

National Educational Policies in India

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Abstract:

Education system in India has seen variegated changes right from Gurukula system till date. Monastic orders of education under the supervision of a guru were a favored form of education for the nobility in ancient 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. Essentially there are three education policies introduced in India since independence, by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1968, by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1986 and by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2020. The present paper talks about the National Education Policy 2020 from the perspective of the policies made in the country till date. The paper also attempts to bring out the Salient Features of National Policy on Education 2020.

Key words: Education, Macaulay's Minutes, National Policy of Education (NPE), National Education Policy (NEP)

Introduction

Bertrand Russell opines that education should aim at achieving perfection of the individual by building vitality, courage, sensitiveness and intelligence. Open-mindedness should also be one of the qualities of educational aims. Jiddu Krishnamurthy, a contemporary thinker, talks about the aim of education being the development of a seeker of knowledge through the process of enquiry. Vivekananda states that education should emancipate an individual by bringing out the perfection that is already there in man. The Indian Constitution mentions the objectives of education as creating a scientific temper and promoting national integration. Development and perfection of individual, pursuit and transmission of knowledge and preservation and progress of society are the ultimate aims and objectives of education in any society. In ancient times, India had the Gurukula system of education in which anyone who wished to study went to a teacher's (Guru) house and requested to be taught. If accepted as a student by the guru, he would then stay at the guru's place, help in all activities at the house of the Guru and learn the ancient Indian texts of wisdom from the Guru. This not only created a strong tie between the teacher and the student, but also taught the student everything about not only the Shashtras and scriptures but also running a house. The guru taught everything the child wanted to learn, from Sanskrit to the Holy Scriptures and from Mathematics to Metaphysics. The student stayed as long as the student wished or until the guru felt that he had taught everything he could teach. All learning was closely linked to nature and to life, and not confined to memorizing some information. According to the interest of the student, the teaching, priesthood, medicine or skill related career could be practiced in the society. As the student is taught to be in synergy with nature and cosmos, whatever he practices would be for the upliftment of the society and nation along with protecting, preserving and improving the living conditions of all living things on this planet. This is what is meant by VASUDHAIVA KUTUMBAKAM meaning =One World Family'. A number of urban learning centers became increasingly visible from the period between 200 BC and 400 AD. The important urban centers of learning were Taxila and Nalanda, among others. These institutions systematically imparted knowledge and attracted a number of foreign students to study topics such as Buddhist literature, logic, grammar, etc. In due course of time, India has seen many social, political economic and pedagogic changes because of many foreign expeditions, exploitations, imperialism and colonization. With the arrival of the British Raj, the modern European education came to India. The colonial educational policy was deliberately one of reducing indigenous culture and religion, an approach which became known as Macaulayism. The system soon became solidified in India as a number of primary, secondary, and tertiary centers for education cropped up during the colonial era. The modern school system was brought to India, including the English language, originally by Lord Thomas Babington Macaulay in the famous =Macaulay's Minute on Education' in 1835. Macaulay opines, .It will hardly be disputed, I suppose, that the department of literature in which the Eastern writers stand highest is poetry. And I certainly never met with any orientalist who ventured to maintain that the Arabic and Sanskrit poetry could be compared to that of the great European nations. But when we pass from works of imagination to works in which facts are recorded and general principles investigated, the superiority of the Europeans becomes absolutely immeasurable. It is, I believe, no exaggeration to say that all the historical information which has been collected from all the books written in the Sanskrit language is less valuable than what may be found in the most paltry abridgments used at preparatory schools in England. In every branch of physical or moral philosophy, the relative position of the two nations is nearly the same.. Macaulay also adds in the minutes.

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.I feel with them that it is impossible for us, with our limited means, to attempt to educate the body of the people. We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern, --a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect. To that class we may leave it to refine the vernacular dialects of the country, to enrich those dialects with terms of science borrowed from the Western nomenclature, and to render them by degrees fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population.. Accordingly, the curriculum was confined to .modern. subjects such as science and mathematics, and subjects like modern Indian languages including Indian Classical language like Sanskrit, Metaphysics and Philosophy were considered unnecessary. Teaching was confined to classrooms and the link with nature was broken, as also the close relationship between the teacher and the student. Education in Free India Universal and compulsory education for all children in the age group of 6-14 was a cherished dream of the new government of the Republic of India as per the directive policy in article 45 of the constitution in free India. The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) established .central schools. (named Kendriya Vidyalayas) in all main urban areas in the country, and they follow a common schedule so that a student going from one school to another on a particular day will hardly see any difference in what is being taught. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, India's first Minister of Education, opined to introduce a uniform educational system throughout the country with a robust central government control over education system, but the system could not be accepted and implemented in the free India due to various regional, religious and linguistic variations across the country. Accordingly, the University Education Commission (1948–1949), the Secondary Education Commission (1952–1953), the University Grants Commission and the Kothari Commission (1964–66) were established by the Union government to modernise and refine India's education system.

The Nehru Government emphasised on the Resolution on Scientific Policy in the education system and to consider the development of higher technical institutions in India, with the goal of ensuring an adequate supply of technical personnel for India's industrial development; and accordingly sponsored Indian Institutes of Technology (IIT), one each in the north, south, east, and west—with the first to be located near Calcutta (Kolkata) and another near Bombay (Mumbai). These institutions were possibly to be modelled after the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), USA.

In 1961, the Union government formed the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) as an autonomous organisation that would advise both the Union and state governments on formulating and implementing education policies. The first National policy on education (NPE) was promulgated 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.

The First National Policy on Education NPE (1968)

The NPE of 1968 called for spending on education in the country to increase to six percent of the national income. Based on the report and recommendations of the Kothari Commission (1964– 1966), the government of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi announced the first National Policy on Education in 1968, The Policy emphasised on the equal educational opportunities in order to achieve national integration, mandatory teacher training programs to be organized to suit the requirement and the three language formula.

Accordingly, compulsory education for all children up to the age of 14 became implemented in India. The "three language formula" to be employed in secondary education emphasised on the learning of three languages by all Indians—the regional-local language, which would be the mother tongue of the learner; Hindi, the national link language; and English, the international language.

The Second National Policy on Education NPE (1986)

In 1986, the second policy on education was implemented by the Rajiv Gandhi Government. The NPE (1986) gave a special emphasis on .the removal of disparities and to equalise educational opportunity," especially for Indian women, Scheduled Tribes (ST) and the Scheduled Caste (SC) communities. To achieve such a social integration, the policy called for expanding scholarships, adult education, recruiting more teachers from the SCs, incentives for poor families to send their children to school regularly, development of new institutions and providing housing and services.

The NPE called for a "child-centred approach" in primary education through "Operation Blackboard" to improve primary schools nationwide, the creation of the "rural university" model to promote economic and social development in rural India and encouraged the Open University system with the Indira Gandhi National Open University, which had been created in 1985.

Program of Action (POA) 1992

The 1986 National Policy on Education was modified once in 1992 by the P. V. Narasimha Rao government and in 2005, and later in 2004 by the former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. Programme of Action (PoA) 1992 brought about the Universalization of Elementary Education – UEE, expansion of secondary education, opening of Navodaya Vidyalayas and the conducting of a common entrance examination on all India basis for admission to professional and technical programmes in the country, and accordingly Joint Entrance Examination (JEE) and All India Engineering Entrance Examinations (AIEEE) at the National level and the State Level Engineering Entrance Examinations (SLEEE) have been organized for maintenance of professional standards across the country.

Despite the vision of a more student-centric learning environment, POA 1992 did not suggest any concrete steps to help with this goal. It did not highlight the changes needed in the textbooks, pedagogies, and teacher training to create a more learner-centric schooling system. Even at the university level, there was no proper planning shared for resource mobilization as suggested in the POA. And once again funds mattered and these policies could not be 100% successful.

Modifications of Program of Action in 2005 The Common Minimum Programme is a document outlining the minimum objectives of a coalition government of UPA in India during 2004. The document has acquired prominence since coalition governments have become the norm in India. In 2005, former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh adopted the 'Common Minimum Programme' which coined the idea of conducting one common entrance examination on all India bases for admission to professional and technical programmes in the country. To fully empower women politically, educationally, economically and legally and to provide for full equality of opportunity, particularly in education and employment for the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, OBCs and religious minorities was given utmost importance in the modification during 2005.

National Education Policy 2020

New Policy was introduced because the results of a survey conducted by NCERT, supported by the Union Ministry of Education was done that showed, students across 12 states scored significantly below the national average in mathematics ability. National Achievement Survey (NAS) is a nationally representative large-scale survey of students' learning undertaken by the Ministry of Education, Government of India. NAS gives a system.

level reflection on effectiveness of school education and identifies learning as a big challenge facing Indian education. A committee of nine-member submitted the draft of the New Education Policy (NEP) in 2019, which was approved by the Union cabinet in July 2020. It recommended greater autonomy for higher education institutions and an increase in the national annual outlay for education to 6 per cent of GDP.

Accordingly, in 2019, the Ministry of Human Resource Development released a Draft New Education Policy 2019, which was followed by a number of public consultations. A Committee led by Dr K. Kasturirangan presented New Draft of National Education Policy. The Draft Policy is built on the foundational pillars of Access, Equity, Quality, Affordability & Accountability. It discusses reducing curriculum content to enhance essential learning, critical thinking and more holistic experiential, discussion-based and analysis-based learning. It also talks about a revision of the curriculum and pedagogical structure from a 10+2 system to a 5+3+3+4 system design in an effort to optimise learning for students based on cognitive development of children.

On 29 July 2020, the cabinet approved a new National Education Policy with an aim to introduce several changes to the existing Indian education system, which will be introduced in India till 2026.

Salient Features of National Policy on Education 2020:

1. Extension of the Right to Education (RTE) Act: RTE, which currently applies to classes I to VIII, will now be applicable to the entire school system from pre-school to class XII. It will cover children of ages 3 to 18 (preschool to senior secondary level).

2. Sanskrit at all levels of education: Sanskrit should be taught at all levels of school and higher education as one of the optional languages on par with all Schedule 8 languages. Sanskrit textbooks at the Foundational and Middle school level may be rewritten in Simple Standard Sanskrit (SSS) in order to teach Sanskrit through Sanskrit (STS).

3. Restructuring of school curriculum and 5+3+3+4 design: The 10+2 structure of school curricula will be replaced by a 5+3+3+4 curricular structure corresponding to ages 3-8, 8-11, 11-14, and 14-18 years respectively. The new system will have 12 years of schooling with three years of Anganwadi or pre-schooling; So schools will be re-organized into school complexes. Under the proposed 5+3+3+4 design:

- The first five years of schooling of children in the age group of 3 to 8 years would be marked as Foundational Stage (it includes three years of pre-primary plus grade 1 and grade 2).
- The next three years of schooling, to be marked as a Preparatory Stage for the children in the age group of 8 to 11 years (will include grades 3 to 5).
- Middle Stage (grades 6 to 8) for the students in the age group of 11-14 years.
- Secondary Stage (Grades 9-12) for students in the age group of 14-18 years.

4. System for flexible and multiple board examinations: Introduction of a semester system in school education for students of classes 10 to 12, with provisions for holding "flexible and modular board examinations". Students will be able to take a board examination in a given subject in whichever semester they take the corresponding class in school, whenever they feel most ready. They should be able to take any such subject board examination again if they feel they can study and do better. Board exams will be based on knowledge application.

5. Home language, mother tongue or regional languages are going to be used as a medium of instruction up to class 5.

6. School curriculum will be reduced to core concepts; integration of vocational education from class 6.
7. Common entrance exams will be conducted for admission to universities and higher education institutions.
8. Restructuring of the higher education institutions: by placing them under three categories:
 - The first primarily being focussed on research.
 - Second providing high-quality teaching across disciplines with significant contribution to research.
 - Third providing quality teaching focussed on undergraduate education.
9. Multiple Exit options in Higher Education: It also suggests the introduction of four-year undergraduate programmes in higher education institutions and restructuring of the current 3- year B.A., B.Sc., B. Com. and B. Voc. programmes with provisions to provide students with "multiple exit and entry options".
10. Establishment of a Rashtriya Shiksha Aayog (National Education Commission): It is a constitutional body through an Act of Parliament, with the Prime Minister being its Chairperson.
11. Rajya Shiksha Ayog/State Education Commissions may be constituted in each state.
12. Establishment of one higher education regulator—National Higher Education Regulatory Authority (NHERA)— that will subsume all other bodies like UGC, AICTE and others into it. All higher education institutions, except legal and medical colleges, will be governed by a single regulator.
13. Common norms have been placed for private and public higher education institutions.
14. MPhil courses have been discontinued.
15. A national programme for the professional development of faculty members of the higher education institutions.
16. A regulatory body called -- National Educational Alliance for Technology (NEAT) has been set up to use technology for better learning outcomes.

Conclusion

NEP 2020 is the first education policy of the 21st century and replaces the thirty-four year old National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986. Built on the foundational pillars of Access, Equity, Quality, Affordability and Accountability, this policy is aligned to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and aims to transform India into a vibrant knowledge society and global knowledge superpower by making both school and college education more holistic, flexible, multidisciplinary, suited to 21st century needs and aimed at bringing out the unique capabilities of each student. The implementation of the ambitious policy poses a number of challenges.

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