

NATIONAL POLICY ON EDUCATION 1986 AND SUBSEQUENT PROGRAMMES AND POLICIES

Jagadeesh K T,
Research Scholar,
Dept of education,
Sunrise University Alwar

INTRODUCTION

The Indian education sector is marching ahead significantly with the changing times. It also been undergoing tremendous changes since its independence from British empire in 1947. The first national education policy was formulated by the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1968 with Triguna Sen as the education Minister, followed by the National education policy 1986 during Rajiv Gandhi's tenure as Prime Minister P.V Narasimha Rao as the Minister of Human Resource Development . The latest document, The National education policy 2020 was framed by under the leadership of Narendra Modi with the goal of bringing about practical changes in the education system of our country.

The National education policy of 1986 brought about a radical change in the history of Indian education. This article attempts to provide a brief overview of the significant experimental projects and their outcomes during the crucial period from 1986 to 2020. The Minimum Level of Learning initiative implemented subsequent on the NPE of 1986, The DPEP of 1994, The SSA programme of 2001-2002 and the SSK project which replaced SSA in 2021 have played a pivotal role in strengthening Indian education sector. This article is intended to throw some light on the significance these programmes and their impact on Indian educational landscape.

KEY CONCEPTS : National Education Policy (NEP) National Policy On Education (NPE), District Primary Education Program (DPEP), Minimum Levels Of Learning (MLL), Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (SSA), Samagra Siksha Abhiyan, Village Education Committee (VEC), Rashtriya Madhyamic Siksha Abhiyan (RMSA), Non-Formal Education (NFE), Block Resource Centre (BRC), Cluster Resource Centre (CRC), Scheduled Caste (SC), Scheduled Tribe(ST), Universalization Of Elementary Education(UEE), Information And Communication Technology (ICT), Right To Education Act 2009 (RTE Act 2009), State Council Of Educational Research

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And Training (SCERT), District Institute For Education And Training (DIET), Early Childhood Education (ECE), Socially Useful Productive Work (SUPW)

NATIONAL POLICY ON EDUCATION – 1986

The National policy on education formulated in 1986, primarily aimed towards addressing the inequalities and providing equal opportunities in education for all, especially to the marginalised sections creating a significant milestone in the history of education in Independent India.

The primary aim of NPE 1986 was to ensure that all children below 14 years of age have access to education. For achieving this, the school infrastructure and premises were made attractive. Innovative learning techniques and appropriate teaching methodologies were, adapted, designed and implemented. Apart from this, the policy aimed at preventing dropouts and ensured education for those children who were then 'out of school' through formal education. This policy also envisaged the establishment of the state-run Navodaya schools and ensured the setting up of a number of primary schools in rural areas. This policy also ensured that the children with limited mobility have access to public schools through inclusive education.

The NPE 1986 proposed the 10+2+3 structure be followed in schools as recommended by the Kothari Commission, suggesting the first 5 years of schooling at the Lower Primary level and the next three at the Upper Primary level. The policy envisaged that all children should have access to free and compulsory primary education by the year 1995 and there should be at least one primary school within a kilometre radius.

With the major aim being able to ensure quality education for all, it strived hard to bring about holistic development in children, by giving due importance to non-formal and part time education. One of the salient features of the education policy of 1986 was that it ensured steps for universal enrolment and retention of children in schools. Campaigns to conduct door to door surveys which ensured maximum enrolment and retention were under taken in an earnest manner. Non-formal education centres were set up for those who couldn't ensure their participation throughout the year. Education of females was a major concern given socio-cultural scenarios at the time two sets of school uniform, Text books, learning materials and transportation facilities were provided free of cost to give further boost to female empowerment.

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Operation Blackboard was set up as a part of NPE 1986 implementation. The project was envisaged to improve the basic infrastructure and other amenities of public schools, could not only make it attractive in appearance but could ensure the retention of children in schools. As part of the project large classrooms were set up in schools. Toys, charts, maps, black boards and other learning materials were made available to children. These efforts paved way for maximum enrolment in public schools. Two committees were appointed to assess the progress of NPE 1986 namely **ACHARYA RAMAMURTHY COMMITTEE (1990)** and **JANARDHANA COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL POLICY ON EDUCATION (1991)**

The Acharya Ramamurthy committee assessed the policy document, report was submitted January 9th 1991

MAJOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- In order to improve the quality of education, we need to ensure the availability of human and non-human resources more.
- Early Childhood Education (ECE) should become an integrated part of primary education.
- Efforts should be initiated to establish common school system to ensure educational equality and social justice
- All disparities must be eliminated to ensure access to quality education. Serious efforts for this should continue.
- Value based education should be integrated at all levels of education.
- Socially useful productive work (SUPW) programme should be embedded in educational activities.

JANARDHANA COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL POLICY ON EDUCATION (1991)

The Janardhana committee is the second committee constituted for the implementation of National Education Policy 1986. The findings of this committee became known as THE PROGRAMME OF ACTION 1992.

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MAJOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- Collaboration between the central and state governments are essential to ensure universalization of elementary education.
- Each state, district, and block should prepare a programme of action to determine their priorities in order to achieve the educational goals.
- Schools should be ensured with in walkable distance for ensuring the access of all students.
- Scientific teacher training, implementation of Minimum Levels of Learning, establishment of Village Education Committee (VEC) are to be ensured for quality education.
- Time to time curriculum revision and development of instructional materials are essential to ensure quality education.

Social mobilization, Universalize literacy and basic education, Provision of universal access are also the prioritised areas of Programme of Action 1992. After NPE 1986, various schemes, programmes and projects were introduced in the field of Indian school education. The ultimate goal of all of them was the holistic development of the children. All these projects had many important objectives such as ensuring quality education for children in the pre-primary, primary, secondary and higher secondary sections, ensuring access to and retention of education for disadvantaged sections of the society and providing an opportunity for everyone to identify their career interest and prepare training accordingly during the school education period.

Minimum Levels of Learning (MLL), District Primary Education Programme (DPEP), Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Rashtriya Madhyamic Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA), Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan, are some of the important centralised projects and programmes implemented during the period from 1986 to 2020 in Indian school education sector.

1) MINIMUM LEVELS OF LEARNING

MLL programme aims to ensure access to schools for all children regardless of caste, religion, class, gender, region. MLL aimed at strengthening elementary education by its ensuring quality

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and equity and has given more importance to the concepts of competency based education and learning outcomes at elementary level. Academic achievements students in formal schools and students in non-formal education centres was a focus area for MLL and its basic features include

- **Achievability:-** A basic characteristic that MLL must satisfy is that they should correspond to learning objectives that are achievable by all learners.
- **Communicability:-** It is not enough that MLLs are realistic and achievable. It is equally important to set them in a language and form that easily understandable to all the teachers, many of whom located in remote rural areas and work in isolation without any outside help or guidance. Apart from primary school teachers, the MLL should also be understandable to the NFE (Non Formal Education) instructor, the parent and the community.
- **Evaluability:-** The statements of MLLs should be such that they serve as an effective blue print for continuous and comprehensive evaluation of learners and there by streamline the process involved

Learning continuum:- The endeavour has been to set MLLs in as simple and comprehensible manner as possible, specifying the competencies to be mastered under each learning unit from class 1 through class 5. Learning has been seen as a continuum, in which the units are sequenced hierarchically so that the clusters of competencies in one unit build as directly as possible on the competencies in the preceding unit.

MLL focussed on the development of competency based teaching and learning. Major steps introduced by the project in schools include Assessment at primary level in current achievement Modification of the project according to the local requirements, consistent training of teachers, preparation of handbooks and training in accordance to MLL based teaching method preparation and utilization of other evaluation materials usage of norms in time of curriculum revision and utilize competency based teaching learning materials to make the educational process an activity oriented and joyful one. Another project intended towards the betterment of Indian education system was DPEP.

DPEP

Implemented in 1994. starting out on 42 districts later spreading to 285 districts. DPEP was intended to improve access, retention and achievement among the primary school going age

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group with a focus on female students, socially deprived and economically backward sections of the society. The major objectives were to ensure primary education for all children through both formal and non-formal, reduce in gender and social disparities in enrolment, learning etc., reducing the prevailing dropout rate by 10 per cent, rise the average achievement rate by 25 percentage and ensuring the achievement basic literacy and numeracy competencies of primary school children, ensuring of alternative accessibility to primary education for children through non-formal education system. Its major characteristics include Decentralised planning with District being the basic unit for planning and implementation the key strategies being conceptual clarity and sensitivity to local condition another salient feature is that Participatory process in which the teachers, parents and community had a key role during the process, with equity being a centre characteristic SC, ST, females, other minorities and disabled sections are given major consideration. Planning and the implementation of all DPEP programmes and projects organizing through community enabled and innovative ways.

DPEP emphasized a decentralized management system with the help of Panchayati Raj Institution, Village Education Committee and the community. DPEP was able to ensure the progress of primary education through the formation of BRC, CRC, and through the conduction of teacher training, curriculum revision and monitoring and evaluation. DPEP has been successful in improving access and retention of of children through formal and alternative modes of education.

SARVA SHIKSHA ABHIYAN

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan is a project implemented by the central government with the aim of ensuring Universalisation of Elementary education by 2010. SSA was started with the aim of ensuring useful and efficient elementary education for children between the age of 6 and 14 years. SSA is the project which ensures community involvement in school management activities by eliminating social, regional, and gender gaps. 60 per cent of the total out lay of SSA projects and programmes are borne by the central government and 40 per cent by the state governments.

FEATURES OF SSA

- Global basic education with clear planning.
- Quality education across the country.

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- Ensuring social justice through basic education.
- Joint action of central and state governments in the matter of education.
- An opportunity to foster basic educational policies and objectives of the state administration.

GOALS OF THE PROGRAMME

- Get all children in schools by 2003 through back-to-school campaign.
- Complete five years of primary education for all children by 2007.
- Focus on elementary education of satisfactory quality with emphasis on education for life.
- Eliminate all gender and social category gaps at primary school level by 2007 and at elementary level by 2010.
- Establish new schools where schools do not exist.
- Provide infrastructural facilities in schools.
- Universal retention by 2010.

SSA goes a step further to DPEP and envisages habitation, as a unit of planning. Habitation form the basis for the preparation of district plans. Each district is required to formulate a perspective plan and an annual plan and budget indicating the required resources needed for achieving the goal of UEE by 2010. Various studies have revealed that invention under SSA has brought considerable expansion quantitatively and qualitatively. While quality still remains as an area of concern, the SSA has been able to increase the schooling facilities, enrolment and retention and achievement gaps between the genders and among social groups.

RASHTRIYA MADHYAMIC SHIKSHA ABHIYAN

Rashtriya Madhyamic Shiksha Abhiyan is major project launched by the central government in march 2009 to increase the access to and improve the quality of secondary education. It aims to increase the enrolment rate by ensuring a secondary school within reasonable distance from every household. It aims to improve the quality of secondary school by ensuring that all secondary schools comply with prescribed standards, eliminate gender bias, remove socio economic barriers and ensure universal access to education at the secondary level.

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OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAMME

- RMSA envisages to increase secondary enrolment from 52.26 percentage in 2005-06 to 75 percentage.
- Establish secondary schools at reasonable distance within five years of the implementation of RMSA.
- Enhance the quality of education in all secondary schools according to the prescribed standards.
- Eliminate gender discrimination and remove socio-economic and disability barriers.
- Ensure universal access to secondary level education.
- Improve and universalize secondary education by 2020.
- Increase the physical infrastructural facilities of secondary schools by setting up additional classrooms, laboratories, libraries, arts and craft rooms, toilet blocks, drinking water facilities and residential hostels for teachers.
- Increase the quality of secondary education by appointing additional teachers to reduce the teacher student ratio to 1:30 , focusing on science, mathematics and English education, providing in-service training to teachers, establishing science laboratories, ICT based education and implementing new teaching learning reforms through curriculum revision.
- Ensure equity interventions in secondary schools by setting up new schools in SC, ST, minority areas, establishing special enrolment drive for weaker sections, increasing recruitment of women teachers and providing special extra- curricular facilities for girls.

SARVA SHIKSHA ABHIYAN

The union budget 2018-19 has been proposed to treat school education holistically from pre-primary to 12th standard without having any division. Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan is an initiative aimed at improving the quality of pre-primary to 12th standard education sector as a single unit. It includes three earlier projects namely Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Rashtriya Madhyamic Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) and Teacher education.

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MAIN OBJECTIVES

- Improve children's learning outcomes by providing quality education.
- Bridging social and gender gaps in education.
- Ensure equity and inclusion at all levels of schooling.
- Ensure minimum standards in school education system.
- Promote vocationalisation of education.
- Support states in enacting the right of children to free and compulsory education.(RTE Act 2009).
- Strengthen and modernize the SCERT and DIET as the nodal agencies for education training.
- Strengthen teacher education institutions.

CONCLUSION

An attempt has been made in this article to mention some of the programmes and projects implemented in the field of Indian school education in connection with the National Policy of Education 1986. The impact of the functioning of Minimum Levels of Learning (MLL), District Primary Education Programme (DPEP), Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (SSA), Rashtriya Madhyamic Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) and Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan on Indian education sector is not insignificant. These programmes and projects have significant impact in the areas of school access, equity, quality education, academic and non-academic facilities and technical education. The impact of such projects in transforming students from being the consumers of knowledge to producers of knowledge is immeasurable. This kind of more research projects, reforms and research studies are essential in the quality oriented Indian education sector. Therefore, we are looking at the National Education Policy 2020, to be implemented in near future, with great hope and expectation. Indian education will become globally recognized and accepted only when this type of innovative programmes and projects are devised and implemented thus easing the way for Indian society being a cosmopolitan one.

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