

Evolution of Ancient and Medieval Indian Education System to Contemporary

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Abstract:

Education a pivotal facet of one's life is the secret to success. It remains with a person from cradle to grave. The famous words of Mahatma Gandhi still have semblance to modern times. "Education should be revolutionized as to answer the wants of the poorest villager, instead of answering those of an imperial exploiter." Education as a volatile process has led man to consciously or unconsciously develop his internal power. The contribution of education in national integration and social development is unprecedented. Since time immemorial in all the civilized societies of the global education has played a notable role in creating an environment of International understanding. While examining the theme of education one realizes that so many philosophies are explicitly linked to it. Naturalism, Pragmatism and Idealism have different yet integrated orientation of Self-Expression. Education gives more importance to world of ideas than the world of objects. Pragmatism develops democratic outlook by focussing on principle of reality and learning things by doing. Education has helped us to recognize the worth of legacy of ancient Indian culture and vice versa. Education purify culture on the basis of essence of realities of life. Standard education and skill development help us lead a constructive life. Action should be the final product of education. It is a long term capital investment yielding high rates of return. After a comprehensive discourse on evolution of Indian education system, this research paper shall dissect extensively the NEP 2020 as a standard yardstick which shall accord highest precedence to remoulding the academic excellence by introducing variegation in Higher Education Commission of India (HECI). Nevertheless the discussion in today's conference will remain biased if we will not venture into exhaustive opportunities and challenges in multifaceted environment where a rational and stabilized approach will serve as a blueprint for a viable and sustainable future ahead.

Keywords: Education policy, Higher education, NEP 2020,

INTRODUCTION

When I was delving into the realm of my research subject, I felt at that point of time that it is very much pertinent to quote the words of 'Machiavelli of India'. He said "Education is the best friend. An educated person is respected everywhere. Education beats the beauty and the youth". Didactic learning was the norm of Ancient Education System. During the Vedic era, learning unfolded under the tutelage of 'Guru'. Adulation of the 'Acharya' was more in vogue than the sovereign of that time. Literary Sources and various agencies of education elucidate that both mystical and cognitive educational understanding were worthy of excellence. A strong conviction and the sense of appreciation in so called holy 'Guru' was indispensable for embracing the life of Gurukul.

With the dawn of Buddhism, the three pitakas : Vinayapitakas, Suttapitakas and Abhidhamma Pitaka ,

societal structure was laid on the canonical literature and the ethical code of belief of Lord Buddha. The ultimate goal of education during Buddhist period was piousness in human character. Inception of Medieval period [8th C.E.] saw Maktab- Madrasah system where the parallel was drawn between the Science and Humanities. In Maktab students were taught reading, writing and arithmetic apart from religious education. During Akbar's reign, many subjects such as astrology, law, philosophy, political science etc were introduced. Oral methods and memorization of the designed lessons was primarily relied upon. Although women and girls were honoured by the community but not all of them were given adequate attention in terms of education. Only the women belonging to affluent sections of the society had the privilege of obtaining education.

The motto of British education system was to create low self esteem among Indians as British rule left no stone unturned in denigrating India's ancient past. Whatever the case the ultimate receptor of their education system was the creamy layer of the society. When we were subjected to colonial law "Minute on Indian Education" by Thomas Babington Macaulay espoused unequivocal policy of substantial thriving of English both as medium of instruction and pioneering of English educational institutions. Wood's Despatch gave an empirical outlook rather as it was inclusive of Indian literature and civilization. 1882 Hunter Commission proposed reforms at all hierarchical levels- primary, secondary and university education. Furtherance of female education brought to fore insufficient provisions in women education. Indian University Commission Act [1902 and 1904] introduced various other appraisals like amendments in curriculum and examination apparatus. Gokhale's Bill [1910-1912] accentuated Primary Education.

Sadler Commission Report [1917] recommended extension of Technological, Professional and Vocational Education. In Pre- Independent India "Sargent Committee Report" [1944] overhauled Employment Bureau, Recreative and Social Activities.

Education in post-Independence Era made following watershed documents as the focus of attention:

1. Bhagwan Sahay Committee Report [1972]
2. Secondary Education Commission [1952-53]
3. Indian Education Commission [1964-66]
4. National Policy on Education [1986]
5. Revised National Policy [1992]
6. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan [2001]
7. National Curriculum Frame Work [NCF-2005]
8. Right to Education Act [2009]
9. National Education Policy [2020]

Accelerated development in the domain of education will prepare the way for vista of Global Education development agenda manifested in the Goal 4 (SDG4) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted by India in 2015. The National Education Policy 2020 is the first and foremost education policy of the 21st century which strives to grapple with the many developmental injunctions of our nation. The locus is based not just on critical scrutiny and investigative approach- but also social, moral and inner temperament of our youth. The legacy of Indian knowledge and wisdom has been a beacon for this Policy. We visualize that in upcoming time this policy infuses the spirit of pride in being Indian and orientation that underpin the allegiance to sustainable development and living and global well- being, thereby envisioning the character of a truly global citizen.

1. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY:

In contemporary scenario, it has become very vital to examine the functioning of NEP 2020 in align with the shifting priorities where research, technology, holistic learning, all fall within the ambit of higher learning landscape. The qualitative nature of paper will throw light on contribution of NEP 2020 in creating a conducive learning-research environment where indagation in education as a form of public service and pride of our nation will make us embark on a journey making us a vibrant part of our intellectual education system.

1.1 Research Methodology

The study undertaken for this research paper is descriptive and illustrative in its approach. It relies on secondary data collected and then compiled from websites which included Government of India, NEP 2020 brochure, publications, journals, newspapers etc.

1.2 Objectives of the study

1. To overcome all the stumbling blocks that will help the policy makers and educationist to work in collaboration in order to make sure that qualitative education is easily attainable to the entire student community.
2. To focus more on empiricism and experimentation rather than solely having theoretical approach while gaining knowledge and information.
3. To foster the growth of multiculturalism and multilingualism by executing the idea of Inclusive education in all spheres of learning.
4. To motivate all stakeholders to work together in over coming barriers in achieving the ultimate agenda of New Education Policy 2020.

1.3 Discussion

In the lives of the inhabitants of 'Bharatvarsha' Vedic knowledge held a position of unique significance. After the upanayana ceremony, students followed the rules of cloistered ashrams which were secluded from the settled areas. With the population explosion during the Gupta Age, educational seminary in urban areas became widespread. Listening and ruminating were some of the methods to explore wisdom in ancient India. Empirical knowledge always held more prominence than theoretical knowledge. Forests were their classrooms which provided salubrious environment to the students. In Taxila and Nalanda metamorphized into urban institutions where logic, philosophy, grammar, metaphysics, arts etc were instructed. Students even from China and Central Asia were drawn into vibrant environment of higher learning into these institutions. Kautilya's Arthashastra was used as an educational tool to train the kings and princes in politics (danda-niti), economics (vartta), philosophy (anvisiki), and historical traditions (itihasa). There had been some women luminaries like Gargi, Maitreyi, Lopamudra, Maya, the mother of the Buddha. In spite of the contributions of Vedic women, the imperious patriarchal society exercised control over the educational organisation. During the supremacy of Rashtrakuta dynasty in 945 CE, royal patronage was provided to numerous centres of learning and state sponsored education was encouraged. In Temple schools [12th-13th centuries] replicas of manuscripts were made and safeguarding of reference material was also taken of. Chinese scholars Xuanzang and Yi Ling took long voyage to India to study Buddhist scripts in Indian institutions. By the 12th century incursions from India's northern frontier disturb the traditional educational framework as loot and plunder was undertaken by foreign army troops.

1.4 Islamic coenobium under erudite scholars like Nizamauddin Auliya and Moniuddin Chisti became powerful educators and students from Afghanistan and Bukhara travelled to India to study Indian texts in the humanities and sciences. 18th century prominent educational school of learning was the Madrasah-i-Rahimiyah founded by Shah Abdur Rahim. His son Shah Waliullah advocated for a perfect balance by amalgamation of Islamic scriptures with Scientific studies. Akbar's reign saw comprehensive approach, where agriculture, geography and Patanjali work in Sanskrit were influenced by the scholarly work of Chanakya, Aristotle, Bhaskara II and Ibn Sina. Even an orthodox ruler like Aurangzeb endorsed the study of administrative subjects. Code of conduct in educational set up was quite firm in its approach. During this era teachers had great expertise in both theological studies and had great command on their subject.

1.5 British educational system had its rigid premises in India with the institutionalization of missionary schools in the 19th century. Condensed educational network based on occidental curriculum was occupied by male aristocratic class of the society of that time. The Madras Medical College opened in 1835 admitted women and the concept of educated women in the noble medical profession gained immense adoration. Madan Mohan Malaviya at the 21st Symposium of Indian National Congress announced his objective of establishing a university in Varanasi.

Without further ado, let us explore the opportunities as well as challenges in chronological order right from National Policy on Education [NPE] 1986 still National Education Policy [2020]. NPE was promulgated by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1986, then by Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao in 1992 and NEP 2020 by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2020.

1.6 NPE 1986 Dimensions

Irregular developments in the field of higher education called for the need to meet the requisites of that time. It called for innovative transformation in teaching and research. Building up Research and development of autonomous colleges and departments required mobility and designing of structures and collaboration at the State and National levels. The State Councils of Higher Education also called for diversification and vocalization of courses. UGC monitored the overall execution and implementation of special programmes located especially in far flung areas. Capitalization of research in universities and associating education along with merger of elements of innovative research industries and recognition of creative potential. UGC was the apex body on which was structured the working of different areas of research. An apparatus will be set up which shall maintain and uplift the catalytic norms and standards of the institutions. It was pivotal to make possible the extension service which could only be accomplished with greater involvement of teachers and students in both teaching as well as research component. The stewardship of the entire system could only be given stimulus through manpower planning, thrust on technical and computerized areas along with fillip to technical teacher education and training. Entrepreneurship flourishment, women's education, staff development, strengthening existing cells, technical education for women and handicapped etc were some of the other strategies that endeavoured to facilitate the entire process. Education for the marginalized section of society like SC, ST etc was emphasized in the interests of National growth and development.

1.7 NPE 1992

It was an amended version of NPE 1986 where at that time matter in question like women emancipation, gender disparity, special economical schemes and financial funding to underprivileged

sections of our society. It was pertinent to frame curriculum that was more frame to students from diverse socio-cultural backgrounds. Specialized training schools were established for teachers to sensitize the educators so as to merge them with conventional academic fields. Professional development of teacher training programmes with technological infrastructure merger shall make curriculum more appealing to the learners.

1.8 NEP 2020

After accomplishing a lot, there are still some important junctures at certain phases where we have to attain milestones. What struck me the most about this imperative policy was its aspiration of pursuing the path of Indian philosophy and knowledge system as the paramount human ambition. Salvation and redemption as the goals in world-class institutions of ancient India such as Nalanda, Vikramshila, Takshashila, Vallabhi, received scholars and students from different socio-cultural milieu and countries. Great academicians such as Susruta, Aryabhata, Panini, Patanjali, Nagarjuna, Gautama, Madhava etc were some of the pioneers whose endowment in their respective disciplines such as yoga, fine arts, mathematics, surgery, civil engineering, architecture etc had a lasting impact on the world's rich cultural diversity. Indian thought and wisdom shall aim to strengthen the legacy of our posterity and magnify its uses once implemented through our education system. Some of the below given rudimentary guidelines are both the challenges as well as opportunities of our educational institutions where ideal integration and cooperation is required at all stages of education and learning.

1. 1. Nurturing holistic development of a student in both scholastic and non scholastic areas
2. 2. Learners shall have open opportunities to choose their own avenues according to their caliber and vocation.
3. 3. Unity and integrated perspective of learning shall be introduced
4. 4. No parrot like learning for evaluative assessments. Equally important shall be co curricular activities.
5. 5. Fostering stimulating and encouraging creative potential of learners
6. Promotion of Constitutional and ethical values
7. Creation of multilingual environment
8. Educational planning and framework
9. Giving due regard to national as well as local curriculum
10. Equitableness and being impartial for prosperity of all the students
11. Coordination and proper teamwork in curriculum designing
12. Cornerstone of learning process are teachers whose regular professional growth and service conditions should be regularly upgraded.
13. Right form of governance and autonomy as well as empowerment for ensuring transparent growth.
14. Pride in rich tradition and diverse culture of our motherland
15. 15. Accessibility to quality education which no child should be denied
16. Proper impetus to philanthropic and community involvement

1.9 NEP 2020 [Higher Education]

Higher education has entitled an individual to study from assortment of different specialized areas of interest at a deeper and vast level. Value- Added and skill enhancement courses will also add to the

development of constructive and cohesive educational community. Some of the paramount problems faced by Higher education system include inefficient working of regulatory body, low level of leadership, dearth of teachers, narrow perspective related to impartment of education, less focus on psychological aspects of learning etc. Renovation of institutional framework by ending the compartmentalization of institutions and introducing cross-disciplinary research. Granting of fair autonomy to a constituent college which shall grant autonomous level degree. Aim of establishing one large multidisciplinary HEI in every district. Introduction of Open Distance Learning and online courses will be preferred in blended mode. Private institutions with public spirited dedication shall be given impetus. Accreditation criterion shall be maintained through suitable guidance and governmental patronage. Reintroducing liberal arts will further enhance the passion of team work, creating social and moral awareness and will refine the aesthetic, emotional, ethical potential in a holistic way. Multiple exit and entry options and the complete overhauling of hierarchical level of education in multidisciplinary universities will render more flexibility and meticulous specialization. Projects based on realistic and practical aspects of learning will be one of the parameters to further enhance employability opportunities. HEIs will undertake investigation in all frontier areas of all main streams with the help of conducive resources such as recreation, labs, sports, technology and other suitable infrastructure. Our country will become destination for world class education where meaningful opportunities and collaborative efforts will be put into action with foreign institutions. Legislative structure will allow high performing Indian universities to set up their premises in other countries. Financial funding assistance in the form of scholarships to reserved sections of our society will be made available through various remedies. At the most basic level, appreciating and prompting the faculty in meeting the targets by regulating the recruitment and career advancement process. Faculty should be allowed to frame their own pedagogical methodologies in institutional service. Some of the students decide to leave the course midway. For them the instrument of Academic Bank of Credits is quite beneficial. This digitally store the credits earned by students in colleges or universities. But still in the 21st century there are certain paramount challenges that need to be specifically attended to.

1. Immense diversification requires infrastructural and investment backing. At the same time funds are prerequisites for adequate digital learning tools at all hierarchical levels. Still it's a major challenge to establish National Research Foundation but the resources required for its funding remain ambiguous.
2. Teacher Training will be a time consuming process as we have to still transform and make amendments in current education system in order to bring necessary qualitative changes as within its ambit fall both urban and rural areas. This also might impact the present proposed assessment process.
3. Our current education system still suffers from regional disparities, socio-economic differences and gender inequality. To strike a balance between theoretical and practical education for the overall development of all the faculties of an individual is one of the complex challenge to address.
4. There is an apprehension that the penetration of private sector involvement in the field of education might make it commercialized and emphasis may shift towards profit-oriented motives.
5. Some of the policy makers are concerned about the eroding of multilingual diverse nature of our society due to a three-language formula.

2. Conclusion:

Overall NEP 2020 appeals for total rejuvenation in education sector through the ‘light but tight’ regulatory measures as stated in its journal. A committed agency for organising the management of sophisticated digital infrastructure which will provide a proper backbone to e-education and e-learning needs in order to create a lively ecosystem which will prioritize the technical demands of India’s transforming e-digital content and world class apparatus of digital capacity. Designing of E-courses curriculum in local languages require tech based options especially for adult learning. Timely implementation across the country in an encompassing manner both at the Central and State levels will lead to smooth headway in the satisfactory implementation of the Policy in all the forthcoming years.

References:

1. Below given are the details of all the sources from where I have collected the information:
2. <https://www.education.gov.in/nep>
3. https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4715999
4. <https://prsindia.org/articles-by-prs-team/the-national-education-policy-2020-recommendations-and-the-current-situation>
5. Books by Prof. Dr. AK Khare & Dr. H K Sahjwani .