

OVERVIEW OF NATIONAL POLICIES ON EDUCATION

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Abstract

The most important and urgent reform needed in education is to transform it, to endeavor to relate it to the life, needs and aspirations of the people and thereby make it the powerful instrument of social, economic and cultural transformation necessary for the realization of the national goals. For this purpose, education should be developed so as to increase productivity, achieve social and national integration, accelerate the process of modernization and cultivate social, moral and spiritual values.

The National Policy on Education (NPE) is a policy formulated by the Government of India to promote education amongst India's people. The policy covers elementary education to colleges in both rural and urban India. The first NPE was promulgated in 1968 by the government of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, and the second by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1986. The government of India has appointed a new committee under K. Kasturirangan to prepare a Draft for the new National Education Policy in 2017.

Key words: Education, Socio, Economic, Culture, Government, Policies.

1.INTRODUCTION

In the Indian context, the fundamental role of education in nation-building, progress, security and social and economic development has been recognized from the outset. Even before independence, Gandhiji had formulated a vision of basic education in India, seeking to harmonise intellectual and manual work. Subsequently, the University Education Commission (Radhakrishnan Commission, 1948-49) and the Secondary Education Commission (1952-53), as well as other Commissions and Committees had reviewed the issues relating to educational reconstruction. The Resolution on Scientific Policy (1958)

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underlined, inter alia, the importance of science, technology and scientific research in
education.

The first National Policy on Education (NPE) was formulated by the Government of India in 1968, based on the recommendations of the Indian Education Commission (1964-66), also known as the Kothari Commission.

Apart from the goal of universalization of education as envisaged in the Constitution, the 1968 NPE dealt with:

1. Measures to ensure that teachers are accorded an honored place in society.
2. Training and quality of teachers for schools.
3. Stress on moral education and inculcation of a sense of social responsibility.
4. Equalization of educational opportunity for all sections of society, including girls, minorities disadvantaged classes, tribal people and in rural areas.
5. Introduction of work-experience, manual work and social service as integral parts of general education.
6. Science education and research.
7. Education related to the needs of agriculture, industry and employment opportunities.
8. Vocationalization of secondary education.
9. Development of games and sports.
10. Spread of literacy and adult education.
11. strengthening of centres of advanced study
12. Setting up of a small number of cluster centres aimed at achieving the highest international standards.
13. Development of quality or pace-setting institutions at all stages and in all sectors.

The NPE of 1968 aimed to promote national progress, a sense of common citizenship and culture, and to strengthen national integration. It laid stress on the need for a radical reconstruction of the education system, to improve its quality at all stages, and gave special

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attention to science and technology, the cultivation of moral values and a closer relation
between education and the life of the people.

However, the general formulations incorporated in the 1968 Policy were not underpinned by a detailed strategy of implementation, accompanied by the assignment of specific responsibilities and financial and organizational support. Consequently, with the passage of time, it was felt that the problems of access, quality, equity, utility and financial support merited a comprehensive review of the NPE.

The NPE was adopted by the Parliament in May, 1986. This was reviewed and modifications suggested by the Ramamurthi Committee (1990-92) and the Janardhana Reddy Committee (1991-92). After consideration by the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE), a revised document entitled 'National Policy on Education, 1986 - Revised Policy Formulations' was laid on the Table of the House in 1992.

The NPE of 1986 as modified in 1992 reiterated the centrality of education for all as a national goal and sine qua non of all-round material and spiritual development, national cohesion and national self-reliance.

The 1986-1992 NPE endorsed the concept of a National System of Education in which all students, irrespective of caste, creed, location or sex, would have access to education of a comparable quality up to a given level.

It envisaged a common educational structure and a national curricular framework with a common core along with other components that were flexible and oriented towards occupational and employment requirements.

The common core included the history of India's freedom movement, the constitutional obligations and other content essential to nurture national identity. These elements cut across subject areas and were designed to emphasize India's common cultural heritage. egalitarianism. democracy. secularism. equality of the sexes, protection of the environment, removal of social barriers, observance of the small family norm, inculcation of the scientific temper and an international outlook characterized by peaceful co-existence and understanding between nations, treating the whole world as one family.

The NPE 86/92 emphasized life-long education, universal literacy and provision of opportunities to the youth, housewives, agricultural and industrial workers and professionals to continue the education of their choice, at the pace suited to them through open and distance learning.

The NPE 86/92 also delineated the competencies and sharing of responsibility between the Union Government and the States in terms of the 42nd Constitutional Amendment of 1976, which moved Education to the Concurrent List. While the role and responsibility of the States was to remain essentially unchanged, the Union Government would accept a larger responsibility to reinforce the national and integrative character of education, to maintain quality and standards (including those of the teaching profession at all levels), to study and monitor the educational requirements of the country as a whole in regard to manpower for development, to cater to the needs of research and advanced study, to look after the international aspects of education, culture and Human Resource Development and, in general, to promote excellence at all levels of the educational pyramid throughout the country.

The NPE 86/92 laid special emphasis on the removal of disparities and the equalization of educational opportunity to specific disadvantaged target groups, including removal of women's illiteracy, education of Scheduled Castes and Tribes, Minorities, the disabled and handicapped, obliterated and through non-formal and adult education programmes.

Recognizing the holistic nature of child development, the NPE accorded high priority to Early **Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)**, which was to be suitably integrated with the Integrated **Child Development Services (ICDS)** programmes.

The NPE 86/92 advocated a child-centered approach to education, with corporal punishment being firmly excluded and a no-detention policy at the primary stage. Talented students should be given special treatment and access to good quality education regardless of their ability to pay for it.

Vocational education was envisaged to be a distinct stream of education, intended to prepare students for identified occupations after, or even prior, to the completion of secondary education.

The NPE 86/92 proposed that the system of affiliation should be phased out by encouraging the development of autonomous colleges.

The NPE 86/92 envisaged the establishment of a national body and State Councils of Higher Education for policy making, planning and coordination of higher education.

Finally, the NPE 86/92 emphasized the need to raise the outlay on education to six percent of the GDP in the Eighth Five Year Plan (1992-1997) and to uniformly exceed this figure thereafter.

The NPE of 1986-1992 was followed up by a 'Programme of Action' announced by the HRD Ministry. However, with the passage of time, it has become clear that many of the objectives of the 1986 policy could not be achieved due to ineffective follow up on a continuing basis, with little attention being given to the implementation phase of the proposed policies.

This brief survey of the National Education Policies adopted in 1968, 1986 and 1992 underlines that many of the essential elements of these policies retain their relevance and will continue to do so in future. The earlier policies have analyzed the ways and means of achieving the national objectives of universalization of education, providing equality of opportunity, improving the quality of learning outcomes, enforcing norms of accountability and benchmarking with international standards exhaustively and in depth. The policy prescriptions set out in these earlier documents are a valuable resource which will guide the new NPE, as it seeks to build on the past experience to refine, revise and attune the education policy to meet the needs of the nation.

In continuation and in furtherance of the objectives of NPEs of 1968 and 1986-92, a number of significant legislative and executive steps have been undertaken over the past two decades - some of these are mentioned in the paragraphs which follow.

The Right to Education Act, 2009 (RTE Act) has imposed legal obligations on the Central and State Governments to provide every child between the ages of 6 to 14 access to full time elementary education of satisfactory and equitable quality in a formal school which satisfies certain essential norms and standards. As against this, over 92 lakh children still remain out of schools as per official records. If one estimates the numbers of these added to the dropouts after one or two years, the number of out-of-school children could easily be around 3 crore. The challenge before the nation is still enormous in magnitude

Since the adoption of the 1986-1992 NPE, the Central Government has launched several schemes to address issues of equity, access and quality in the 23 elementary, secondary and higher education sectors. The shortfalls and lacunae in the achievement of the targets laid down in these programmes need to be analyzed and corrective measures taken as appropriate.

The District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) was started in mid 1990s and was, for many years, the flagship programme of the Government of India in elementary education. Indeed, the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) programme, which is still an important implementation vehicle, is the successor programme to DPEP.

The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) Programme, operational since 2000-2001, aims at the universalization of elementary education in a time bound manner. Although the original targets of bridging all gender and social category gaps by 2007 and achieving universal retention at the elementary education level by 2010 have yet to be achieved, the programme remains in force as one of the largest education initiatives in the world.

The Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA), launched in 2009, aims at enhancing access and improving the quality of secondary education by removing gender, socioeconomic and disability barriers and making all secondary schools conform to prescribed norms. The principal objectives were to increase the total enrolment rate from 52% in 2005-06 to 75% over the five-year period from 2009-2014 by providing a secondary school within a reasonable distance of any habitation. The programme aims to provide universal access to secondary level education by 2017, i.e., by the end of the 12th Five Year Plan and achieving universal retention by 2020.

The Rashtriya Uchchar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) was launched in 2013 as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme to provide norm based and outcome dependent strategic funding to eligible state higher educational institutions. RUSA aims to improve the overall quality of state institutions by ensuring conformity to prescribed norms and standards, adopting accreditation as a mandatory quality assurance framework, promoting autonomy and improving governance in State Universities.

As a party to **the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)** adopted by the United Nations in 2000, India was committed, inter alia, to achieving universal primary education, in terms of both enrolment and completion of primary schooling for all girls and boys, by 2015. It was also committed to eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education,

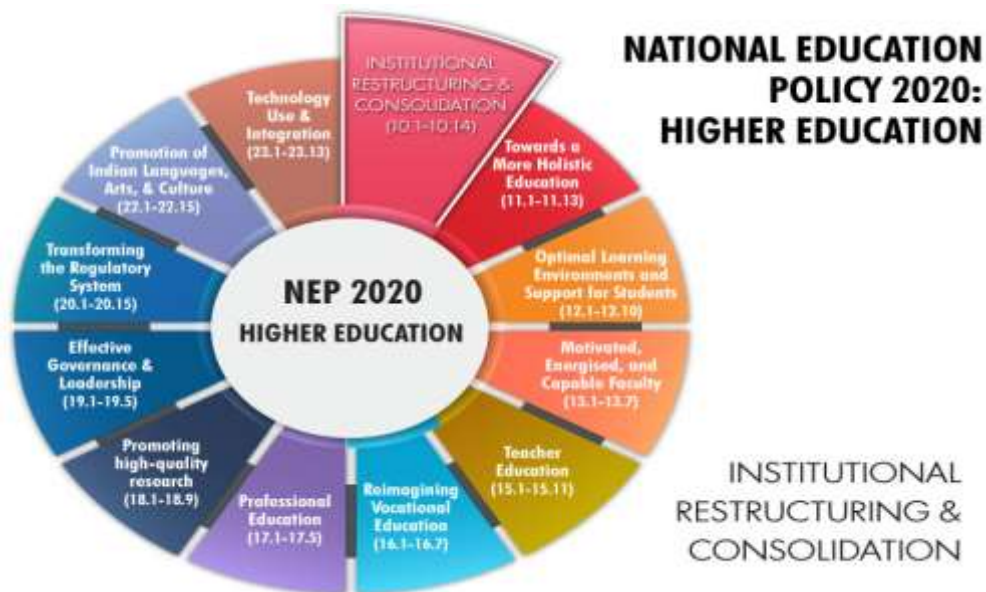
"preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015." Unfortunately, these goals remained unrealized. It is imperative now to work seriously to achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030.

The 2016 National Policy on Education: which is being formulated nearly three decades since the last Policy, recognizes the criticality of Education as the most important vehicle for social, economic and political transformation. It reiterates the role of education in inculcating values, and to provide skills and competencies for the citizens, and in enabling him to contribute to the nation's well-being; strengthens democracy by empowering citizens; acts as an integrative force in society. and fosters social cohesion and national identity. One cannot over-emphasize the role of Education as the key catalyst for promoting socio-economic mobility in building an equitable and just society. It is an established fact that an education system built on the premises of quality and equity is central to sustainable success in the emerging knowledge economy. Education is a powerful tool for preparing our citizens in the knowledge society. Education will amalgamate globalization with localization, enabling our children and youth to become world citizens, with their roots deeply embedded in Indian culture and traditions.

The 2020 National Policy on Education: Education is fundamental for achieving full human potential, developing an equitable and just society, and promoting national development. Providing universal access to quality education is the key to India's continued ascent, and leadership on the global stage in terms of economic growth, social justice and equality, scientific advancement, national integration, and cultural preservation. Universal high-quality education is the best way forward for developing and maximizing our country's rich talents and resources for the good of the individual, the society, the country, and the world. India will have the highest population of young people in the world over the next decade, and our ability to provide high-quality educational opportunities to them will determine the future of our country. The global education development agenda reflected in the Goal 4 (SDG4) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by India in 2015 - seeks to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" by 2030. Such a lofty goal will require the entire education system to be reconfigured to support and foster learning, so that all of the critical targets and goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development can be achieved.

Important Highlights of National Education Policy 2020

- ✚ New Policy aims for Universalization of Education from preschool to secondary level with 100 % GER in school education by 2030.
- ✚ NEP 2020 will bring 2 crore out-of-school children back into the mainstream.



Need for A New National Policy on Education

The National Policy on Education, as formulated in 1986 and modified in 1992, has been the guiding document of the policies of the Central Government in the education sector for well over two decades. During this period, significant changes have taken place in India and the world at large. New technologies have transformed the way in which we live, work, and communicate; the corpus of knowledge has vastly expanded and become multi-disciplinary; and research has become far more collaborative. Since the NPE was last reviewed in 1992, there have been momentous changes in the situation in India and worldwide. These need to be taken into account in formulating a new NPE for the coming decades.

While the earlier policy was robust in conception and orientation, it has not delivered the desired results in terms of acceptable outcomes in the education sector. Despite the stated priority accorded to this sector and the plethora of specific programmes which have been launched, as well as the infusion of massive public outlays over the years, the state of education remains a conspicuous weak spot in the economy, indeed in society at large.

The earlier NPEs had aimed at a number of overarching objectives, which included 'development of quality', 'pace setting institutions in all stages and all sectors', 'setting up of a large number of cluster centres aimed achieving highest international standards', 'to promote

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The earlier policies had laid out clear objectives and goals; however, many of these have not been realized fully or even partially. This has largely been due to absence of a clear workable roadmap and continuing operational guidance being put in place. Even more importantly, heavy politicization at every level of operation of the school system, from the village/block level to state headquarters, as well as increasing corruption, reaching every aspect of school administration have been prominent developments in the past three decades or so. These adverse factors have permeated every aspect of school administration, contributing to the current extremely poor educational conditions at the ground level- negating the noble objectives of the policy of 1986-92.

The ground reality today is, depressingly, quite different from what was envisaged in the earlier policies. While gross enrolment in schools, as also at higher education institutions, has gone up sharply, these have been accompanied with many undesirable new factors. While the infrastructure facilities in the school system have significantly improved, there has been little corresponding impact on the quality of instruction or learning - on the contrary repeated studies have indicated a worrisome decline in learning outcomes in schools. The perceived failure of the schools in the government system to provide education of minimal quality has triggered entry of a large number of wholly private or aided schools, even in rural areas. Concurrently there has been mushroom growth of private colleges and universities, many of them of indifferent quality; leading up to questions about the quality of degrees generally obtained in the system. In short, while there has been some improvement in infrastructure, and significant gains in respect of enrolment and access, new gnawing worries about the quality of education have increasingly bedeviled the education system. These need urgent attention.

Education and public health are possibly the two most important development vectors in a democracy. While adequate financing alone will not address the needs of the education

sector, governments in successive decades also do not appear to have comprehended the imperative need to ensure minimum essential funding to this area, which offers potentially the best investment opportunities for coming generations. This is a critical gap in overall national policy in the past decades.

As mentioned earlier, the quality of school education has been steadily on the decline. Inadequate stress in early childhood years has severely contributed to poor learning outcomes at successive secondary and higher education periods. Serious gaps in teacher motivation and training, sub-optimal personnel management in the education sector, absence of necessary attention to monitoring and supervision of performance at all levels - in short an overall neglect of management issues in this field have contributed to the current state of affairs. While it is true that there is wide disparity in this regard between states, with some states having displayed encouraging initiatives and innovative management, the overall picture in the country is unsatisfactory. A renewed look at policies in this regard, as also on a framework for implementation has become imperatively urgent.

While the RTE of 2009 has led to significant increase in enrolment, as also stress on infrastructure, new issues in the implementation phase have arisen which need to be addressed. In particular, the 'no detention policy' needs to be examined, to ensure that it is optimally and judiciously implemented.

Despite references in the earlier policies to Early Childhood Education, there are no systems firmly in place to ensure this. This gap needs to be addressed effectively and comprehensively, without delay.

There is no clearly laid out policy in respect of private participation in the education system, both at the school and higher education levels. While there is scope for differential treatment of this issue in different states, the respective roles to be played by private-public players is not currently defined. Issues of regulation, autonomy and fee structure have all been dealt with in an ad-hoc manner, now requiring some baselines to be established. The rapid growth of higher education institutions, many of dubious quality and functioning in grey market has raised the question of necessary minimal financial conditions to be created to foster institutions of reasonable quality. Issues of transparent quality evaluation of higher education institutions, and revamping the system of affiliation are all issues which need to be currently

Mrs. Sudha / International Journal of Engineering & Science Research addressed. The menace of institutions which have sprung up on the philosophy of 'degrees for cash' need to be squarely tackled.

In an aspiration society, it is natural that parents desire their children to obtain 'good' education. However formally linking the development of skills in vocational fields, bringing an academic equivalence to vocational accomplishments has not been seriously attempted. This also means that avenues for horizontal and vertical mobility of students have not been provided to an adequate degree. Fostering dignity and social acceptability to high quality vocational training is an important goal that begs attention.

2. CONCLUSION:

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has made rapid strides in the past couple of decades. New technologies are now available for information dissemination, enhancement of skills of all sorts, not yet suitably adapted to the needs of the education sector. The immense potential for inducting ICT to come to the aid of Indian education in myriad innovative ways has not been harnessed. Many experiments have taken place in the country, and a large body of knowledge has accumulated in this regard. ICT now provides a new and potentially highly effective vehicle for advancing the quality of education at all levels; this issue needs to be seriously explored and the alternatives expounded.

The Government of India have launched several social and developmental initiatives such as Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, Digital India, Skill India, Make in India and Smart Cities. All these initiatives have significant backward and forward linkages with the education sector which need to be taken into account in the new NPE. For example, the induction of ICT also underlines the imperative necessity of providing electricity and connectivity, and making computer hardware, software and technical support available in every school, especially in rural areas. Similarly, Skill India and Make in India require the mainstreaming of vocational education, practical knowledge, hands-on projects and courses oriented towards meeting the needs of industry and employment.

The rate of change has accelerated. New technologies and disciplines have emerged and new knowledge and insights are being generated at a rapid pace. Social media transmit and disseminate information and opinions almost instantaneously. Individuals, societies, governments. and educational and other systems are often behind the curve in keeping pace with these developments.

While 'equity' and 'access' have been, rightly stressed in the past as the guiding principles in the education field, the issue of quality has hitherto effectively been relegated to the background. It has now become an imperative necessity to lay major emphasis on improvement of quality across the board, without compromising on equity and access.

It is now time to undertake a comprehensive review of the educational scene in India as it is currently being administered and implemented, and articulate a new NPE.

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