

Education Policy and Diversity Accommodation in India

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I. INTRODUCTION

Post Independent India, governments have been considering education as a fundamental development tool with the purpose of making human resources for national development. Since Independence, the education policies of successive governments have build upon the legacies of the Nehruvian period as well as British education system. Therefore, it has been an essential to review the educational system pre British period, during British period and post independent India.

Education for all and industrial development were seen as crucial tools to unite a country divided on the basis of wealth, caste and religion etc. The legacies of this Nehruvian approach to education are considerable; perhaps most notable is the entrenchment of the pluralist/secularist perspective in the minds of the Indian people. In addition, policies of positive discrimination in education and employment furthered the case for access by hitherto unprivileged social groups to quality education. It has been argued that while access for some marginalized communities continues to be limited, the upward mobility of a few Dalit and tribal households resulting from positive discrimination in educational institutions and state patronage has created role models that help democracy survive in India.⁽¹⁾ Drawing on Nehru's vision, and articulating most of his key themes, the Kothari Commission (1964–6) was set up to formulate a coherent education policy for India. According to the commission, education was intended to increase productivity, develop social and national unity, consolidate democracy, modernize the country and develop social, moral and spiritual values. Other features included the development of languages (Hindi, Sanskrit, regional languages and the three-language formula), equality of educational opportunities (regional, tribal and gender imbalances to be addressed) and the development and prioritization of scientific education and research.⁽²⁾

II. SPECIFICATION OF INDIA EDUCATION SYSTEM

Under the Constitution of India, the responsibility for providing education is mutually shared between central and concerned state governments. The central government formulates policy guidelines, stimulates innovation and plans frameworks. These guidelines are as follows are in accordance with the constitution of India and following the concept of secularism and diversity accommodation.

III. SECULAR EDUCATION

The real education can grow only in a secular environment of country. A secular state is one which recognises every citizen as equal and does not recognise any social or religious group. But

practically, in secularism there is also tolerance of all religions with special emphasis on the protection of minorities and preservation of communal harmony. India is assumed as a nation in theoretical phase where as tensions of all kinds are moving around. The governments have to make its efforts in adjusting with the rapidly changing socio-economic and political environment. Historically, India was transformed into a federal democratic polity by the British for their own advantage. As a result, the whole political system of India was not properly prepared to adjust with the western concepts such as democracy, federalism and secularism and India had to adjust over night. Consequently, there emerged various stresses and issues due to western concept secularism.⁽³⁾

Indian constitution is based on concept of political philosophy under which all forms of faith and worship are of equal importance. On the other hand, it has been argued that public education and other educational policies have no role of religious sentiments. Therefore, Indian constitution has a lot of secularism aspect which has been mentioned in details. The fundamental outline of secularism are mentioned in preamble of the constitution and other article of constitution. It is true that preamble was amended by the forty second constitution Amendment Act of 1976, which read as that India is a sovereign, socialist, secular, democratic republic.

India's secularism appears to be a politically convenient mechanism to procure and sustain support of minorities. India is a multi religious and multi lingual nation which really needs an understanding to accommodate various social groups and section to provide a common platform. Unfortunately however, our leaders never endeavoured to look into the root cause of the differences. Hence, communal differences and other disputes among themselves led to disintegration of India. Despite their heart-whole efforts to remove communal tension and violence and to make a secular India, the political process drawing mainly on soico-economic disparities between the majority and minorities; strengthened the fundamentalist and other divisive forces which continue to challenge the edifice of a secular India even today.⁽⁴⁾

IV. DIVERSITY

The father of nation Mr. M. K. Gandhi's view on diversity in education was a great challenge to unite India as common platform for educational development on account of India's having a great civilization along with diverse culture, faiths, religions, languages and different people. Despite, this diversity, there is an excellent combination of cultural unity and integrity which offers varied ways of philosophies and life patterns that could be adopted according to one own interest and aptitude in education. This unity in diversity is a lesson of tolerance, love,

understanding and sacrifice for the welfare of all. Therefore, Gandhi always defended for these principles made efforts to promote a society based on these qualities; It is suitable to recollect that 'Gandhi saw, in the whole of geographical India one country, and in her people, one nation.'⁽⁵⁾

Therefore, the principal object of the state lies in maintaining the secular structure of the society; promote spirit of veneration and tolerance, harmony and peace. Any disturbances may be solved through non-violent means assisted by enlightened public. To relish the cultural confluence of the society, Gandhi stressed the importance of respect and forbearance towards others' religious, and cultural practices, languages, and educational institutions." The imparting of education should facilitate the upkeep of diverse cultural traditions and harmony and the state should be vigilant not to divert itself from its assigned role of being a custodian of its diverse society.⁽⁶⁾

V. GANDHI PHILOSOPHIES

Gandhi's philosophy of education popularly recognised as Basic Education system. He explored this idea from scientific research, politics, child development and successful experiment of his ideas on education in South Africa and India.⁽⁷⁾ Gandhi proposed at holistic education of individual, making India self reliant creation of peaceful communities all over India based on non violence and political freedom of India from British.

Gandhi also focused on inclusion of religious instruction into curriculum apart from their own interest area. According to him, study of other religious besides one's own religion gives an opportunity to unite of all religions. On the other hand Gandhi does not believe that the state should take into consideration itself or cope up with any religious education. He only argued that religious education must be the only concern of religious associations. Gandhi never promoted the concept of mixing up religion with ethics. Even that the government feels the need of the religious instruction to be included in education, it is imperative that the religious instruction offered should be of the best type; says Gandhi. The aim of all religious teaching has to make men more tolerant and broad minded.⁽⁸⁾

Gandhi's concept of pluralism is indivisible from religion but is free from rigidity. On the other hand, social order, in a way, is also an addition of cultural pluralism in society. Gandhi was always against isolating any singular cultural feature supported any individual identity of a community in broader aspect of a society. Gandhi's faith in the Indian cultural plurality was undiminished; this plurality, he perceived, existed even in undivided India. This plurality is especially necessary in addressing the common grievances, which he termed as matters of all-India concern.⁽⁹⁾

VI. COEXISTENCE

Coexistence is a state of mind shared by society members who recognize the rights of another group to exist peacefully as a legitimate, equal partner with whom disagreements have to be resolved in nonviolent ways. Achieving coexistence is a great challenge because of the negative relations between the two

groups. It is in this context education plays an important for coexistence.⁽¹⁰⁾

After the efforts made by policy makers with reference to peaceful coexistence in the society in India, it has been experiencing that there have been a number of challenges such as the reservation on ground of caste and religion gave a negative point in Indian education system. On the other hand, high level of corruption in the allocation of seats of institutions of higher studies hamper the concept of coexistence. Though there are disparities between the objectives and their implementation in education but still education system in India has come a long way and will continue to improve in the future.

VII. PLURALISM

From sociological point of view, education plays a vital role in society where an individual is a member of that society. Hence, the educational system of any society is concerned with society structure. A plural society in which there is inclusion of every section of society without any discrimination. In Indian context, it can be said that it is a multi cultural and multi plural society, where when one talks of education, one thinks in many ways of the community, its' ups and downs, its conflicts. On the other hand, a community is not supposed to be defined by the boundaries but by the sharing of life. It is in this context, the educational system of the country is guided by constitution which focuses on a socialist, secular and democratic polity. Therefore, relationship between educational system and society is mutual; sometimes the society influences changes in educational system and at other times the educational system influences changes in the society. The education system should emphasize the development of fundamental social, moral and spiritual values. There should also be some provision, in a multi-religious, democratic society like that of India, for giving some instruction about the different religions.⁽¹¹⁾

Indian educational system suffers from so many drawbacks. Hence, education policies are formulated in accordance with provision where there must be treatment of all religions on an equal footing and the promotion of a wide religious culture among all students, it now presents a valid alternative to strict secularism, which precludes the inclusion of any religious aspect in the formal curriculum.⁽¹²⁾ Thus the Indian education system needs a complete renovation through proper legislation and its effective implementation. Legislations should be made taking into account the all type of diversities of state.

VIII. MULTILINGUALISM

Indian experiences of the concept of multilingualism is more or less theoretical as all programmes and polices are formulated using two to three languages at different level or points. This system cannot be said true multilingualism as India having a wide no. of regional languages spoken through out the country. Even, in school, colleges and universities level, the teachers do not use multiple languages for teaching school subjects other than the languages themselves and, hence, they are not multilingual education in the strict sense of the term.⁽¹³⁾

As I have already pointed out earlier in previous chapter that the issue of use of multiple languages as medium of instruction for teaching (a feature of multilingual education system) is not comprehensively mentioned in Indian education system. Thus, various programmes and policies of education in school, colleges, universities and higher education levels are only nominally multilingual in a broad sense since they either teach multiple languages as subjects or use different languages for instruction in successive phases of education. For example, a student may be instructed in a mother tongue up to a particular level in school, may change to the regional majority language subsequently and to English in the University level as the medium of teaching. However, the languages used do not consider children's home language background. Also, while subjects such as Mathematics and Science (which are perceived to be more important) are taught in English, Hindi is used for teaching of subjects like Social Studies.⁽¹⁴⁾

National Education System and Education Policy Documents

After independence from British rule in 1947 the Indian National leaders realized the underlying faults in the system of British education as it was colonial in nature. It was already designed to prepare Indians only for taking certain subordinate positions in Government offices. Therefore, policy of national education policy was the need of the hour. Education and national development in every sphere must go together. To achieve the goals of personal, economic, social, political and cultural development, it is necessary to make appropriate provisions for an integrated programme of education for people who happen to be living at different levels of development, possessing different linguistic, social and cultural attributes. With these purposes, Independent India established various committees and commissions for educational reforms. These committees and commissions have formulated educational aims and objective which laid the foundation of India's National Education System.⁽¹⁵⁾

Analytical Study (National Education System and Educational Policy Documents)

Soon after India got independence from British in the year 1947, education became a matter of concern as education system of India was introduced by British rule had been full of western style and content which always fulfilled the goals and objective of colonial rules. Therefore, successive Governments of India has treated "education" as an important sector and has undertaken major steps in this field since Independence. In this process, it has been realized by national leader and policy makers that education could be utilized as instrument in order to curb the problems of poverty and unemployment. Therefore, Education in India has always been one of the few sectors which have enjoyed social, economic, political, constitutional and statutory importance in the country throughout over six decades of independence. To achieve the above the goals, the government has been active in prioritizing education globally through international conventions and declarations, viz., Convention against Discrimination in Education, the United National Declaration of Human Rights and the International Convention of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

First of all, the Constitution of India itself protects education at elementary level under Articles 46, 330, 332, 335, 338, 342 and the Fifth and Sixth Schedules. On the other hand, in order to provide education to minorities, there has been provision under Article 30(1) facilitates establishment and administration of education by minority groups. With the purpose of rising high literacy after independence, I can make argue that government has also placed education as a concurrent responsibility under which Centre and State Government makes policies as per need and situation of education. These steps highlight the efforts of the policy makers to provide every possible opportunity to benefit every section of society through education. It can be said that the Government has always responded to the changing requirements of education system in India with policies and legislations. After Independence, India has seen a number of education policies such as University Commission 1948, followed by Kothari Commission 1964-66. In order to give a proper shape of recommendation, India has set up its first National Policy on Education in 1968, later on National Policy on Education in 1986. On the basis of reports and suggestion made by Commission the government formulated concept of National System of Education under which every student has access to education of similar class up to certain level irrespective of location, caste, gender or belief of a similar class. A common school system has been introduced under 1968 policy of education which is the basis of ordinary structure of education 10+2+3 has been accepted and recognized throughout the country. Beside, many efforts have been made to have the +2 phase in senior secondary education, which is accepted all over the country as part of the school education. On the other hand, these polices stressed a common educational structure based on a national curricular frame work. The content under national education included the history of India's freedom movement, the constitutional obligations and other contents essential to nurture national identity. It was also ensured that all educational programmes must be carried on in strict conformity with secular values and plural society as well as application of science and technology must be applied. Apart from these achievements in educational sector, success of education polices could also be linked to other area in society. It laid the foundation of equality in education through providing educational opportunity by attending to the specific needs of needy, emphasising huge investment in the development of the child. These police also gave priorities on Non formal education and higher education provided an opportunity to reflect on the critical, social, economic, cultural, moral and spiritual issues facing humanity. However, even after over 60 years of independence, we are far away from the goal of universal literacy. The reason behind this is lack in implementation of the policies. The structure of education in India is one of the most simplified and better thought after in the world. Despite this, an urgent needs to transform the educational system in keeping with the needs and aspirations of the people, to improve its quality. There are a number of areas where attentions are required such as on quality of teachers, students, administrators and even the general public, which have been even more inadequate in the six three decades. On the other hand, simultaneous effort must be made with the purpose of transforming society and education in keeping with the national goals of socialism and democracy and the ultimate

creation of an egalitarian and non-exploitative society based on justice, equality, freedom and the dignity of the individual. It can be also argued that Indian policy makers still has to work on challenges such as improving access and quality at all levels of education, increasing funding, especially with regard to higher education, improving literacy rates etc.

Finally it can be concluded that Indian national education system has started in achieving its objectives which were formulated by the constitution makers. The education system could be made successful if the government will provide appropriate allocation of funds as well as strict monitoring of education policies

IX. CONCLUSION

India is a multi cultural and multi plural society as it is enriched by the ethnic, cultural, and language diversity among its citizens. Following independence in 1947, India went through a high level of transformation politically, socially and economically. In order to balance and keep a common platform for whole nation, adopting democracy for India is not a choice but matter of compulsion. At the time of independence India itself mandated by the Constitution to be a socialist, secular and democratic Country. In any democratic country everyone talks of education, community, language, culture etc and the most important function of government to take into consideration all of diversities among citizen while formulating education policies. The existing systems of Indian education were formulated in accordance with the British interest ignoring interest of nation. Governments are believed that education plays important role for national prosperity and welfare of country. Hence, focussing education sector was the priority area of government. Hence, it had already determined to mobilize all the resources of science and technology and new modern education system for making a strong foundation of good and education system. On the other hand, India had to balance between development and nation culture and tradition spirit. Apart from these, the government had also to look into the factors of religion, language, ethnic, urban-rural divide etc. while formulating educational policies.

After going through various phases of educational reforms and polices, India still has to face various challenges in term of educational policies and reform such as improving access and quality at all levels of education, increasing funding, particularly with regard to higher education, improving literacy rates.

However, these issues needed a high level of increase in financial allocation by the government along with stability in political system of nation as India is always under strain due to diversities and plural society. But it can be argued that Indian Education System has achieved the standard of education level as per the development countries along with maintaining its diversity in unity.

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