

**HISTORY OF INDIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM****Rajni Bala¹, Ph. D. & Alisha Gill²**¹*Assistant Professor, Ramgarhia College of Education, Phagwara, Punjab*²*M.ed Student, Ramgarhia College of Education, Phagwara, Punjab***Abstract**

The National Policy on Education (NPE-1968) was prepared to improve the quality of education in the country and was focused on providing education facilities to all the citizens of the nation. The policy has been reviewed in the subsequent years. It was further updated in 1992 to spread knowledge and freedom of thought among the citizens of the country. Though education is in the concurrent list of the Constitution of India, the State Governments play an important role in the development of education especially in the primary and the secondary levels.

Introduction

Governments all over the world place a major emphasis on education policy. There is a global pressure on increasing attention on the outcomes of educational policies and their impact on social and economic development. However, there is often a lack of understanding of how educational policies are formed and what constitutes an education policy. An attempt is made in this module to analyse the nature of educational policy, basic features of education policies and the intended outcomes of these policies. Education policy refers to the rules and principles that govern the operation of educational systems. The module also tries to answer questions regarding the goals of education, strategies employed for achieving these goals and for identifying tools for assessing their impact. In the process of formulating educational policies, many crucial factors have to be taken into consideration. These include pedagogical methodologies, resource mobilisation, curriculum content and the possible impact of the policy on different groups.

According to Taylor (1997) there are three major aspects in education policy, these being:

a) Context: It refers to the antecedents and pressures leading to the development of a specific policy.

b) Text: It refers to the content of the policy itself.

c)Consequences: If policy texts are open to differing interpretation by practitioners then this is also likely to result in differences in implementation.

In India educational institutions have existed since the emergence of civilisation (Keay,1972). It is essential to view thehistorical background of education policy in order to understand its current status. A sound understanding of education policy could be gained by dividing the historical analysis into two time periods, these being pre-independence and the period after independence

Education Policy in Pre-Independent India

The education policy in preindependentIndia could further be classified into twotime periods- Pre-British and the British period.

Pre-British Period

While discussing education policy in Pre-British India, an attempt has been made to analyse educational policies from the beginning of ancient period to the arrival of British. Since the beginning of Indian civilisationtill contemporary times those in power have directed the course of education but 3it was only with theadvent of modern times that a scientific approach began to be adopted in formulating educational policies. There are no available literary sources for getting an authentic understanding ofeducational 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 Aryans entered India in II B.C. These Aryans were the first to make a significant attempt in formulating an education policy in India. The Aryans had clearly defined the nature of their educational system and the natives who were referred to as‘Dasyus’had to adhere to the norms that the Aryans had laid down (Keay 1972). 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. Students in ancientIndia were required to study the subjects not only from the point of view of making themselves capable of handling life, but were also required to study them basically from the point of view of engaging in research and work towards creating an advanced body of knowledge in the area.As a result when students reached the status of learned persons, theywere greatly respected and revered. In the ancient period a pride of place was accorded to education that primarily drew its inspiration from religion(Scharfe 2002).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 Nalanda and Taxila were known for their scholarship (Scharfe 2002). There was a long struggle between Buddhism and Brahmanism during the period of 400 BCE to 1000 CE to gain prominence in interpreting the world. While Buddhism was more people-centric Brahminism tried to reinforce hierarchies. Quite significantly, Buddhist education was different and not based on Vedic study and teachers were not Brahmin. The educational policies of Buddhism were more radical and based on equality and opened up the doors of knowledge to all castes. The majority of Buddhist Monks lived in Viharas and they spread in large numbers throughout India. Gradually for many centuries these Viharas were widely spread throughout India. These Viharas had become centres for knowledge and higher learning.

The most important Buddhist centre of learning was at Nalanda. Many foreign travellers like Fa-Hien (399 –414 A.D.), Hiuen –Tsang (636 -646 A. D.) and Itsing (675 A. D.) had not only visited the Nalanda University but had also stayed there in order to acquire a real knowledge of Buddhism. At Nalanda University students were given facilities such as free education, boarding and lodging. ‘During the Mughal period the rulers did not make any significant efforts to universalise the existing educational system, but tried to spread Islamic education in India’. Any Muslim could acquire education at a ‘Madrasa’ and all higher education was imparted in Arabic by Moulvis. Muslim educational institutions were distinguished as ‘Maktaba’ –a primary school often attached to a mosque or run in private houses and ‘Madrasa’ –schools for higher learning generally attached to monasteries. The Maktabas and Madrasas were first confined to Muslims, but later, Hindus and Muslims had begun to study each other’s languages. This led to the formation of a new language called ‘Urdu’. Both the Hindu as well as Muslim educational institutions in pre-British India gave a greater thrust to religion than other matters (Yechuri 1986). In the ancient period the major objective of education was religion. There were no significant efforts made to universalise education and include people from different groups. In particular for many centuries education continued to be monopolised by a few groups, with ‘caste’ and ‘gender’ determining both access to and utilisation of educational opportunities.

British period

Development of education system during the British period was determined by the needs of the colonial powers. If we analyse the development, we will find that the colonial interests of the British always shaped the then educational policies of India. European trading companies began their commercial activities in India from 1600 A.D. Gradually the Portuguese, the

French, the Dutch and the English settled in some parts and commercial centres of India. Among them the English East India Company was ultimately able to establish their rule in India. Till the 19th century, they did not evolve any definite educational policy (Ramana, 2012, p. 81). One should not suppose that there had been no educational system before the coming of the East India Company.

When the British came to India and were gradually establishing themselves in Bengal, they met such a system (Ghosh, 1989:2). F. W. Thomas was of the opinion that "Education is no exotic in India. There is no country where the love of learning had so early an origin or has exercised so lasting and powerful an influence" (Thomas, 1891, p. 1). The modern system of education came to be established in India during the British period at the cost of the traditional indigenous system. Before the British established a new system of education in India both the Hindus and the Muslims had their own systems of education. Both the systems went into oblivion gradually and suffered a set –back because of political turmoil and lack of a strong centralised political authority and want of suitable patronage (Purkait, 1992, p.1).

Indian education had always been of a classical and spiritual rather of a practical nature. It was communicated through the sacred classical languages of the Hindus and the Muslims, namely Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian (Ghosh, 1989, p.2). The Tols and Madrassas were the highest seminaries of learning meant for the specialists. These institutions were not meant for education of an elementary kind. For primary education, there were in the villages, Patsalas and Maktabs where the Gurus and Maulavis imparted knowledge of the three "R"s to the boys of the locality. There was no school for the education of the girls though the Zamindars often had their daughters educated at home (Ghosh, 1989, p.3). The indigenous Indian Education started with the advent of the British. The colonial interests of the British shaped the then educational policies of India. In his book, 'Education in British India' Arthur Howell says. "Education in India under the British Government was first ignored, then violently and successfully opposed, then conducted on a system now universally admitted to be erroneous and finally placed on its present footing" (1872:3).

The East India Company became a ruling power in Bengal in 1765. Following the example of the contemporary English Government, the Court of Directors refused to take on itself the responsibility for the education of the people of India and decided to leave education to private effort. However, the Indian officers of the East India Company urged the Court of Directors to do something for the oriental learning. Some half-hearted efforts were made by the Company's Government to foster oriental learning. Warren Hastings, himself an intellectual, set up the Calcutta Madrasa in 1781 for the study and learning of Persian and

Arabic. In 1791 the efforts of Jonathan Duncan, the British resident at Benares, bore fruit and a Sanskrit College was opened at Benares for the cultivation of laws, literature and religion of the Hindus. These early attempts for the education of the people in oriental languages met with little success. The historians Grover and Alka (2014) explained the hidden policy of the British East India Company in their attempts of the people in oriental languages that administrative needs of the Company required Indians well-versed in the classic and vernacular languages. In the Judicial Department Indians conversant with Sanskrit, Arabic or Persian were required to sit as assessors with English judges and expound Hindu or Muslim law from Sanskrit or Persian or Arabic books. Besides, the knowledge of Persian and vernaculars was valued in the political department for correspondence with rulers of Indian states. The clerical staff in the revenue and commercial departments had contacts with uneducated masses and for them knowledge of vernaculars was a must (p. 257).

Although the East India Company was established in 1600 A.D., it took no educational activities for nearly one hundred years of its existence (Narullah & Naik, 1943, p. xiv). The development of modern system of education in India ... may be said to have begun with the Charter Act of 1813 which provided through the Section 43 that “a sum of not less than one lac of rupees in each year shall be set apart and applied to the revival and improvement of literature and the encouragement of the learned natives of India, and for the introduction and promotion of a knowledge of the sciences among the inhabitants of the British territories in India; and that any schools, public lectures, or other institutions, for the purposes aforesaid, which shall be founded at the Fort William, Fort St. George, or Bombay, or any other part of the British territories in India, in virtue of this Act shall be governed by such regulations as may from time to time be made by the said Governor – General in Council;”(Sharp, 1920, p.22).

The Charter Act of 1813, therefore, forms a turning point in the history of Indian education. With it ...the education of the Indian people was definitely included within the duties of the Company; comparatively large amount was annually secured for educational activities; ... thereby laying the foundation of the modern educational system” (Narullah & Naik, 1943, p. 67).

The Clause 43 of the Charter Act of 1813 assumed more importance when one remembers that in those days education was not a State responsibility in England, and except Scotland, no public money was spent on elementary education, which was left mostly to charity schools, village dames, to private Sunday schools movement started by Robert Raikes and private efforts of individual like Hannah More (Ghosh, 1989, p. 26).

The Charter Act of 1813 constitutes a landmark in the educational history of British India. Its Clause 43 contained the first legislative admission of the right of education in India in the public revenues (Misra, 1989, p. 189). This Act was the first legislative recognition of the right for education (Jayapalan, 2000, p. 81). However, The Charter Act made it obligatory on the part of the East India Company to spread education in India; it laid the foundation of State System of Education in India. For the first time, the British Parliament included in 1813 Charter, a clause under which the Governor- General-in -Council was bound to keep a sum not less than one lakh rupees, for education. This Act renewing the East India Company's Charter for a twenty year period produced two major changes in Britain's relationship with her colony: one was the assumption of a new responsibility towards native education, and the other was a relaxation of controls over missionary activity in India.

Section 43 of the Charter Act 1813 had only defined the objects of the educational policy, viz. '**the revival and improvement of literature**', '**the encouragement of learned natives of India**' and '**the introduction and promotion of a knowledge of sciences among the inhabitants of the British territories in India**'; but it had no directions regarding the methods to be employed to secure these objects (Nururillah & Naik, 1943, p. 68). Actually the Company had not been given any specific instruction on this issue. Consequently, the direction of education remained uncertain during the next 22 years on the following issues:

1. **The Medium of Instruction:** It could not be decided whether the medium of instruction should be English or Indian Languages.
2. **Aim of Education of the British Policy:** Whether education should be available to all or should be given to only a selected few.
3. **Type of Knowledge:** Whether to preserve and promote Oriental learning or to introduce Western knowledge, culture and science.
4. **Agency of Education:** Whether the Government should assume direct responsibility of educating the Indians or the Indigenous system of education of the country to continue.
5. **Role of Missionaries:** Whether the missionaries should be given a free hand in their educational practices or should the Company itself shoulder the total responsibility.

The vagueness of the clause 43 of the Charter Act of 1813 intensified the Oriental and Occidental educational controversy in India. One group was of the Orientalists who wanted the promotion of Indian education through the medium of Sanskrit, Arabic, and Persian whereas the other group was of Anglicists who were in favour of developing western education in India through the medium of English. This fund was kept unspent till 1823 due to the controversy.

That's why the recommendations of the Charter Act of 1813 were delayed until 1823 when the Governor General in Council appointed a General Committee of Public Instruction (G.C.P.I.) for the Bengal Presidency to look after the development of education in India. The Committee consisted of ten members and the grant of one lakh of rupees provided by the Charter Act of 1813 was also placed at the disposal of the Committee. A decade before Lord Macaulay arrived in India; the General Committee of Public Instruction was formed in 1823, which was to guide the company on the matter of education. The Orientalists dominated the committee and advocated the promotion of Oriental learning rather than the Anglican one. The Committee of Public Instructions consisted of members with Orientalist attitude till 1824. However, when new members, imbued with the growing liberal influences were recruited, the committee lost its homogeneous character and in 1835 the differences of opinion over the competing aims of oriental and occidental learning began to come to surface. As a result of the Orientalist-Anglicist controversy, the spread of education in India was halted until 1835, when Macaulay's Resolution provided a somewhat clear picture of the British education policy.

Educational policy in independent India

The **National Policy on Education** (NPE) is a policy formulated by the Government of India to promote education amongst India's people. The policy covers elementary education to colleges in both rural and urban India. The first NPE was promulgated in 1968 by the government of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, and the second by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1986.

History

Since the nation's independence in 1947, the Indian government sponsored a variety of programmes to address the problems of illiteracy in both rural and urban India. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, India's first Minister of Education, envisaged strong central government control over education throughout the country, with a uniform educational system. The Union government established the University Education Commission (1948–1949) and the Secondary Education Commission (1952–1953) to develop proposals to modernise India's education system. The Resolution on Scientific Policy was adopted by the government of Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first Prime Minister. The Nehru government sponsored the development of high-quality scientific education institutions such as the Indian Institutes of Technology. In 1961, the Union government formed the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) as an autonomous organisation that would advise both the Union and state governments on formulating and implementing education policies.

University Education Commission (1948)

The Government of India appointed a university Education Commission under the chairmanship of Dr. Radhakrishnan in November 1948. The Commission made a number of significant recommendations on various aspects of higher education and submitted its report in August 1949. In the rapidly changing contemporary world, universities are undergoing profound changes in their scope, function and organisation and are in a process of rapid evolution.

Their tasks are no longer confined to the two traditional functions of teaching and advancement of knowledge. After the transfer of power to Indian control on 15 August 1947, great changes had taken place in the political and economic conditions of Indian society. The academic problem has also assumed new shapes.

Similarly the conception of the duties and responsibilities of the universities have become wider and they have to provide leadership in politics, administration, profession, industry and commerce. They have to meet the increasing demand for every type of higher education, literary, scientific, technical and professional. By the application and development of technical and scientific knowledge, the country will enable to attain freedom from want, disease and ignorance.

India is rich in natural resources and her people have intelligence and energy and it is for the universities to create knowledge and train minds who would bring together the two—natural resources and human energies. Keeping these things in view the Commission suggested certain aims of University Education.

Wisdom and Knowledge:

Our ancient teachers tried to teach subjects and impart wisdom. Their ideal was wisdom along with knowledge. We cannot be wise without some basis of knowledge. No amount of factual information would take ordinary men into educated men unless something is awakened in them. Since education is both a training of minds and training of souls, it should give both knowledge and wisdom.

Aims of the Social Order:

We must have a conception of the social order for which we are educating our youth. Our educational system must find its guiding principle in the aims of the social order for which it prepares. We cannot decide what we should do and how we should do it unless we know where we are tending. Unless we preserve the value of democracy, justice, liberty, equality and fraternity, we cannot preserve our freedom. Universities must stand for these ideal causes which can never be lost so long as men seek wisdom.

Love for higher values of life:

The greatness of a country does not depend on the extent of its territory, the length of its communication or the amount of its wealth, not even on widespread education or equitable distribution of wealth, but on the love for higher values of life. If we claim to be civilized we must develop thought for the poor and the suffering, regard and respect for women, faith in human brotherhood regardless of race, colour, nation or religion, love of peace and freedom and ceaseless devotion of the claims of the justice.

Training for Leadership:

One of the central aims of university education is the training for leadership in the professions and public life, which is difficult to realize. It is the function of universities to train men and women for wise leadership. They must enable young men and women to read with insight the record of human experience, to know the nature and consequences of ethical values, to sense the meaning of the social forces operating in the world today and comprehend the complexities and intricacies of life in all its immensity, physical, social and spiritual.

We are building a civilization, not a factory or a workshop. The quality of a civilization depends not on the natural equipment or the political machinery but on the character of men. The major task of education is the improvement of character.

Secondary Education Commission (1952)

The Commission has defined the aims of secondary education in the following manner:

- 1. To Produce Ideal Citizens**
- 2. To Develop Capacity for Earning Money**
- 3. Quality of Leadership**
- 4. To Develop Human Virtues**

Duration of Secondary Education

The Commission has recommended that the secondary education should be for children between 11 to 17 years of age. It has divided this seven years' education into two parts-(1) Junior High School stage for three years and (2) High School for four years.

The Commission has recommended the introduction of three years' degree course. For this secondary education should continue up to the eleventh class and the twelfth class should be added to the first degree course (B.A., B.Sc. or B.Com.) of the university. Thus the Commission has suggested the abolition of intermediate colleges existing in some parts of the country.

Subjects of Lower Secondary Education

The Commission has suggested mathematics, general science, languages, social studies, physical education, art, handicraft and music etc., for this stage.

Subjects for Secondary Education

For this stage the Commission has suggested seven groups of subjects as below:

1. Humanities.
2. Sciences.
3. Agriculture.
4. Fine Arts.
5. Industrial subjects.
6. Commercial subjects.
7. Home Science.

Teaching Method

For improving the standard of teaching the Commission has suggested that the Central Government should appoint a Committee of Experts which should make research for finding out ways and means for improving the teaching methods.

Improvement of Teachers status

1. Trained teachers should be appointed to teach higher classes.
2. The policy of same pay for the same work and ability should be adopted.
3. Teachers should be given handsome salary in order that the society may respect them.
4. Teachers should be given pension, provident fund and life insurance benefits in order to give them some economic security. The Government should provide these facilities.
5. The children of teachers should be given free education.
6. Teachers and their dependents should be given free medical service.
7. Separate committees should be appointed for removing the difficulties of teachers.
8. The retirement age for teachers should be 60 years.
9. The teachers should not be permitted to take up tuition of students.

Management and Administration of Secondary Schools

The Commission has given the following suggestions in this respect:

1. The post of Education Director should be equivalent to the Joint Secretary of the secretariat and he should advise the minister in this capacity.
2. Central and State Committees should be organised for giving advice on secondary education.

3. The District Inspector of Schools should not only find faults with teachers but should also assist them in performance of their duties. They should solve their problems arising from time to time and should acquaint them with latest developments in the field of education.
4. The Secondary Education Board should be organised under the chairmanship of Education Director who should arrange for secondary education in his State.
5. A Board for teachers' training should be established.
6. New schools should be recognised only when they fulfill all conditions.
7. The State Government should organise a Committee for management and administration of schools. This Committee should be responsible for the management and administration of schools, but it must not interfere with the work of the Principal.

National Policy on Education (1968)

Based on the report and recommendations of the Education Commission (1964–1966), the government of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi announced the first National Policy on Education in 1968, which called for a "radical restructuring" and equalise educational opportunities in order to achieve national integration and greater cultural and economic development. The policy called for fulfilling compulsory education for all children up to the age of 14, as stipulated by the Constitution of India, and the better training and qualification of teachers. The policy called for focus on learning of regional languages, outlining the "three language formula" to be implemented in secondary education - the instruction of the English language, the official language of the state where the school was based, and Hindi, the national language. Language education was seen as essential to reduce the gulf between the intelligentsia and the masses. Although the decision to adopt Hindi as the national language had proven controversial, the policy called for use and learning of Hindi to be encouraged uniformly to promote a common language for all Indians. The policy also encouraged the teaching of the ancient Sanskrit language, which was considered an essential part of India's culture and heritage. The NPE of 1968 called for education spending to increase to six percent of the national income. As of 2013, the NPE 1968 has moved location on the national website.

National policy on education (1986)

Having announced that a new policy was in development in January, 1985, the government of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi introduced a new National Policy on Education in May, 1986. The new policy called for "special emphasis on the removal of disparities and to equalise educational opportunity," especially for Indian women, Scheduled Tribes (ST) and the Scheduled Caste (SC) communities. To achieve these, the policy called for expanding

scholarships, adult education, recruiting more teachers from the SCs, incentives for poor families to send their children to school regularly, development of new institutions and providing housing and services. The NPE called for a "child-centred 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 Indian leader Mahatma Gandhi, to promote economic and social development at the grassroots level in rural India.

National policy on education (1992)

The 1986 National Policy on Education was modified in 1992 by the P.V. Narasimha Rao government. In 2005, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh adopted a new policy based on the "Common Minimum Programme" of his United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government. Programme of Action (PoA), 1992 under the National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986 envisaged conduct of a common entrance examination on all India basis for admission to professional and technical programmes in the country. For admission to Engineering and Architecture/Planning programmes, Government of India vide Resolution dated 18 October 2001 has laid down a Three – Exam Scheme (JEE and AIEEE at the National Level and the State Level Engineering Entrance Examinations (SLEEE) for State Level Institutions – with an option to join AIEEE). This takes care of varying admission standards in these programmes and helps in maintenance of professional standards. This also solves problems of overlaps and reduces physical, mental and financial burden on students and their parents due to multiplicity of entrance examinations.

Recent Developments

- Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)/Right to Education (RTE)
- National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level (NPEGEL)
- Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan(RMSA) for development of secondary education, launched in 2009.
- Inclusive Education for the Disabled at Secondary Stage (IEDSS IEDSS)
- Saakshar Bharat (Saakshar Bharat)/Adult Education
- Rashtriya Uchchar Shiksha Abhiyan(RUSA) for development of higher education, launched in 2013.

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan or The Education for All Movement is a central government programme which aimed at universalising elementary education in a time bound manner. This

programme has been in operation since 2000-2001. However, its origin dates back to 1993-94, when the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) was launched. DPEP had basically aimed at fulfilling the goal of universalisation of primary education. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan aimed at creating an ideal system of education which enabled individuals to develop and inculcate knowledge, create awareness of social and human values, and build a strong character. SSA proposed that the education system must develop in consonance with contemporary societal needs (Mohanty 2003). Availability of infrastructure is fundamental in providing access to education. Under the SSA scheme between 2002-03 and 2008-09 1,48,492 new primary schools and 1,33,277 new upper primary schools were opened and an additional 8,00,000 classrooms were built, significantly expanding access to the elementary level. Further, the Mission also motivated increased efforts to develop, fund and implement specific strategies to reach deprived urban children, particularly in the 35 cities with more than one million inhabitants (Joint Review Mission of SSA 2009).

Right to Education (2009)

The Constitution (Eighty-sixth Amendment) Act, 2002 inserted Article 21-A in the Constitution of India to provide free and compulsory education of all children in the age group of six to fourteen years as a Fundamental Right in such a manner as the State may, by law, determine. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009, which represents the consequential legislation envisaged under Article 21-A, means that every child has a right to full time elementary education of satisfactory and equitable quality in a formal school which satisfies certain essential norms and standards.

Article 21-A and the RTE Act came into effect on 1 April 2010. The title of the RTE Act incorporates the words 'free and compulsory'. 'Free education' means that no child, other than a child who has been admitted by his or her parents to a school which is not supported by the appropriate Government, shall be liable to pay any kind of fee or charges or expenses which may prevent him or her from pursuing and completing elementary education. 'Compulsory education' casts an obligation on the appropriate Government and local authorities to provide and ensure admission, attendance and completion of elementary education by all children in the 6-14 age group. With this, India has moved forward to a rights based framework that casts a legal obligation on the Central and State Governments to implement this fundamental child right as enshrined in the Article 21A of the Constitution, in accordance with the provisions of the RTE Act.

The RTE Act provides for the:

- Right of children to free and compulsory education till completion of elementary education in a neighbourhood school.
- It clarifies that ‘compulsory education’ means obligation of the appropriate government to provide free elementary education and ensure compulsory admission, attendance and completion of elementary education to every child in the six to fourteen age group. ‘Free’ means that no child shall be liable to pay any kind of fee or charges or expenses which may prevent him or her from pursuing and completing elementary education.
- It makes provisions for a non-admitted child to be admitted to an age appropriate class.
- It specifies the duties and responsibilities of appropriate Governments, local authority and parents in providing free and compulsory education, and sharing of financial and other responsibilities between the Central and State Governments.
- It lays down the norms and standards relating inter alia to Pupil Teacher Ratios (PTRs), buildings and infrastructure, school-working days, teacher-working hours.
- It provides for rational deployment of teachers by ensuring that the specified pupil teacher ratio is maintained for each school, rather than just as an average for the State or District or Block, thus ensuring that there is no urban-rural imbalance in teacher postings. It also provides for prohibition of deployment of teachers for non-educational work, other than decennial census, elections to local authority, state legislatures and parliament, and disaster relief.
- It provides for appointment of appropriately trained teachers, i.e. teachers with the requisite entry and academic qualifications.
- It prohibits (a) physical punishment and mental harassment; (b) screening procedures for admission of children; (c) capitation fee; (d) private tuition by teachers and (e) running of schools without recognition,
- It provides for development of curriculum in consonance with the values enshrined in the Constitution, and which would ensure the all-round development of the child, building on the child’s knowledge, potentiality and talent and making the child free of fear, trauma and anxiety through a system of child friendly and child centred learning.

Concluding Remarks

Education policy has played an immensely important role in the development of an educational system in India since pre-independence days. Since education policies reflect the approaches of those in power towards education, they have a close bearing on the goals and strategies of the educational system that is in existence at that point of time. From courses to curriculum to pedagogical practices, education policy sets the framework within which an educational system takes shape. In India the thrust of educational policies has been changing from time-to-time in response to the emerging socioeconomic needs of the country. Till the enactment of the Charter Act of 1813, during British rule there was no formal education policy in place, but since then the Woods Education Despatch of 1854 and Report of the Sargeant Commission before independence have impacted the course that the educational system in India has taken. The growth in the number of educational institutions at all levels, especially in the private sector has posed a serious challenge to both educational planners and policy makers. A sad commentary on our education policies is that they have failed to address the social and economic inequalities and cultural diversity inherent within the system of education, as it operates in India. While it is true that many state initiated support services and schemes have been introduced at different levels of education to bridge these inequalities it has not been possible either to control the burgeoning expansion of private educational enterprise or enhance the quality of many state run as well as private educational institutions. No policy has been able to put in place a common system of education or a commonly accepted quality assessment mechanism. It is a challenge for future education policies to address this issue.

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