unskilled laborers will have no jobs as they do not possess the necessary skills and requirements to deal with the new world. So the need of the hour is to rearrange our traditional education system to meet the global needs by introducing a learning-based, exploring and discovery-oriented, multi-skilled, holistic, integrated, the flexible education system that will widen the scope of education in India and enhance the capabilities of the students to compete at the global stage. At the same time, easily accessible education to all the people even one who belongs to the most remote part of the country, and providing employment opportunities should be the prime focus of the Indian education system in the 21st century. As it has already been observed that the heightened risk of the Covid-19 pandemic caused the slowdown of the Indian education system and compelled to shut down the educational institutes for almost two years. Digital online education was the only option available during the pandemic days for the students to continue their studies and curriculum and a huge percentage of the students and also teachers experienced hardships and several issues while adapting to digital education. Hence, the education system in India needs to be reformed urgently to pursue the goals of the 21st century and overcome the issues it is grappling with. The Indian education system should strive for conceptual learning rather than rote learning, giving more practical knowledge to the students and must help students to identify their strengths, skills, and ability and encourage creativity and innovations.

The New Education Policy of 2020 envisages an education system that would transform India sustainably into an equitable vibrant knowledge society for all by providing the opportunities for higher education to all the people and thereby making India a global knowledge super-power. The New Education Policy proposes revision and revamping of all the aspects of education including its regulation and governance to create a new system that is aligned with SDG4 goals of the 21st century. The policy tries to build a system that emphasizes the all-round development of the students such as literacy, cognitive capacities of critical thinking and problem-solving, and also social, ethical, and emotional values among

them. As we know that research and innovations are the primary principles of development, this new education policy is intended towards building a strong research environment in the country. The National Research Foundation will be set up as an apex body to look out for and promote the research in higher educational institutions. Greater autonomy to the colleges that are affiliated with universities currently will be granted within a fixed period. There will be made more autonomous colleges in the country. Most importantly the New Education Policy, 2020 went a further step toward achieving a true sense of equity in the educational sphere in India. The foundation of education centers in deprived areas and the introduction of Gender Inclusion funds are the new arrangements in this regard. Top-ranked universities in the world are welcome to open their branches in India with the purpose of Indian students getting access to the standard educational curriculum, knowledge, facilities, and guidance of renowned personalities around the world and simultaneously attract more foreign students to the Indian education thereby to exchange knowledge and information through a collaborative effort.

CHALLENGES :

New Education Policy, 2020 outlines the vision of a modernized renovated education system in the country that aims to transform India's education sector by 2040. It is a comprehensive framework for elementary and higher education where the focus will be given on skill-based education to the students, making them familiar with the technology-dominated world of today and simultaneously providing value-based and ethical education to the students. As the policy is supposed to be experimental so it is not exempted from challenges. Firstly, education is included in the concurrent list of the constitution that provides for both the Union and State governments the right to legislate in the manner suited to them. The New Education Policy has a centralistic approach that strengthens the Union Government to control the whole education system in India. The concept of the formation of the National Higher Education Commission and accumulating two or more bodies in the organization is an inclination towards a centralization of the education system in India. The introduction of subjects like Sanskrit, and Hindi in some states i.e tribal states or South-Indian states also may confront resistance from some sections of the society. Secondly, the policy paves the way for Indian students in more number to prepare for top foreign universities and at the same time invite those top-ranked universities to open their branches in the Indian territory. However, as per the views of various academics, the education system may likely be more expensive, financially weaker meritorious students may hardly afford the cost of the education due to the lack of government regulation and a true sense of equity will not be achieved and education likely to be the privilege of the rich class. In a few of the top-ranked educational institutes in India such as JNU and BHU; educational cost is less and affordable for any section of the people who relentlessly produce talents in varied fields. The New Education Policy has some arrangements that accommodate education to be more expensive and may turn to be a privilege rather than a right.

The New Education Policy tries to Sanskritize the Indian education system through the adoption of the tri-language formula. It may create chaos mainly in the South-Indian states where people may resist the policy and the newly proposed system. The New Education Policy, 2020 focuses on skill-based and entrepreneurship-oriented education, however lack of enough skilled and professional teachers, especially in elementary education may cause hinder its proper implementation. The introduction of digital devices in schools and the approach to make education smart, digital and techno-based is indeed an appreciable stage that time demands. But to achieve its purpose, India has to look out for the applicability of such digital education whereas the country has not yet fulfilled the basic needs of the people. Even though the education system in India has tried to adapt to technology, the switch over to online education and the digital divide has increased inequality and disparity in education which has already been observed during the pandemic

days. 27% of the children do not have access to smartphones and laptops to attend online classes in virtual mode. Apart from the students, more than 80% of the teachers have faced challenges while delivering education digitally. Besides, according to many experts and academicians, online education is seen to be a failure in molding the overall growth of the students as the system has failed in sustaining the skills and developments of the children and disproportionately reduced the qualities such as attitudes of the students, mathematical and reasoning skills, psychological and moral development and so on. Some subjects need to be taught in a physical classroom practically otherwise these will not be properly understood. According to many experts, digital education is an alternative but never can be the future of a developing country like India. Hence, before implementing such a policy, the country must sort out the issues related to it and take necessary measures to meet its purposes, otherwise, it will turn out to be a pipe-dream.

The multidisciplinary approach of the New Education Policy, 2020 also may create a chaotic situation among the students while going to acquire the knowledge of different subjects under the same course. It may prevent them to identify their strength and reduce the scope of mastering a subject and fail to reach their potential. Last but not the least, the lack of will of the political leaders and administrative bureaucrats to effective implementation of the policy also may arise serious issues before fulfilling the inner purpose rather turn out to be a trouble for the people of the country.

CONCLUSION :

Despite having challenges before the implementation of the New Education Policy, 2020, the Government of India has decided to remodel the Indian education system after 34 years and is almost on the verge of reaching a milestone in the educational sector keeping in view the development objectives of the country. The policy has inclined towards bringing a dimensional change in the education system that aims to address many growing developmental imperatives of the country. The development of the creative potential of each individual is the primary focus of the new education policy, 2020. The policy is structured on both the student and teacher-centric approach simultaneously that proposes the revision and revamping of all aspects of education. Education for equity is one of the basic themes of the new framework policy as it emphasized providing equal opportunities for all the people facilitating easily accessible education within a short period. Provisions such as expanding and strengthening the programs of distance education of the National Institute of Open Schools and state-level open schools are supposed to be very beneficial for those who aren't able to attend a physical school. Most importantly, the policy has opened the door for global education through restructuring the whole education system and trying to create a smart knowledge and information society in the world.

The Chairman of the committee K.K. Kasturirangan quoted, “We have tried to create a policy that will change the educational landscape in our understanding so that we can prepare our youth to face the current and future challenges. It has been a journey that every member has taken it personally and collectively, we have tried to cover different dimensions of the broader educational landscape of our country. This policy is all based on guiding objectives like access, capacity, quality, affordability, and accountability. From pre-primary to higher education, we have taken this field seen in an uninterrupted continuity as well as encompassing other areas connected to the broader landscape.”

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