

Education Policy in India: A Comprehensive Overview

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Abstract

Governments all over the world place a major emphasis on education policy. There is a global pressure on increasing attention on the outcomes of educational policies and their impact on social and economic development. However, there is often a lack of understanding of how educational policies are formed and what constitutes an education policy. An attempt is made in this module to analyse the nature of educational policy, basic features of education policies and the intended outcomes of these policies. Education policy refers to the rules and principles that govern the operation of educational systems. The module also tries to answer questions regarding the goals of education, strategies employed for achieving these goals and for identifying tools for assessing their impact. In India educational institutions have existed since the emergence of civilisation (Keay, 1972). Education policy has played an immensely important role in the development of an educational system in India since pre-independence days. Since education policies reflect the approaches of those in power towards education, they have a close bearing on the goals and strategies of the education system that is in existence at that point of time. From courses to curriculum to pedagogical practices, education policy sets the framework within which an educational system takes shape. In India the thrust of educational policies has been changing from time-to-time in response to the emerging socioeconomic needs of the country

Keywords: Education Policy, Education System, , Policy Formation, NEP, India.

Introduction

Since gaining its independence, the Indian government has experimented with a broad range of programmes in an effort to reduce the widespread illiteracy that affects both rural and urban populations. These initiatives were

largely focused on establishing a rigid central control over the educational industry in order to create a unified educational system. Under the name of increased sovereignty, unity, and integrity in nearly all subjects, the newly created constitution of the nation clearly granted the

centre precedence over the state governments. Education was therefore no different in this regard.

In Thomas Dye's words, public policy is anything a "government chooses to do or not do for the public". Public policies on issues such as Education, Health, Infrastructure, etc. are aimed at facilitating the equalization within the society. The education system brought about by the British Government in India was not suitable to the population at large and was detrimental to the needs of free, independent and developing India. Since its inception, India is trying to restructure its education policy to suit the needs of technological and industrial developments and to bring about equality within the society. For the same purpose, several Commissions under the chairmanship of well-known educationists have been setup and there have been five phases under which the National Policy of education has been structured and amended until recently, these are NPE 1968, 1986, 1992, 2005, and 2016. The 1968 draft served as the first official document that laid the strong foundation of equalization of education within the country, post which the other four recommendations were introduced.

The Government of India created the National Policy on Education (NPE) to advance and oversee education in India. The policy encompasses both rural and urban India's primary and secondary education as well as higher education. The Indian government has supported a number of programmes to address the issues of illiteracy in both rural and urban India since the country's independence in 1947. The first minister of education in India, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, envisioned a unified educational system and tight supervision by the national government over all aspects of education. To create recommendations for modernising India's

educational system, the Union government formed the University Education Commission (1948–1949), Secondary Education Commission (1952–1953), University Grants Commission, and Kothari Commission (196–196). The first Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru, signed the Resolution on Scientific Policy. The establishment of prestigious scientific education institutes like the Indian Institutes of Technology was supported by the Nehru administration. In order to provide independent guidance to the Union and state governments on developing and carrying out education policy, the Union government established the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) in 1961.

The evolution of education policy can be understood in the following manner through the discussion of various policies formulated by Govt. of India from time to time.

National Policy of Education, 1968

In 1968, based on the recommendations and reports of the Kothari Commission (1964–66), The government under Indira Gandhi promulgated the first ever National Policy on Education. The objective of the NPE in general, was to make India a knowledge superpower by equipping its students with the necessary skills and knowledge, in addition to eliminating the shortage of manpower in science, technology, academics and industry. In particular, the major aim encapsulated by the 1968 policy was to radically restructure the education sector so as to overcome economic and social divisions prevalent within the country and thereby equalise educational opportunities for all. It included, among other things, compulsory education upto the age of 14, training of teachers so as to increase their qualifications, raising the spending on the education sector to 6% of the GDP, adopting the

three language formula in school curriculums - English, Hindi and the official language of the state at hand as also teaching of the Sanskrit language. Evidently, language had taken up a major chunk of the discussions and debates in the drafting of the constitution. Hence, it became necessary to rightly calculate an arrangement that would promote diversity and unity all in the same. In retrospect, therefore, language became the cornerstone of promoting greater inclusion within the country.

While the policy achieved success in its objectives to a certain degree, it also set in motion a newer NPE that was to be formulated in 1986 under the governance of Rajiv Gandhi.

National Policy of Education 1986

In the Budget session of 1986, the Parliament discussed and adopted the NPE 1986. This policy, or any subsequent policy under NPE for that matter, has been a mere improvement upon the previous one. Under this, 23 task forces were constituted, each delegated with a unique subject under the NPE 1986. Under an intriguing study, it was understood that these task forces were relegated with the important duties such as effective working of the system, education for equality (majorly focusing on SC, ST, and OBC), Minority education, Adult education, Vocalization of education, and laid importance on a new aspect of Open University System or Distance Learning. In spite of huge time constraints and political controversies, the task forces were successful in submitting their reports in July 1986. As already discussed, the major task at hand under this policy was the 'Universalisation of Education' and 'Removal of Disparities'. Under the NPE 1986, a three tiered structural approach was followed, i.e. betterment of Elementary education, Secondary Education,

and Higher Education. The main focus was on Elementary Education under which two successful policies namely the 'Child-Centered Approach' and 'Operation Blackboard' was implemented to motivate more children under the purview of 14 years of age and ensure the benefits of 'Free and Compulsory' Education to seep into all the sections of the society, especially the backward impermeable ones. This policy also laid great importance on 'Vocalization' of Education which is considered to be a rather western concept in order to incentivize children to attend classes in order to develop confidence and imbibe adequate psychomotor skills. These also come to form the significant inclusionary measures of NPE 1986. Emphasis was also given to strengthening of the core curriculum in order to bind the children together with the nation by inculcating values of Equality, Justice, Socialism, etc, and to make children aware of the rich cultural heritage, existence of social barriers and understand ways to defy them. One of the biggest Achievements of the policy is that most of the policies prescribed under NPE 1986 were operationalised by the states, and the 'Total Literacy Campaign' came to be recognized as the dominant strategy for eradication of adult literacy in India. On the other hand, one of the biggest drawbacks that was discovered was the lack of data available that makes the structural analysis of the policy a difficult task. Also, the policy tried to cover a lot of aspects at once due to which it is sometimes considered as a failure.

National Policy of Education 1992

NPE 1992, also known as the Programme of Action (POA) served to democratize education across India. This policy (like any subsequent) served as an improvement over the 1986 policy after which the Central Advisory Board of Education suggested a few recommendations that

materialized into the formation of this policy. It was comprehended that most of the structures and policies of the NPE 1986 were taken as it is as they fared well, and some of the structural changes suggested were implemented by the Manmohan Singh government by virtue of NPE 2005. Thus, to avoid repetition, only the major highlights that differ from the previously formulated policy will be discussed. Under NPE 1992, All India bases common entrance exam for admission in all professional and technical programmes in the country was introduced. This policy however was successfully implemented in 2005 and mainly reduced the problem of overlapping and aimed at reducing physical, mental and financial burden. The previously discussed 'Operation Blackboard' was revised for a better implementation under NPE 1992 which yielded successful results. This policy also relegated importance to 'Decentralized' planning, which focused on the equal and better development of all the educational sectors. Both NPE 1986 and POA 1992 laid greater importance on higher education, research work, and vocalization of education. This policy also focused on the development and training of teachers to serve as adequate beings in imparting the best education and knowledge to students which could become a motivating factor for the latter.

National Policy of Education, 2005

The succeeding NPE of 2005 under the Prime Ministry of Dr. Manmohan Singh and the UPA government at the centre, observed the onset of a "Common Minimum Programme", which outlined the common grounds of agreement on policies by the coalition as a whole. The Yash Pal Committee Report in 1993, 'Learning Without Burden' focused primarily on the aspect of learning that came to be associated with a novel source of stress for both the children and the

parents. Thus, a meeting was convened sometime in 2004 to revise the 'national Curriculum Framework'. The process of development of the National Curriculum Framework was head started in November, 2004 by setting up various structures like the 'National Steering Committee' chaired by Prof. Yash Pal, and twenty-one National Focus Groups on themes of curricular areas, systemic reforms and national concerns. Thus, it was only after a plethora of deliberations and inputs from multitude sources and stakeholders from varied levels that helped shape the draft of the NPE-2005. As for the policies under education, it focused on 6% GDP spending on education, the strengthening of the mid-day meal schemes, the enforcement of an education as also a National commission for granting student loans, greater access to higher education, reduced communalization of school curriculum, proper infrastructure of educational institutions and empowerment of the marginalized sections of the society. It focused on a wide range of subjects to help in the all-round development, like Art education, Health and physical education, education for peace, to name a few. In continuation of the previous structure of analysis, greater accessibility in the economic sense especially in higher education became the most promising inclusionary measure besides the strengthening of making education more available to the disadvantaged sections. This draft of NPE becomes pertinent to take into consideration because it focused fundamentally on the value of enhancing interaction with the social milieu and peers to amplify the teaching-learning process, and the need to take a leap from the typical "Herbartian" lesson plan and techniques to involve active, invigorating activities and techniques to help make the process more engrossing.

National Policy of Education, 2016

Under the NDA government and the Prime Ministry of Narendra Modi, the salient features of the successive NPE were promulgated in 2016. The motto of the new policy put forth by the MHRD is “*Educate Encourage Enlighten*”. Thus, the vision is to create a credible education system capable of ensuring inclusive quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all alike, beyond the discriminatory bars within the society. Among others, the missions include: Ensuring equitable, inclusive and quality education for all; foster quality education with strong focus on education reforms; promote acquisition by all learners of relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for work and entrepreneurship, etc. The policy featured a pressing focus on pre-school education, curriculum renewal and reforms in examination, minimum standard of infrastructure and facilities by all state governments, steps to improve teaching standards, protection of the rights of child and adolescents, zero tolerance approach on gender and social discrimination and violence, skill development for greater employability, greater concentration on ICT, inclusion of regional language in education and greater focus on Indian culture and tradition in textbooks and curriculums, comprehensive Education - PE, Yoga, NCC etc, research, innovation and newer knowledge, internationalizing Education and faculty development in addition to competitive recruitment in higher education.

Hence, elements of the this NPE that were set in the direction of greater inclusion were - the promotion of greater accessibility for people with special needs in addition to encompassing caste, class and gender divisions. Besides this was the incorporation of a liberal and rights based culture through technology, privatization, competition

etc. Lastly, there were attempts at consolidating a common sense of nationality for greater national unity and integration although the differences continue to exist.

National Policy of Education, 2020

A comprehensive policy framework called the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 attempts to restructure and modernise India’s educational system. The NEP places a strong emphasis on the value of equitable and inclusive education and is committed to offering high-quality instruction to everyone, regardless of their socioeconomic status or geographic location. Moreover, it encourages the use of technology, creativity, and academic study. 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. Research Methodology has been added in the last year of graduation course and student will have the choice to leave the course and receive the certificate/ degree according to that. 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.

The best means of attaining equality, inclusiveness, and economic and social mobility are via education since it levels the playing field. There must be programmes in place to guarantee that, despite insurmountable difficulties, all students from these groups have access to a range of focused opportunities to enrol in and succeed in the educational system. The country’s local and international demands, as well as its rich variety and culture, must be respected and honoured while incorporating these components. For the sake of national pride, self-confidence,

self-knowledge, collaboration, and integration, it is thought crucial to teach India's young people about the country's diverse social, cultural, and technical demands, as well as its unique artistic, linguistic, and intellectual heritage.

The focus of curriculum and pedagogy reform at all levels will be to shift the educational system away from the culture of rote learning that is prevalent now and towards actual understanding and learning how to learn. The goal of education will be to enhance students' cognitive abilities as well as their character and create whole, well-rounded people who possess the essential 21st century skills. Each subject's curriculum will be pared down to the fundamentals in order to allow room for critical thinking and more all-encompassing, inquiry-based, discovery-based, discussion-based, and analysis-based learning. Classroom activities will change to competency-based learning and teaching to address the achievement gap in learning outcomes. No clear distinction will be made between "curricular," "extracurricular," or "co-curricular," among "arts," "humanities," and "sciences."

Conclusion:

The Policy pledges to greatly increase educational spending since investing in the future of a society's youth through a high-quality education is the best thing we can do. Regrettably, India's public spending on education still falls well short of the 6% of GDP target set by the 1968 Policy, which was restated in the 1986 Policy, and which was further reinforced in the 1992 review of the Policy. In India, public spending on education (by the Center of Government and the States) is now about 4.43% of GDP (Expenditure 2017-18), making up just 10% of all Government expenditures on education (Economic Survey 2017-18). These figures are

far lower than those of most industrialised and developing nations. The Policy also urges the rebirth, vigorous development, and assistance of private charitable work in the field of education. Every public institution can take steps to raise private philanthropy money in addition to the public budgetary assistance that would have otherwise been given to them in order to improve educational opportunities. The 'light but tight' regulatory approach, which mandates full public self-disclosure of finances, procedures, course and programme offerings, and educational outcomes, the significant investment in public education, and mechanisms for good governance of all institutions, public and private, are just a few of the relevant fronts through which the Policy has addressed the issue of commercialization of education. In a similar vein, options for more cost collection without harming the areas that are most in need or worthy will also be investigated.

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