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Envisioning New Education Policy 2020 at the Turn of 21st Century

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Abstract:

Education plays a powerful role in building nation. Education decides the future of the nation and the destiny of its people. The impact of education is long lasting one in terms of growth and development of the nation and its citizen. The role of education and its importance cannot be ignored in today's scenario. The growth and development of education can be seen if we compare the pre-independence and post-independence era. After 34 years the Indian Government is going to change the way we study, and this is the third amendment in the education policy in India.

The New Education Policy 2020 visualized to provide a quality education which is beneficial to meet the growing economy in India. The new policy is aiming to achieving majorly three aspects such as highest quality, equity and integrity in the education system from schooling to higher education. The current education policy existing in India is concentrating majorly on theoretical aspects which lack the practical training among the students, i.e., the major drawback for meeting the global job opportunities. Therefore, the Education Policy 2020 is aiming to develop creative potential, skill and analytical thinking which are the need in the global market. Thus, in this backdrop the present paper is an attempt to know the society's response from the various stakeholders where they can know in prior what they are going to learn and how it is beneficial to develop themselves to meet the future changes in economy and also at the same time will try to focus on the level of awareness and future impact of the New Education Policy 2020 by asking a series of questions floating among the different section of stakeholders in the society.

Introduction: Educational policy or legislation is directly related to an ideal educational standard or model such as that which suits manpower requirements of the economy. It can be easily noted that education policy is determined by various inherent factors such as socio-economic changes. A framework of educational policy analysis involves a process in which various stakeholders analyze, generate, implement, assess and redesign policies. The field of education all over the world has been characterized by shifting positions largely influenced by the local micro economic changes and other regional priorities.

Every society is characterized by both the accumulation of capital and knowledge. The exercise of knowledge production and accumulation cannot be dissociated from the overall mechanism of planning within any society. Knowledge production and accumulation has often been identified with schooling, though its scope extends far beyond this to include intellectual and social development of the individual and society. Education is considered as an instrument of social policy, in the sense not only of policies for welfare but also as policies intended to deal with the structure of society. Educational policies emphasize that educational aims have to be in accordance with local circumstances and goals such as to secure accessibility, equality, democracy, quality, publicity, transparency and cooperation within the education sector.

A country's education system has been seen as a means of bringing about social change. It cannot be considered in isolation from other key public policies such as for labour market and social policies. Moreover, education also concerns closer connections with the health, science and environmental policy areas. These concerns are closely related. Fundamental to building better links between education and other policy areas is the education sector's capacity to clearly articulate its objectives, to demonstrate how these are inter-related with wider social and economic developments, and to identify and implement cost-effective policies and programmes.

Policy, therefore, is a course of action. Understanding the general idea of governmental policy practices designed to encourage expected social behavior is more important in getting on with the task of identifying processes involved and the emerging policies. Policy making is concerned with the educational decisions in the area of conflict resolution and/or resource allocation. It involves establishing the educational system, selection of leadership, laying out the course of action and defining how to administer educational affairs. Thus, educational policy deals with the expected outcome of the government. It is intended to affect the 'real' world, by guiding the decisions that are made.

Tracing the History of Education System and Educational Policies in India – A Brief Account: There are no available literary sources for getting an authentic understanding of educational policies in ancient India. Literary sources of 1000 A.D. and onwards give a reasonably adequate knowledge of the policies that governed the ancient education system in India, the prominent sources being the Rigveda, the Aranyakas, the Upanishads, the Epics and the Puranas (Scharfe, 2002).

The education system of ancient India was culturally and spiritually enriched and advanced. Ancient Indian thinkers regarded education as an instrument which puts an ignorant person on the path of an intellectual, progressive, moral and virtuous course of life. The foundation of ancient education was religion. As religion played predominant part in the education system, the ultimate aim of the same was to seek “*moksha*”. Sanskrit was considered to be the mother of many languages and sciences was also the language of learned men and the language of teaching. Later, the Gurukul system of education came into existence. The Gurukuls were the traditional Hindu residential schools of learning. This system was considered as the oldest and most effective system of education.

After the Vedic period, there developed large kingdoms of powerful kings who wanted to develop an advanced course of life in their society. They took keen interest in promoting the interests of higher education by giving rich donations and lands to learned scholars. And more importantly these kings enacted policies to redefine and reconstruct the education system in India. The major universities in ancient India were the Nalanda and Taxila which was known for their scholarship (Scharfe, 2002). The educational policies of Buddhism were more radical and based on equality and opened up the doors of knowledge to all. Husan Tsang in his records mentioned that in India education was widespread in the 18th century, with a school for every temple or village in most regions of the country. Thus, heterodox Buddhist education was more inclusive and the early secular Buddhist urban institutions of higher learning like Takshashila and Nalanda were very renowned in the whole world. However, the education and society of the era continued to be dominated by educated male population.

As India progressed from ancient to medieval period, its education system deteriorated. Various socio-cultural and political factors were responsible for the degradation of this most efficient and most ancient education system of the world. With the advent of the Mughal reign in India, the traditional methods of education increasingly came under Islamic influence. With the establishment of the Islamic empires in the Indian subcontinent in the middle ages, Islamic education become ingrained with the education system of India. In the Mughal period, the face of education system as well as religion changed and the Islamic tone appeared in Indian education system. Urdu, Farsi and Arabic languages replaced Sanskrit as a medium of instruction. Islamic institutions of education developed traditional Madrasas and Maktabas, which taught different subjects in Islamic scriptures. Under the rule of Akbar, the education system adopted an inclusive approach, which was quite uncommon in India. He gave respect to Indian scholars and incorporated their principles in the contemporary education system (Pandya, 2014).

In British period the introduction of western education was an event of great historical significance for the emergence of an education policy in India. Before the introduction of modern education, opportunities for learning were generally confined to a very small portion of the population. The main purpose of education system which was introduced and founded by Macaulay in the 20th century was to prepare Indian Clerks for running local the administration (Pandya, 2014). The instruction of school education was the vernacular

languages, while the higher education was granted in English only. The pioneering work in the field of education under the British was done by missionaries and thus, British education solidified in India with the establishment of missionary schools during 1920s. During 19th century in higher education, the British rule did not take adequate measures to help develop science and technology in India and instead focused more on arts and humanities.

The British government was the main agency for deciding the course that education system in India took in the pre-independence period. It helped to establish, throughout the country, a number of schools and colleges which turned out tens and thousands of educated Indians well versed in modern subjects. Though the main purpose was to produce Clerks for their administrative machinery, the fact remains that British, by spreading modern education in India (liberal and technical) played a progressive role.

A new chapter in education began with India becoming independent. In independent India the different education commissions that was set up by the government from time to time was (1) University Education Commission 1948, under the chairmanship of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, (2) Secondary Education Commission 1952, under the chairmanship of Dr. A. Lakshmanaswami Mudaliar and (3) Indian Education Commission 1964-66, under the chairmanship of D.S. Kothari. All these commissions were set up in order to address the various challenges and issues and to recommend comprehensive policies for educational problems and also for the improvement of the education system in India.

National Policy on Education 1968: In 1968 the Government of India had formulated the first National Policy on Education, in response to the recommendations of Kothari Commission. This policy sought total reformation and aimed at extending the prospects of education to all sections of the society to accomplish the goal of harmony and integration. The policy suggested the provision of compulsory education to children in the 6-14 years age group as proposed in the Indian Constitution. Further, it also recommended that regional languages must be encouraged for being used in secondary schools. The Commission was of the opinion that English had to be the medium of instruction in schools and it considered Hindi as the national language. The National Policy on Education also promoted the development of Sanskrit, which was the symbol of India's cultural heritage. This policy recommended to the government of India that six percent of the national income to be spent on education. The National Policy on Education 1968 received considerable attention as it was the first of its kind to give a proper direction to the educational system in independent India. The three language formula was seen as a step towards national integration and was viewed as a facility provided for the improvement of education among the minorities (Sharma, 2004). In spite of criticism, this policy was still hailed as the first systematic effort to give shape to Indian education.

National Policy on Education 1986: 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 and Scheduled Castes communities. To achieve such a social

integration, the policy called for expanding scholarships, adult education, recruiting more teachers from the Scheduled Castes, incentives for poor families to send their children to school regularly, development of new institutions and providing housing and services. This policy 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. This 1986 Education Policy expected to spend six percent of GDP on education (Kalyani, 2020).

Revised National Policy on Education 1992: The 1986 National Policy on Education was re-examined and modified in 1992. The Government of India set up a commission under the chairmanship of Acharaya Ramamurti in 1990 to reassess the impact of the provisions of the National Policy on Education 1986 and also to give recommendations. Later, under the chairmanship of N. Janadhana Reddy the Central Advisory Board of Education was set up. This Board considered some modifications in National Policy on Education. The report of the committee had been submitted on 1992 and it came to be known as the National Programme of Action of 1992. The National Policy on Education 1992 stressed on promotion of development and strengthening national integration. This policy of 1992 also emphasized the need for greater transformation of the Indian educational system, with a focus on quality enhancement. The policy also stressed on developing moral values among students and bringing education closer to life (Ranganathan, 2007).

New National Policy on Education 2020 – The Policy in Focus: The National Education Policy 2020 is the first education policy of the 21st century in India which comes after 34 years of the previous policy, which was announced in 1986 and revised in 1992. Built on the foundational pillars of Access, Equity, Quality, Affordability and Accountability, this policy is aligned to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and aims to transform India into a vibrant knowledge society and global knowledge superpower by making both school and higher education more holistic, flexible, multidisciplinary suited to 21st century needs and aimed at bringing out the unique capabilities of each learners in the country.

Highlights of National Education Policy 2020 – A Synoptic View: The National Education Policy’s 2020 chief purpose is to reform the education system and bridge the gap between current learning outcomes and those desired. Recognizing the need to keep up with a rapidly changing world and knowledge landscape, the National Education Policy 2020 articulates that, the purpose of education system is to develop good human beings capable of rational thought and action, possessing compassion and empathy, courage and resilience, scientific temper and creative moorings and values. It also aims at producing engaged, productive and contributing citizens for building an equitable, inclusive and plural society as envisaged by the Indian constitution.

Key Points at School Education Level:

- New Policy aims for universalization of education from pre-school to secondary level with 100 percent Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in school education by 2030.
- National Education Policy will bring two crore out of school children back into the main stream through open schooling system.
- The current 10+2 system to be replaced by a new 5+3+3+4 curricular structure corresponding to ages 3-8, 8-11, 11-14 and 14-18 years respectively. This will bring the hitherto uncovered age group of 3-6 years under school curriculum, which has been recognized globally as the crucial stage for development of mental faculties of a child. The new system will have 12 years of schooling with three years of Anganwadi/pre-schooling.
- Emphasis on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy, no rigid separation between academic streams, extracurricular, vocational streams in school; Vocational Education to start from Class 6 with Internship.
- Teaching up to at least Grade 5 to be in mother tongue/regional languages. No language will be imposed on any student.
- Assessment reforms with 360 degree Holistic Progress Card, tracking Students Progress for achieving Learning Outcomes.
- A new and comprehensive National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education, NCFTE 2021, will be formulated by the NCTE in consultation with NCERT. By 2030, the minimum degree qualification for teaching will be a 4 year integrated B.Ed. degree.

Key Points at Higher Education Level:

- Gross Enrolment Ratio in higher education to be raised to 50 percent by 2035; 3.5 crore seats to be added in higher education.
- The policy envisages broad based, multi-disciplinary, holistic Under Graduate education with flexible curricula, creative combinations of subjects, integration of vocational education and multiple entry and exit points with appropriate certification. Under Graduate education can be of 3 or 4 years with multiple exit options and appropriate certification within this period.
- Academic Bank of Credits to be established to facilitate Transfer of Credits.
- Multidisciplinary Education and Research Universities (MERUs), at par with IITs and IIMs to be set up as models of best multidisciplinary education of global standards in the country.
- The National Research Foundation will be created as an apex body for fostering a strong research culture and building research capacity across higher education.
- Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) will be set up as a single overarching umbrella body for the entire higher education, excluding medical and legal education. Higher Education Commission of India to have 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. Public and private higher education institutions will be governed by the same set of norms for regulation, accreditation and academic standards.

- Affiliation of colleges is to be phased out in 15 years and a stage-wise mechanism is to be established for granting graded autonomy to colleges. 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.

Some Other Key Points:

- An autonomous body, the National Educational Technology Forum (NETF), will be created to provide a platform for the free exchange of ideas on the use of technology to enhance learning, assessment, planning, administration.
- National Education Policy 2020 also emphasized on setting up of gender Inclusion Fund, Special Education Zones for disadvantaged regions and groups.
- New Policy promotes Multilingualism in both schools and higher education. National Institute for Pali, Persian and Prakrit, Indian Institute of Translation and Interpretation to be set up.
- The Centre and the States will work together to increase the public investment in Education sector to reach 6 percent of GDP at the earliest.

Thus, the New Education Policy 2020 spells out a long-term concept with far-reaching influences and will change future challenges into chances by improving a quality education system. This new education system will strengthen the culture of innovation, institution and inclusion. The adoption of the New Education Policy 2020 is based on the motive at paving the way for transformational reforms in schools and higher education systems to make India a global knowledge superpower.

Society's Response on New Education Policy 2020 – Some Observations: The New Education Policy 2020 which was launched on 29th July, 2020 has all the promising key points that are expected to prove beneficial to enable an individual to study one or more specialized areas of interest at a deep level, along with developing a students' character, scientific temper, creativity, the spirit of service, and enhance 21st century capabilities across a range of disciplines including sciences, social sciences, arts, humanities, among others.

The New Education Policy 2020 foresees inclusive and justifiable quality education while targeting to address the rising developmental imperatives of India. With the fast growing employment landscape universally diverse ecosystem in education sector, it is becoming acute that one should not only learn but one should also know how to learn.

Change in education reforms are engaged in such a way that learning outcomes convey the highest quality, integrity and equity into the system right from schooling till higher education. The emphasis of the policy offers multidisciplinary and holistic education by absorbing knowledge of several arts (popularly known as generous arts) in the course. Emphasis needs to be specified on theoretical understanding through pedagogies that

highlight on communication, discussion, debate, research and cross-disciplinary and interdisciplinary thinking.

The New Education Policy 2020 to be adopted is emerging various challenges from the different stakeholders in the society which include the educational institutions, teaching fraternity, students and parents. Some say this is a welcome step in the right direction, while another section have their doubts regarding the possibility of its implementation. The other common pertinent questions that is being raised by the different sections of people in society which came forward with regard to the New Education Policy 2020 is that – What is new in the new education policy 2020 ? Has it come to grip with the lacuna of education system in India today? When will the new policy be ready for implementation? What will be the expected outcomes in the coming ten years and more? Will a number of robust skills be imparted to the students which will truly equip them to traverse through 21st century with confidence to enter into job markets of various scales of competitions? Will communication, creativity and problem solving be the catch words in the training imparted to the students for the coming years? Will an average student who embraced the single discipline stream can easily navigate through the multi-disciplinary streams with substantial and scalable performance? Will technology assist the one who is willing to take the advantages of new education policy? Will it bring better quality in students, and therefore, better performance in their area of economic and social spheres of life? Will the youths of rural and interior regions of the country be benefited by the new education policy? So all these and scores of many other questions deserve an answer that is floating in the society at present (Jose, 2021).

While the proponents of National Education Policy 2020 unequivocally states that the present initiative has an ambitious aim of overhauling the present day education system in the country with the aim of ‘making India a global knowledge superpower’. Anything new requires some time to yield the results. New Education Policy 2020 has many new things, yet to be implemented and tested and also at the same time there are many areas where people need more clarification. Therefore, the various stakeholders must understand the benefits which are listed with the New Education Policy 2020 for the betterment of the society.

At the same time the stakeholders must start analyzing the New Education Policy 2020 working factors so that it helps to identify the skills required for working with the new policy for adopting it positively. There is a wide scope for the study on New Education Policy 2020 because the major group of people in the society is still lacking the knowledge on the working of the New Education Policy 2020. Hence, the researchers must come forward and undertake enormous research on this field to improve the knowledge among the various stakeholders which ultimately will lead to the adoption of New Education Policy 2020 at greater speed and the development of Indian economy and society at large.

Conclusion: New Education Policy 2020 is an attempt to address the lacking of the education system, which have been pending for decades. This policy is a good policy as it

aims at making the Indian education system more holistic, flexible, multidisciplinary, aligned to the needs of the 21st century. This is certainly a historic moment for all the stakeholders involved, be it the teachers, students or the parents. But the intent of the policy seems to be ideal in many ways, as it is the implementation where lies the key to its success. Thus, it will be intriguing to see in the coming days that how the norms of this policy will be implemented to bring a change in the new age for Indian education landscape.

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