

Education Policy in India: Changes, Challenges and Implementation

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Abstract: Education in India had been a very crucial factor behind its development as a nation now. But the journey of development of the education system had been a very difficult one because there had been several shifts in authority and rule in India. The nation had went through a lot of changes. Thus there had been a different mode of education in Vedic, Post Vedic, Medieval period (Mughal Empire), Colonial period and Post - independence period. The education system in India was itself fragmentary in nature until the medieval age. But since the advent of the Britishers on the Indian soil and taking possession of the country, they had managed to change the notion of education in India. They established several educational institutions as well as several policies for the betterment of education. And it was through the Britishers that we got the post independence vigor and base of establishing a particular Indianized mode of education. And since independence there had been three specific national education policy, which brought significant changes in the education system in India. These education policies not only provide solutions to the existing issues but also talk about the problems inherent in our system which needed to be sorted as soon as possible and it also requires consistent modification with time.

Keywords: Education Policy, Improvisation, Implementation, Dynamic, Challenges, Outcome

1. Introduction

The method and ways of teaching - learning process and particularly the education system in India went through a sea of changes since the eighteenth century, specifically after the arrival of the Britishers on the Indian soil. Before the advent of the Britishers and their consequent colonization of India, there was no particular emphasis paid on structuring and uniting the education system in India. Before the colonial rule, there was no such thing called education system or a particular centralized emphasis on the education system in India. It was the Britishers who apprehended the need for a establishing a proper way of learning through a particular system which would look after education. At first several missionaries came to India to teach and spread education specifically among the Anglo - Indians and consequently spreading their teaching among the Indian masses. At this point it needed to be mentioned that, the Britishers in the initial stages did not really paid attention to the need of education system in India. But after the Battle of Plassey in 1757, the East India Company realized they could capture the soil. After their initial success, at the end of eighteenth century they somehow managed to become the authority of the Indian soil. After getting such authority and ruling the land for few decades they put emphasis on the education according to their notion of the "White man's burden".

However, A. Biswas and S. P. Agarwal in their work, *Development of Education in India: A Historical Survey of Educational Documents Before and After Independence*, rightfully pointed out that,

"Education in India under the British Government", says Arthur Howell, "was first ignored, then violently and successfully opposed, then conducted on a system now universally admitted to be erroneous and finally placed on its present footing". The East India Company in the beginning was not at all interested in education, for at that time in England there was no state system of education and any state interference was resented. In India there were seats

of Sanskrit and Arabic learning. There were 12, 498 indigenous schools in the Madras Presidency in 1882 and about one lakh in Bengal in 1835. The earliest efforts to introduce any form of education beyond the indigenous system came from missionaries and private societies. In a dispatch of 1659, the Court of Directors had declared their earnest desire to propagate the Gospels in all possible ways. In 1659 the Court of Directors in their desire to spread Christianity allowed missionaries to come to India by embarking on the Company's ships. In 1698, the British Parliament introduced the missionary clause in the Company's Charter under which ministers of religion were to be maintained in the factories of the Company. "

In 1835, T. B. Macaulay in his "Minute" presented the proposal to westernize the Indian education system by putting emphasis on English as a medium of learning and instruction. This was the first ever proposal for a particular education system. But things were not like that, as A. Biswas and S. P. Agarwal in their work, *Development of Education in India: A Historical Survey of Educational Documents Before and After Independence*, rightfully pointed out that,

"The officials of the Company, however, felt that some attention could be paid to the education of the Indian people by encouraging classical learning, in Sanskrit and Arabic on traditional lines. It did not feel any urgent need to teach English or western knowledge to the Indian people. In 1781, Warren Hastings founded the Calcutta Madrassa, the cost was fir privately defrayed and later officially reimbursed. In 1792, Jonathan Duncan founded the Benaras Sanskrit College which was maintained by the government. Thus, though the Company had not yet assumed the responsibility for the education of the people, its individual officers here and there applied public funds for maintaining institutions of oriental learning. "

Several Indian social reformers such as Ram Mohan Roy and Vidyasagar were also the exponent of the Western philosophy of education. Again A. Biswas and S. P. Agarwal in their work, *Development of Education in India: A Historical Survey of Educational Documents Before and After Independence*, rightfully pointed out that,

“The case of the English party was argued by Macaulay in a matchless fashion in his minute. He interpreted the Section 43 of the Charter Act of 1813 in his own way. For him, the word literature occurring in this Section meant English literature, learned native of India meant person versed in English philosophy and poetry, and the promotion of scientific knowledge could only be achieved through adoption of English as medium of instruction. He boasted that a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia and eulogised the Baglish language as providing "ready access to all the vast intellectual wealth which all the wisest nations of the earth have created". As such he strongly recommended the spread of western learn - ing through English language. Lord William Bentinck fully accepted the arguments advanced by Macaulay and endorsed the minute by writing one line beneath it: I give my entire concurrence to the sentiments expressed in the minute.”

That was perhaps the stage when education system in India was more western than Indian.

However after the independence there was a need for Indianization of the education system. Hence after several conferences, and establishment of Committees for that purpose, the first national education policy was put into effect in 1968 under the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and it was modified and enhanced by the National Education Policy of 1986, which came into effect under the leadership of the then Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi. It was further modified by the Prime Minister Narsimha Rao in 1992. And the latest education policy that came into effect was the National Education Policy of 2020 under the leadership of Prime Minister, Narendra Modi.

This paper under discussion would put forward several issues that were brought up by the education policies. This paper would also point out the changes that it brought in the independent Indian education system. This paper would put spot light specifically on the three major National Education Policies in India that were introduced in 1968, 1986 and 2020 respectively. This paper in analyzing the differences and similarities of these three national policies would also discuss the role of the Britishers in shaping the education system in India.

Before delving deep into the discussion regarding the need of education policies in India and how the education policies came into effect, it would be important to discuss the brief history of education policy in India. Education Policy as the name itself suggest had been a policy specifically designed for catering to the need of maintaining a proper balance suitable for maintaining and developing the education in

India. The realisation for a particular educational policy was felt even before the independence as the western way of education with English, a foreign language being the medium of instruction had not been that effective in spreading the education to the general masses of the country. Hence after the independence in India, several commissions were established to look after the education system in India and find solutions for the betterment of education. Commission such as Sadler Commission, Hurtog Commission were already in norm and practice even before the independence of India but after the independence many new commissions were established specifically to design the education system according to the need of the country.

The National Policy on Education (NPE) was a policy formulated by the Government of India to promote and regulate education in India. The policy covers elementary education to higher education in both rural and urban India. The first NPE was 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.

Since the country's independence in 1947, the Indian government sponsored a variety of programme to address the problems of illiteracy in both rural and urban India. Because the main emphasis was put on education as it was the only way of developing a nation. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was India's first Minister of Education, envisaged strong central government control over education throughout the country, with a uniform educational system. His emphasis was basically based on earlier observations where a particular State was enlisted to take care of its own province and education system. This method however denied centralization of education because of the differences of culture and language of each state in India, which could have easily become a barrier in centralizing the education system in India.

However, Union government established the University Education Commission (1948–1949), the Secondary Education Commission (1952–1953), University Grants Commission and the Kothari Commission (1964–66) to develop proposals to modernize India's education system. All these committees looked after the Indianization of education through a particular chain which would keep the education system in a balance amidst the social, religious, economical, cultural and political barriers in India. The Britishers introduced a particular education system which was based on a unified and sole language as the medium of instruction and learning. But English being a foreign language became a difficulty for spreading the education to the lowest masses. Hence these committees introduced and proposed for a three language learners programme, emphasizing on mother tongue in the initial school learning.

However, the Resolution on Scientific Policy was adopted by the government of Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first Prime Minister. The Nehru government sponsored the development of high - quality scientific education institutions such as the Indian Institutes of Technology. 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.

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, which called for a "radical restructuring" and proposed equal educational opportunities in order to achieve national integration and greater cultural and economic development. The policy called for fulfilling compulsory education for all children up to the age of 14, as stipulated by the Constitution of India and specialized training and qualification of teachers. The policy called for a focus on the learning of regional languages, outlining the "three language formula" to be implemented in secondary education - the instruction of the English language, the official language of the state where the school was based, and Hindi. Language education was seen as essential to reduce the gulf between the intelligentsia and the masses. Although the decision to adopt Hindi as the national language had proven controversial, the policy called for the use and learning of Hindi to be encouraged uniformly to promote a common language for all Indians. The policy also encouraged the teaching of the ancient Sanskrit language, which was considered an essential part of India's culture and heritage. The NPE of 1968 called for education spending to increase to six percent of the national income.¹

In the first ever education policy introduced by Indira Gandhi in 1968, several things were adopted from the Colonial education system introduced by the Britishers. The very common "10+2+3" mode of learning was adopted and it went for a longer period and many of us have studied under this particular mode. This mode went for more than half of a century. The second education policy introduced in 1986 under the leadership of Rajiv Gandhi the same system of learning was there. Use of mother tongue, three language formula, strengthening research in universities were the key methods and policies introduced by the 1968 National Education Policy. However there were several shortcomings of that education policy. At first there was a lack of proper programme and hence a proper programme of action was not brought out. Secondly, the nation of India faced a shortage of funds. India's economy was in tatters, hence the implementation of the education policy never really took place in its entirety and was bound to fail. Because in order to implement such a huge programme in a nation like India with its vast geographical space and population density, it needed a lot of money to set up new constructions and establishments around the country for a smooth country wide teaching - learning process.

In 1986, the government led by Rajiv Gandhi introduced a new National Policy on Education. The new policy called for "special emphasis on the removal of disparities and to equalize 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 - centered approach" in primary education, and launched "Operation Blackboard" to improve primary schools nationwide. The policy expanded the Open University system with the Indira Gandhi National Open University, which had been created in 1985. The policy also called for the creation of the "rural university" model, based on the philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi, to promote economic and social development at the grassroots level in rural India. 1986 education policy expected to spend 6% of GDP on education.²

This particular National Policy introduced by Rajiv Gandhi, specifically focused on issues that were previously neglected in the earlier education policy. It was a modified version and a rather improved one from the previous one because it took account of all the shortcomings and difficulties and India, by then, was in a better economical position to cater to the need of the education policy. This particular educational policy focused primarily in the modernization of education with the modern technological advancements. And hence it emphasized the role of IT in education. More attention was paid on restructuring the teacher education, early childhood care, women's empowerment and adult literacy. It also accepted autonomy of universities and colleges. It needed to be mentioned that, before the 1986 education policy the autonomy of a educational institution was not provided, it was hardly resisted. This education policy succeeded and delivered according to its promises of building a nation on the basis of educational prosperity. The policy succeeded also because of several new amendments which were introduced for the first time in India. All such amendments helped the Indian government to regulate the education policy with much more fidelity and freedom. Hence the 1986 National Education Policy had been considered more successful than the previous one.

The 1986 National Policy on Education was modified in 1992 by the P. V. Narasimha Rao government. In 2005, Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh adopted a new policy based on the "Common Minimum Programme" of his United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government. [9] Programme of Action (PoA) 1992, under the National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986 envisaged to conduct of a common entrance examination on all India basis for admission to professional and technical programme in the country. For admission to Engineering and Architecture/Planning programme, Government of India vide Resolution dated 18 October 2001 has laid down a Three – Exam Scheme (JEE and AIEEE at the National Level and the State Level Engineering Entrance Examinations (SLEEE) for State Level Institutions – with an option to join AIEEE). This takes care of varying admission standards in these programmes and helps in maintenance of professional standards. This also solves problems of overlaps and reduces physical, mental and financial burden

¹Source:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Policy_on_Education

²Source:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Policy_on_Education

on students and their parents due to multiplicity of entrance examinations.³

In 2019, the Ministry of Human Resource Development released a Draft New Education Policy 2019, which was followed by a number of public consultations. The Draft NEP discussed reducing curriculum content to enhance essential learning, critical thinking and more holistic experiential, discussion - based and analysis - based learning. It also talked 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 optimize learning for students based on cognitive development of children. This education policy changed the age old system of Secondary - Higher Secondary - College education system and introduced a new kind of approach towards education. 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. Some of the most important changes brought about by this education policy was

- 1) Multiple entry and exit options in degree courses
Discontinuation of M. Phil Programs
- 2) Single regulator for higher education institutes
- 3) Low stakes Board Exams
- 4) Common entrance exams for Universities
- 5) 5+3+3+4 structure corresponding to ages 3 - 8, 8 - 11, 11 - 14, and 14 - 18 years respectively
- 6) Integrate Technology with Learning and Teaching Process
- 7) PARAKH (Performance Assessment, Review, and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development), a national assessment centre has been proposed to set up to keep a regular check on the education system

NEP 2020 aims to recognize the need to evaluate "higher order skills" such as creativity, critical thinking, and problem solving, visualization, and idea generation. NEP 2020 also emphasized on multidisciplinary learning and no separations were made between vocational and academic streams. Students were given freedom to select the subjects of their choice across streams. Vocational education starts from 6th grade that also include internships. Hence the NEP 2020, brought about a dynamic range of changes that were never seen or apprehended before.

However it needed to be mentioned that, beside the three major national education policies in India, there had been several education acts and amendments which were introduced in India for the betterment of our education system by providing access and aid to the lowest classes and backward peoples, providing access to all and giving equal opportunities. Few specific examples of such acts would be; Right to Education (RTE) - Article 21 - A in the Constitution of India to provide free and compulsory education of all children in the age group of six to fourteen years as a Fundamental Right. National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level (NPEGEL), Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) for development of secondary education, launched in 2009. Saakshar Bharat (Saakshar Bharat/Adult Education) to

create a literate society through a variety of teaching learning programmes for non - literate and neo - literate of 15 years and above. Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) for development of higher education, launched in 2013. Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) - overarching programme for the school education to ensure equitable learning outcomes Inclusive Education for the Disabled at Secondary Stage (IEDSS). District Primary Education Program (DPEP) - launched in 1994 as a major initiative to revitalize the primary education system and to achieve the objective of universalisation of primary education.

2. Conclusion

Thus we could very easily see that there had been a panoramic change in the education system in India. From the Vedic ages where there had been education confined to some specific and remote places with few gurus and pupils. Education in Vedic ages was fragmentary in nature. And the medieval age had been known as a kind of dark age for education in India. But the advent of the Britishers changed the dynamics of the education system in India. They had managed to develop a system which paid of for the education in India. And based on their system, the Indian education system went on and made several necessary changes. However changes seemed to be the need of the hour. The monetary, political, religious, cultural barrier behind education was also there. But the government of India had done a remarkable job to cater to the need of the Indian society for the purpose of education.

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³Source:

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