

NPE 1986 & PROGRAM OF ACTION 1992 AIMING AT DEMOCRATIZING EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

In a country like India, it is imperative to democratize education. Various initiatives and attempts have been made by the Government of India in order to achieve education for all. The government lays down directives for the future course of action towards realizing some perceived goals through policy formulation. The goal lies in various aspects of the welfare of people in a democratic society. Well defined thrust has been laid down on education for the wellbeing of the Indian nation and the Indian society at the national and local level. Even in early Indian history, education was an important aspect of the administrative policies of the government. The modern trend of education can be traced to British colonial government. In the post-independence time in India, one of the important initiatives of the government of India is towards democratizing education. This is reflected in the National Policy of Education, 1986 and its modified policy, 1992 which is known as Programme of Action.

KEYWORDS: National Policy Of Education (NEP), 1986, Programme Of Action (POA), 1992, Democratization, Education.

INTRODUCTION

When the National Policy of Education was formulated for democratizing the educational scenario in our country in 1968, it was planned that it would be followed by a 'five yearly review to progress and working out of new policies and programs.' In light of this statement, at the time of formulation of every new Five-Year plan, a review has been made to assess the shortcomings and achievements of education and finally to decide on some plans or programs for the coming Five Years. It is through formulating the policies and chalking out programs that India seeks to democratize its system of education to express and promote its unique socio-cultural identity and also to meet the challenges of the

times. The National Policy of Education of 1986 is the result of the reviews which were discussed and adopted during the budget session of 1985. Later, a committee was constituted under the chairmanship of Acharaya Rammurti in May 1990 to review National Policy of Education (NPE) and to make recommendations for its modifications. The Central Advisory Board of Education, a committee constituted in July 1991 under the chairmanship of Shri N. Janadhana Reddy took into account some modifications in NPE at the close heels of the report of the Rammurti Committee and other relevant development having a bearing on the policy. This Committee submitted its report in January 1992.

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Subsequently this is known as National Programme of Action of 1992. This policy aimed to promote national progress, a sense of common citizenship and culture, and to strengthen national integration. It realized the need for a radical reconstruction of the education system, to improve its quality at all stages, and therefore paid greater attention to science and technology, the cultivation of moral values and a better relation between education and the life of the people.

OBJECTIVES

The main objective of the National Policy of Education of 1986 and Programme of Action, 1992 was to evolve such a national system of education in which all students irrespective of caste, creed, sex, and religion have access to education of a comparable quality. Actually, the objectives of this policy had been divided into several aspects.

- The following are the major objectives of National Policy of Education 1986 in relation to Elementary Education: i) Universal access and enrolment, ii) Universal retention of children up to 14 years of age, and iii) A sustainable improvement in the quality of education to enable all children to achieve essential levels of learning.
- National Policy of Education focused on the improvement of the quality of secondary education. Effort to be made to provide computer literacy in as many secondary level institutions to make the students equipped with necessary computer skills.
- As far as higher education is concerned, National Policy of Education and Programme of Action of 1986 and 1992 stressed that higher education should provide to the people with an opportunity to reflect on the critical social, economic, cultural, moral and spiritual issues.
- In this way, the basic objectives of the

National Policy of Education of 1986 and Programme of Action of 1992 stressed that education must play a positive and interventionist role in correcting social and regional imbalance, empowering women, and in securing rightful place for the disadvantaged and the minorities. Government was expected to be strongly determined and committed to provide education for all, the priority areas being free and compulsory education, covering children with special needs, eradication of illiteracy, education for women's equality and special focus on the education of S.C.s (Scheduled Castes) and S.T.s (Scheduled Tribes) and Minorities.

- As highlighted in the N.P.E., the educational policy also stressed on enhancing and promoting the vocationalization of education, adult education, education for the mentally and physically challenged persons, non-formal education, open universities and distance learning, rural university, early childhood care and education. It was also an important policy to delink degrees from job making it one of the basic objectives of National Policy of Education of 1986.

The basic objectives of NPE of 1986 and its modified policy in 1992 have incorporated the following recommendations to democratize education in true spirit:

EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION

Integrated Child Development service, Balwadis, Pre-Primary schools of the State government and Municipalities, Day-care centers and training institutes of teachers and the existing facilities of pre-primary education were recommended for strengthening them, and getting increased attention from the Government. Moreover, the system of monitoring and evaluation had to be strengthened.

ELEMENTARY EDUCATION, NON-FORMAL EDUCATION AND OPERATION BLACKBOARD

National Policy of Education and its modified policy stressed on elementary education as (i) universal enrolment and universal retention of children up to 14 years of age and (ii) a substantial improvement in the quality of education. Besides these, this policy also calls for a drive for a substantial improvement of the primary schools and provision of support service. Even some steps have been recommended for securing participation of girls and of children from the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes families, other educationally backward section and minorities.

In context of operational blackboard, the policy foresaw the following facilities that should be kept for implementing the operational blackboard. (i) two reasonably large rooms that are usable in all weather; (ii) necessary toys and games material; (iii) blackboards, (iv) maps, (v) charts, and (vi) other learning materials.

Modern technological tools such as solar packs for provision of power in non-formal education centers, audio-visual aids, and radio-cassette players were to be used to improve the learning environment of non-formal education centers as well as to enhance the quality of non-formal education.

SECONDARY EDUCATION AND NAVODAYA VIDYALAYAS

Regarding Secondary education, the National Policy of Education of 1986 stressed on the extension of the school system in the unserved areas consolidating the existing facilities and providing special arrangements for the gifted children and high achievers. 'Under the scheme of Navodaya Vidyalaya for catering to the category of high achievers such Vidyalayas will be

set up in each district during the 7th five year plan period.' [1]

The arrangements should require:

- I. Program to ensure access to secondary education being widened to cover unserved areas
- II. Program of consolidation in other areas
- III. Program of setting up Navodaya Vidyalayas

Moreover, as a short term measure, the State Government was expected to open secondary schools in unserved areas taking blocks as a unit having a lower ratio than 1:2:5 duly considering the present distance of habitation from the nearest secondary school and population in the unserved habitation.

VOCATIONALIZATION OF EDUCATION

Socially Useful Productive Work/ Work Experience was expected to create an integral part of the curriculum from classes 1 to 5 in many states. 'Hence the program of SUPW/ WE is expected to ensure modest preparation for students before they leave the school, to enable them to choose the occupation.' [2]

At the middle stage, the work experience program aimed at developing confidence and sufficient psycho-motor skills to students through certain occupational training courses. 'Self-employment skills will be developed in vocational stream through curriculum special training programs as well as paid apprenticeship facilities.' [3]

HIGHER EDUCATION

The National Policy of Education of 1986 and its revised policy, also known as Programme of Action of 1992 had stressed on higher education, particularly on graduate, post-graduate and research work. It recommended that autonomous colleges be established according to UGC directives. Technical institutes like medical,

engineering, agriculture universities etc. should be established and development of vocational skill be stressed upon. The following were the strategies devised for improving the innovations in higher education:

- I. Consolidation and expansion of institutions
- II. Development of autonomous colleges and departments
- III. Redesigning courses
- IV. Training of teachers
- V. Strengthening research
- VI. Improvement in efficiency
- VII. Creation of structures for co-operation at the state and national levels
- VIII. Mobility

In addition to these, the AICTE (All India Council of Teacher Education) had spelled out certain norms and standards for diploma, degree and Post Graduate courses in the various fields. Guidelines were issued for admission to technical institutions on merit to be followed by all concerned. The National Technical Manpower Information System had been established by the Government of India with a view to generate a strong data base to monitor the supply and utilization of engineering and technical manpower at the national and individual state level to ensure a planned development of technical education.

OPEN UNIVERSITY AND DISTANCE EDUCATION

Systems such as Open University and Distance Education have been designed to promote the accessibility of education at higher stage as well as to make higher education as flexible as is required by the learners. The Central Open University which is known as Indira Gandhi National Open University has been assigned the task of coordinating the distance learning system in the country and determining its standards to develop and strengthen the Open University system. 'The Open university system augments

opportunities for higher education, ensures access, is cost effective and promotes a flexible and innovative system of education.'[4]

The National Policy of Education and its Revised Policy have to develop some conditions relating to the Open University system and distance mode of learning which are as follows:

- I. The Indira Gandhi National Open University was to initiate action for its academic program.
- II. The courses were to be structured on a modular pattern in such a way that the facility for accumulation of credits was available. Provision had to be made for transfer of credits from formal to non-formal system and vice-versa.
- III. Standards had to be prescribed to determine the minimum level of learning at every stage of education and criteria had to be evolved to objectively assess this level of attainment so that the opportunities had to be provided to all including housewives, agricultural and industrial workers and professionals to continue their education.
- IV. State Governments had to ensure that open universities were established after very careful planning and were provided the required resources and facilities.

RURAL UNIVERSITIES AND INSTITUTES

The National Policy of Education of 1986 and its Revised Policy of 1992 stressed the fact that the rural universities and institutions be developed in rural areas after studying the needs of such pattern of educational institutions in such communities as well as the program of Gandhian Basic Education be strengthened. 'The courses offered by the universities have not been reorganized to meet the demands of the times. Their relevance and utility are constantly questioned. The emphasis on autonomy of colleges and departments was envisaged.'[5] "The rural university of rural institute is not

envisaged as a traditional institution which lays down minimum qualification for admission, well defined courses of study, award of diplomas and degrees based on examination..... seek to integrate all aspects of education with productive and creative activities horizontally across disciplines of science, technology, humanities.... primary to higher education.'[6]

TECHNICAL AND MANAGEMENT EDUCATION

The policy amplified that technical and management education system should be clustered with reference to the interrelated objectives, priorities and programs of the key functional areas like development of human resource development spectrum with great potentials for adding values to products and services and for contributing to the national economy and improving quality of life of the people.

MAKING THE SYSTEM WORK

The National Policy of Education and its Revised Policy, known as Programme of Action, mentioned the necessity of introducing discipline into the present system of education. It had also been mentioned by the NPE and POA that the teacher's accountability towards the profession should be fixed for improving the students' service. The behavior of the students was to be promoted in accordance with acceptable norms; and also better facilities for the educational institutions be ensured to derive the performance of the institutions.

DE-LINKING OF DEGREES FROM JOBS AND MANPOWER PLANNING

The National Policy of Education and its revised policy also felt the need that some job-oriented degree courses as well as skill oriented courses should be initiated for promoting human capital

in the state as well as in the nation. 'The policy visualizes de-linking of university degrees from the requirement of services for which a university degree need not be a necessary qualification. This will lead to refashioning of job specific courses.'⁷

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

In National Policy of Education and POA, the stress was put on research as an essential component of higher education because of its role in creating new knowledge and insights imparting innovations and dynamism to the educational process.

WOMEN EDUCATION

The N.P.E. and POA attached importance to the problems of universalization of elementary education as, in essence, the problem of the girl child and on the increasing participation of girls at all stages of education, particularly in streams like sciences, vocational, technical and commerce education. The POA also focused on the need for reorienting the education system to promote women's equality in education. 'The NPE envisages that education would be used as a strategy for achieving a basic change in the status of women.'[8]

It pleaded the need for institutional mechanism to ensure that gender sensitivity be reflected in the implementation of all national programs. The national education system was expected to play a positive role in the empowerment of women and contribute towards the development of new values through redesigned curricula and text books with women's studies being promoted as part of the various courses. 'The NPE envisages that education would be a means for reducing economic, social and gender disparities.'[9]

The main strategies to promote women education by the NPE and POA are as mentioned hereunder:

- I. To prepare the entire education system to plan a positive interventionist role in the empowerment of women,
- II. To encourage women's studies as a part of various courses and to encourage the educational institutions to take up active programs to further women's development.
- III. To put in place a dynamic managerial structure to cope with the targets envisaged.

EDUCATION OF SCHEDULED CASTES AND SCHEDULED TRIBES, AND BACKWARD SECTIONS

The top priorities were to be accorded to opening primary schools in tribal areas, scheduled caste areas and backwards areas, according to the NPE and POA. In addition to these, cent percent enrolment of SC/ ST children in the age group of 6-11 years ensuring their retention in school leading to satisfactory completion of the primary stage of education or its equivalent through the non-formal stream has to be achieved by 1990. At least 75 percent of the children in the age group of 11-14 years had to be enrolled and retained in school leading to satisfactory completion of class VIII according to the NPE and POA. Some of the recommendations of the policy related to the Scheduled tribes, Scheduled caste and backward sections are as follows:

- I. The socio-cultural milieu of the STs had its distinctive characteristics including, in many cases, their own spoken languages. This highlights the need to develop the curricula and devise instructional materials in tribal languages at the initial stages, with arrangements for switching over to the regional language.
- II. Educated and promising Scheduled Tribe youths had to be encouraged and trained to take up teaching in tribal areas.
- III. Residential schools, including Ashram Schools, had to be set up on a large scale.
- IV. Incentive schemes had to be formulated for the Scheduled Tribes, keeping in view their special needs and life styles. Scholarships for higher education had to be stressed for technical, professional and para-professional courses. Special remedial courses and other programs were to be undertaken to remove psycho-social impediments so as to improve their performance in various courses.
- V. Anganwadis, non-formal and Adult Education Centers had to be opened on a priority basis in areas predominantly inhabited by the Scheduled Tribes.
- VI. The curriculum at all stages of education had to be designed to create an awareness of the rich cultural identity of the tribal people and also of their enormous creative talent.
- VII. Pre-matric Scholarship scheme for children of Scheduled caste whose families were involved in occupations such as scavenging, flaying and tanning were to be made applicable from Class I onwards. Regardless of incomes, all children of such families had to be covered by this scheme and time-bound programs were targeted on them to be undertaken;
- VIII. Constant micro-planning and verification had to be ensured in the context of enrolment, retention and successful completion of courses by SC students, and provision of remedial courses be provided in order to improve their prospects for further education and employment.
- IX. Recruitment of teachers from Scheduled Castes was a priority;
- X. Recruitment of teachers from Scheduled tribes was also a top priority;
- XI. Provision of facilities for SC students in students' hostels at district headquarters was to get preference, according to a phased program;
- XII. Location of school buildings, Balwadis and Adult Education centers had to be in such a way as to facilitate full participation of the

Scheduled Castes;

XIII. The utilization of Jawahar Rozgar Yojana resources was to make substantial educational facilities available to the Scheduled Castes;

XIV. Suitable incentives should be provided to all the educationally backward sections of the society, particularly in the rural areas. Hill and desert districts, remote and inaccessible areas and islands should be provided with adequate institutional infrastructure.

MINORITIES EDUCATION

Article 29 and Article 30 of the Constitution guarantee the right of minorities to conserve the language, script and culture and to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice whether based on religion or language. The NPE and POA had strived to solve the problems of the minorities. As the minority groups are educationally deprived or backward, therefore more attention had to be paid to their education of these groups in the interest of equality and justice. 'Some minority groups are educationally deprived. Greater attention will be paid to the education of such groups.' [10] At the same time, objectivity had to be reflected in the preparation of textbooks. In all school activities, all possible steps had to be taken to promote an integration based on the appreciation of the common national goals and ideals, in conformity with the core curriculum.

EDUCATION OF THE HANDICAPPED

The NPE and POA envisaged that the education of the children with loco-motor handicap and other mild handicaps had to be similar to that of normal children. The objective was to integrate the physically and mentally handicapped with the general community as equal partners, to prepare them for normal growth and to enable them to face life with courage and confidence. The measures to achieve the targets are suggested as follows:

- I. Wherever it is practically possible, education of the children with motor handicaps and other mild handicaps has to be similar to that of normal children.
- II. Special schools with hostels are to be provided, as far as possible at district headquarters, for the severely handicapped children.
- III. Adequate arrangements are to be made to give vocational training to the disabled.
- IV. Teachers' training programs have to be reoriented, in particular for teachers of primary classes, to deal with the special difficulties of the handicapped children; and
- V. Voluntary effort for the education of the disabled has to be encouraged in every possible manner.

ADULT EDUCATION

The NPE and POA proposed that adult education had to be a means for reducing economic, social and gender disparities. The whole nation had pledged itself, through the National Literacy Mission, to the eradication of illiteracy, particularly in the age group of 15-35 years through various means, with special emphasis on total literacy campaigns.

The Central and State Governments, political parties and their mass organizations, the mass media and educational institutions, teachers, students, youth, voluntary agencies, social activist groups, and employers, have to reinforce their commitment to mass literacy campaigns. These include literacy and functional knowledge and skills, and awareness among learners about the socio-economic reality and the possibility to change it. The National Literacy Mission has to be geared to the national goals such as alleviation of poverty, national integration, environmental conservation, observance of the small family norm, promotion of women's equality, universalization of primary education, basic health-care, etc. It should also facilitate

energization of the cultural creativity of people and their active participation in development processes.

CONTENT AND PROCESS OF SCHOOL EDUCATION

NPE and POA made the followings points:

- I. There is an access to education of a comparable quality for all irrespective of caste, creed, location or sex.
- II. The norms of minimum levels of learning are introduced for different stages and provision of threshold facilities so that learning becomes a more enjoyable experience even for the slow learners.
- III. A national system of education is articulated with a common structure, and national curricular framework which contains common core.
- IV. There are examination reforms and introduction of evaluation as an ongoing process in schools for the improvement of teaching and learning.
- V. There is development of culture specific curricular and instructional material for the tribal people and educationally deprived minority groups keeping in view their rich cultural identity.
- VI. The system of teacher education is overhauled, strengthening the technical and resource support structures, including the establishment of District Institutes of Education and Training.
- VII. There is decentralization of educational administration, creation of a spirit of autonomy for educational institutions with greater role assigned to the institutional heads and development of professionalism among teachers.
- VIII. Non-governmental and voluntary efforts and people's participation are encouraged for giving impetus to innovative ideas and practices and mobilization of resources.

EVALUATION PROCESS AND EXAMINATION REFORMS

The Policy envisaged the integration of the assessment of performance with the process of learning and teaching, utilizing the process of evaluation to bring about qualitative change in education. The assessment methods have to be valid and reliable in order to ensure the student's performance. The short term measures recommended by the NPE and POA are as follows:

- I. Public examinations to continue to be held only at the levels of classes X and XII.
- II. There has to be decentralization of the operation involved in the conduct of examinations to make the system work more effectively.
- III. There has to be school boards in certain States set up in a number of sub centers to decentralize the conduct of examinations.
- IV. Continuous institutional evaluation has to be introduced at the post graduate level of the university, to begin with, in unitary universities, deemed universities and autonomous colleges.
- V. Students' performance has to be indicated through letter grades, and assessment of overall performance has to be on the basis of cumulative grade point average.
- VI. There has to be modifications in the qualifying recruitments for admission in the universities and colleges to be examined to accelerate the process of change in the level of examinations.

CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

When the national policy was being formulated, the basic emphasis was given to interlink education with culture. By interlinking education and culture, the emphasis was given on the development of child's personality, particularly in terms of helping the child to discover his inner talent and to express it creatively.

MEDIA AND EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY

The NPE and POA stressed that in order to avoid structural dualism, modern educational technology has to be reached out to the most distant areas and to the deprived sections of beneficiaries simultaneously with the areas of comparative affluence and ready availability.

TEACHER AND THEIR TRAINING

The new programs of teacher-education have to stress the need to continuing education and also the need for teachers to meet the thrusts proposed in this policy. 'The NPE places complete trust in the teaching community. It calls for substantial improvement in the conditions of work and quality of teachers' education.' [12]

District Institutes of Education and Training (DIET) have to be established with the capability to organize pre-service and in-service courses for elementary school teachers and for the personnel working in non-formal and adult education. As DIETs get established, sub-standard institutions have to be phased out. Selected Secondary Teacher Training Colleges have to be upgraded to complement the work of the State Councils of Educational Research and Training. The National Council of Teacher Education has to be provided the necessary resources and capability to accredit institutions of teacher-education and to provide guidance regarding curricula and methods. Networking arrangements have to be created between institutions of teacher education and university departments of education.

MANAGEMENT OF EDUCATION

Educational planning has to be linked to manpower planning according to the NPE and POA. For this, such mechanism has to be put in place that can link the need based requirement of the society with what it has at present.

CONCLUSION

The education system has to be such that the interests of all the stake holders are safeguarded. India made its sincere effort to democratize education by formulating its NEP in 1986 and POA in 1992. It is crucial to note that every day new challenges are emerging. What was relevant yesterday may not be true today. The history is a witness that those countries that could formulate sound policies and programs to meet the challenges of new situations have scaled new heights. Developed countries are those that are educationally developed. To make a country educationally developed, a clear cut road map has to be prepared and for that policies and strategies are required. In May 1986, India took an initiative to meet the emerging challenges and again it relooked at the whole scenario in 1992. It was known as the Programme of Action (1992). All these efforts were made to reflect the true aspirations of common men. The country had high expectations and aspirations from the NEP 1986 and POA 1992. Practically partial success could be achieved but it consoles that in a long journey at least some concrete steps have been taken to democratize education.

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