AN ANALYSIS OF NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICIES AND CHALLENGES AND OPPORTINITIES

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Abstract: A nation can promote development- equitable and just society- by achieving full human potential through education. To become a developed society, India, not only requires a vibrant economy driven by knowledge but also a new society where justice and human values prevail. Our nation builders understood the role of education as the key catalyst for promoting socio-economic mobility in building equitable and just society. After the independence, education was largely controlled by the central government but then became a joint effort by the central and the state governments through a constitutional amendment in 1976. Education commissions and the National Policy on Education 1986, was modified in 1992 (NPE 1986/92), a major development since the last Policy, has been the Right of children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009, which laid down legal framework for achieving universal elementary education for children till 14 years of age. In spite of a rich past, India as a country is still afflicted by high percentage of illiteracy and high rate of dropouts. The previous policies on education have focused largely on issues of access and equity. In this paper an attempt has been made to enquire whether the unfinished agenda, especially of higher education, is appropriately dealt with in the National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020)? and suggest those areas to make it more inclusive Education Policy.

Key Words: Education, higher education and NEP 2020.

1. INTRODUCTION:

The National Education Policy – 2020 unveiled by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), is a landmark policy which has revolutionized the age-old colonial system of education prevailing in India. The Indian education system is a product of colonial legacy which is primarily focussed on rote learning that led to the deterioration of the basic fundamentals of education by undermining the thinking and creative skills of the students which are creating nation of only obedient followers not leaders. Rote learning is no longer the need of the 21st century education system where people need to constantly adapt to the rapidly changing situation. In order to keep pace with the current trend of globalization, there is a need of constantly improvising our skills. Proper implementation of the National Education Policy – 2020 in its true sense has the potential to bring remarkable changes by transforming the Indian education system. The main aim of National Education Policy – 2020 is to fill the gap of present education system which is totally mechanized which develops the cramming power of the students but curbs the individual thinking capability of the students. It also interrupts the free thinking of the students. Switching the method of education from rote learning to project/ activity based or experiential learning will enrich the learning experience of the learners through hands-on training experience. It will help to promote scientific temperament among the young learners. The policy framework will further enable the policy makers to bring education reforms by re-designing the structure of education system, improving teaching methods, adopting technology as an alternative means of continuing and augmenting school/ college/ university education. During the current pandemic situation, people are forced to adopt technology as a pivotal means of imparting online education which is the need of the hour today. Rather being optional this is the only means of continuing the teaching-learning process. In the current pandemic circumstances, with virtual learning replacing in-person learning experiences, students and teachers have been compelled to re-

imagine convention teaching and learning techniques. In recent years, higher educational institutions have been experiencing important changes derived from technological, sustainable, and social trends towards digitization (Milicevic, 2015; Ghemawat, 2017). The adoption of information and communication technologies (ICTs) by educational institutions is conceived as an interconnected environment that enables student digital learning (Chen and Wu, 2020). Moreover, ICTs help learnerstomake informed decisions and adopt responsible measures for the integrity of the environment and the viability of the economy. This link fosters a quality, comprehensive, and transformative.

2. METHODOLOGY :

Articles in newspapers, popular magazines, scholarly journals and important websites have been studied extensively. Also, reports published by the UGC and the MHRD sources on education have been examinedand duly acknowledged as Empirical evidence and information to justify the truth or falsity of a claim.

3. BACKGROUND TO INDIAN HIGHEREDUCATION

Indian civilization is one in all the oldest civilizationsof the world. Educational institutions have existedsince the emergence of civilization. Around 2nd century B.C. (Before Christ) the Aryans arrived in India and they were the first to make an attempt to formulate and define the nature of educational system. The natives who were referred to as 'Dasyus' had to adhere to the norms of the Aryans (Keay 1972). Thehistory of systematic education in India begins with the time of early religious centers such as Takshashilaand Nalanda which taught religion, mathematics, logicetc. (Scharfe 2002).

With the establishment of Islamic empires, in theMiddle Ages, 'Maktaba' – a primary school oftenattached to a mosque or run in private houses and 'Madrasa' – schools for higher learning generally attached to monasteries, became ingrained in Indian Islamic educational Institutions, teaching Grammar, Philosophy, Mathematics and Law. (Yechuri 1986). Western education was introduced by the Europeans during the colonial period i,e. British era. The Jesuits were the first to introduce India to both the European college system and the printing of books by establishing the Saint Paul's College, Goa in 1542. British education became solidified into with the opening of Madras Medical College in 1835. In 1894,the Women's Christian Medical College, an exclusivemedical school for women, was established inLudhiana, Punjab. (Wikipedea)

List of Commissions in India before Independence

Name ofCommissions	Year	Governor- General/Viceroy	Subjects ofCommissions
Charles WoodDispatch	1854	Lord Dalhousie	Education
Hunter Commission	1882	Lord Ripon	Education
Raleigh Commission	1902	Lord Curzon	Education
Sadler Commission	1917	Lord Chelmsford	Education
Hartog Commission	1929	Lord Irwin	Education
Sargent Plan	1944	Lord Wavell	Education

List of Commissions in India after Independence

Name ofCommissions	Year	Chairman	Subjects
University Education Commission	1948-49	Dr. S. Radhakrishan	UniversityEducation
Secondary Education Commission	1952-53	Dr. A. Lakshmanaswami Mudaliar	SecondaryEducation
The KothariCommission	1964-66	Dr. D. S. Kothari	System ofEducation
National Knowledge Commission	2005-09	Mr. Sam Pitroda	excellence in the fieldsof education, research and capacity building

4. NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICIES AND THEIR EVOLUTION :

On February 2, 1835, Thomas Babington Macaulay proposed the present form of education in India, for he believed that by attaining modern education Indians will come out of their age old traditions. Before the intervention of the British Government, the Christian missionaries spread education. Then the East India Company was forced to do something for the spread of education. Learned Englishmen, Indian intellectuals, Araya Samaj and Muslim reform movements also worked for the spread of education. We attained our independence on 15th August 1947. At that time there were 17 universities and 636 colleges, 5,297 secondary schools, 12,843 middle and 1,72,661 primary schools. The percentage of literacy was only about fourteen and the total educational expenditure was less than half a per cent of the national income (about Rs. 570 millions).

Against the above background, after the Independence, the government established several education commissions in order to address educational challenges and recommend comprehensive policies for education and also for the improvement of the education system in India. It was felt that Universities could play a significant role in the process of national development. Higher education now is easily accessible to a large segment of society. To understand the current status of education policy, it is essential to review its historical background. As per the recommendations of Kothari Commission the National Educational Policy of 1968 was formulated. The commission stated "….the destiny of India is now being shaped in her classrooms. In a world based on science and technology, it is education that determines the level of prosperity, welfare and security of people. On the quality and number of persons coming out of our schools and colleges will depend our success in the great enterprise of national reconstruction whose principal objective is to raise the standard of living of our people" (Report of the Education Commission 1964-66. Vol. 1).

National Educational Policy of 1968: It was in 1968, for the first time that a national policy on education was formulated for preparing suitable hands for shouldering responsibilities in various fields of our national reconstructions. It advocated a broadly uniform educational structure in all parts of the country and increasing gradually the investment in education. The ultimate objective was to adopt the 10+2+3 pattern. (Sharma 2004). Barring a few criticism, this policy was still hailed as the first systematic effort to give shape to Indian education.

The Five-Year Plan : Major achievements in the area of higher education First Five-Year Plan (195 1-56) In the context of higher education, the Plan laid emphasis on building up of a new system (or systems) more e suited to national needs and working out of the relationship of the various systems. The Second Five Year Plan (I 956-61). The plan stressed on improvements of the standards of college and university education. The Third Plan (1 96 1-66) recognized education as the most important single factor in achieving rapid economic development and technological progress and in creating a social order founded on the values of freedom, social justice and equal opportunity. (1961; 573).

Seventh FYP (1985-90): National Policy on Education 1986 and Draft National Policy on Education 1979) More stress on speedy implementation of various reforms already initiated, emphasizing on quality and equity. An open university, the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) was established. Eighth FYP (1992-97) National Policy on Education (1992) this plan highlighted several weaknesses such as substandard institutions, outdated curriculum, lack of research, integrated and low-cost higher education without compromising excellence and equity. An information library network "INFLIBNET" was proposed. (After a period (1989-91) of political instability),

Ninth FYP (1997-2002) Enhancing access and equity, deterioration of quality, the resource crunch and the problems of governance in higher education was main focus. To grant autonomous status to 10% of eligible colleges was targeted.

Tenth FYP (2002-2007) Enrolment in higher education in the age group 18-23 years to be raised from the present 6 per cent to 10 per cent by the end of the Plan period in the form of strategies to increasing access, quality, adoption of state-specific strategies and the liberalization of the higher education system. Eleventh FYP (2007-2012) 30 new Central Universities, 16 in States to be established where ever they do not exist and 14 as World Class Universities, 8 new IITs, 7 new IIMs, 10 new NITs, 3 IISERs (Indian Institutes of Science, Education and Research), 20 IIITs and 2 new SPAs (School of Planning and Architecture) Rapid movement and inclusion in quality by enhancing public spending, encouraging private initiatives.

Twelfth FYP (2012-2017) Planning Commission has been abolished in 2014 to usher in the NITI AAYOG (Thus, there will be no thirteenth Five Year Plan. It is important to note that the documents of the NITI Aayog have no financial role. They are only policy guide maps for the government.). Plans for inclusive expansion brought in under the RUSA (Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan) which would include up-gradation of autonomous and A rated colleges into universities, increasing the intake capacity of existing higher education institutions, encouraging existing universities to start undergraduate programmers or integrated UG-PG program; and creation of small, affiliating

College.

An appraisal of the Five-Year Plans in India reveals that the objectives of planning for higher education are related to access and equity, improvement in standards, relevance to national needs and encouragement of research and critical studies.

Trends of Government Expenditure on Higher Education as Per cent of GDP

Year	Government Expenditure on Higher Education as Percentage of GDP
1980-81	0.31
1985-86	0.38
1990-91	0.43
1994-95	0.36
1999-00	0.47
2004-05	0.31
2009-10	0.41
2010-11	0.33
2011-12	0.30
2012-13	0.35
2013-14	0.31
2014-15	0.28
2015-16	0.24
2016-17	0.26
2017-18	0.27
2018-19	0.30
2019-20	0.37
2020-22	0.60 proposed

Source: 1. Analysis of Budgeted Expenditure on Education, MHRD, Various Issues. 2. Handbook of Statistics, 2011-12 & 2012-13, Reserve Bank of India.
3. ASHE 2015, Deloitte, 4. Economic Survey 2017- 18, Union Budget

5. NEW EDUCTION POLICY 2020

The new policy replaces the previous National Policy on Education, 1986 and forms a comprehensive framework to transform both elementary and higher education in India by 2040. It focuses on five pillars: Affordability, Accessibility, Quality, Equity, and Accountability – to ensure global learning. It has beencrafted in accordance with the needs of the citizens asa demand for knowledge in society and economycalled for a need to acquire new skills on a regular basis. It ensures providing quality education and creating lifelong learning opportunities for all, leadingto full and productive employment.

6. HIGHLIGHTS OF NEP 2020
- 3.5 crore seats to be added in higher education byraising Gross Enrolment Ratio in higher education to 50 % by 2035;
- The policy envisages broad-based, multi- disciplinary, holistic Undergraduate Program with flexible curricula, creative combinations of subjects, integration of vocational education and multiple entries and exit points with appropriate certification.
- At par with IITs, IIMs Multidisciplinary Education and Research Universities (MERUs), to be set up as models of best multidisciplinary education of global standards in the country.
- An apex body for fostering a strong researchculture and building research capacity across higher education, The National Research Foundation will be created.
- With four independent verticals – National Higher Education Regulatory Council (NHERC) for regulation, General Education Council (GEC) for standard-setting, Higher Education Grants Council (HEGC) for funding, and National Accreditation Council(NAC) for accreditation, asingle overarching umbrella body for entire higher education Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) will be set up. HECI excluding medical and legal education.

- Regulation, accreditation and academic standards of both Public and private higher education institutions will be governed by the same set of norms.
- A stage-wise mechanism is to be established for granting graded autonomy to colleges and affiliation of colleges is to be phased out in 15 years.
- over a period of time, it is envisaged that every college would develop into either an Autonomous degree-granting College or a constituent college of a university.
- From the year 2022 session, National Testing Agency will conduct a common college entrance exam twice a year.
- M.Phil degree to be discontinued.
- All higher education institutions like IITs will become multidisciplinary with greater inclusion of arts and humanities subjects for science students and vice-versa by 2040.
- 100 top universities in the world will be facilitated to operate in India.
- To reach 6% of GDP in the Education sector at the earliest, the Centre and the States will work together.

7. FINDINGS & SUGGESTIONS :

1. The policy is a vision document that fails to be inclusive of the bottom-most strata of society and provides little to no relief to the poor, women and caste and religious minorities, as it glosses over key concerns of access to education which have long prevailed. There has to be comprehensive roadmap and coherent implementation strategy in place to execute this grand vision.

2. Many milestones and a commitment to finances necessary to execute this plan aren't clearly defined. Take, for example, the line: "The Centre and the States will work together to increase the public investment in the Education sector to reach 6% of GDP at the earliest. No one can hold the government accountable as there is no clear commitment.

3. Three Language formula: Though the policy does not compel this provision, it is crafted in a manner that leaves little choice and flexibility with the students
/teachers /schools.

4. The NEP 2020 is silent on the RTE Act and universalisation of education will not be achieved without legal backing: There is no mechanism to link primary and secondary education with the RTE. This is not binding on the centre/state legally. Without the RTE Act, universalisation will be very difficult."

5. There is no commitment towards affirmative action for the socially and economically disadvantaged: The NEP 2020 omits mentioning any policy directive affirming the rights/reservation of SC, ST, OBCs in academic institutions- for students or teachers. It relies heavily on privatising education but there are no alternatives suggested as a way forward for the socially marginalised.

6. Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) providing a much broader scope is a move towards a monolithic, homogenised and centralised education system..

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