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ABOUT US

WHITE BLACK LEGAL is an open access, peer-reviewed and refereed journal provided dedicated to express views on topical legal issues, thereby generating a cross current of ideas on emerging matters. This platform shall also ignite the initiative and desire of young law students to contribute in the field of law. The erudite response of legal luminaries shall be solicited to enable readers to explore challenges that lie before law makers, lawyers and the society at large, in the event of the ever changing social, economic and technological scenario.

With this thought, we hereby present to you

ASSESSING THE CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS OF INDIA'S NEW EDUCATION POLICY 2020: IMPLICATIONS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION AND SOCIAL JUSTICE¹

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Abstract –

The New Education Policy (NEP) 2020 represents a significant shift in India's higher education system, introducing a comprehensive framework aimed at fostering multidisciplinary learning, skill development, and digital integration. It aspires to make higher education more flexible, inclusive, and globally competitive while promoting innovation and research. The policy emphasizes key aspects such as holistic development, technological advancements, and the restructuring of degree programs to encourage a competency-based learning approach. Despite its progressive objectives, the NEP 2020 has sparked debates regarding its implications for social justice, particularly concerning accessibility, affordability, and equity in higher education. This research critically analyzes the strengths and shortcomings of NEP 2020 in addressing social justice issues in higher education. It examines the policy's structural and financial implications, evaluating its potential to bridge or widen gaps in educational access and equity. Furthermore, the study explores the broader consequences of policy implementation, particularly regarding linguistic diversity, regional disparities, and the feasibility of proposed reforms in different socio-economic contexts. By analyzing these aspects, the research aims to contribute to the discourse on educational reform, offering recommendations to enhance inclusivity and ensure a more equitable higher education system. Strengthening public institutions, increasing financial aid, and fostering a participatory approach in policymaking are key measures necessary to align the NEP's vision with the principles of social justice. Addressing these concerns will be critical to realizing an inclusive and progressive education system in India that caters to diverse socio-economic backgrounds.

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Keywords: New Education Policy 2020, Higher Education, Social Justice, Educational Equity, Privatization

Introduction

India has had religious systems that have influenced education for a very long time, and this is an indigenous approach. Because of its long history, education has been viewed from many different cultural and religious points of view, primarily based on what was needed at the time. So, over time, the goals of education, the way it is taught, and the expected results have all changed. No matter how different they are, the philosophical basis of each education system is where it is all. Kautilya believed that philosophy is the guiding light for all branches of knowledge, enabling people to carry out various tasks and fulfill their duties. From a sociological perspective, ancient education was viewed as a method to preserve and transmit cultures, assimilate them, and integrate them into society. Education, in this context, encompasses a broad spectrum of actions individuals undertake to either effect change or prevent others from doing so².

Ancient System of Education (1500 BCE –300 BCE)

In the old Hindu system, there were two main ways to learn.³ Throughout human history, there has been a profound appreciation for two forms of knowledge: Aparavidya, which pertains to spiritual understanding, and Paravidya, which encompasses material knowledge. Over time, the focus of educationists has shifted towards Paravidya, leading to the establishment of universal education systems and the development of various educational levels, such as primary, secondary, higher, and technical education. Religious groups have traditionally been entrusted with disseminating Paravidya or spiritual knowledge. The primary objective of education has been to equip young men and women with the necessary skills to fulfill their religious, social, and economic obligations. Additionally, education has aimed to preserve and enrich culture, foster character and personality development, and instill positive values in individuals.

Historically, two main types of educational institutions have been prevalent: gurukulas and vidyapeetas. Gurukulas were residential schools where students lived with teachers while

² H Sharma, 'The Gurukula System' in MK Singh (ed), *Ancient Indian Education* (2nd edn, Abhinav Publications 2005) 67

³ Anantha Buddappa, 'Education in ancient India' 10 (2022) <www.ijert.org>accessed 24 May 24, 2024

receiving education. They emphasized the importance of three essential steps to success: Sravana (listening to scriptures), manana (reflecting on and interpreting teachings), and nididhyasana (applying truths learned in daily life).

Vidyapeetas, on the other hand, were centers of advanced spiritual learning.⁴ So, in the old Hindu education system, the individual was the most important thing and the center of learning. Asanas like sravana, manana, and nidihidyasana were more straightforward to learn through oral tradition. This method was used in both ancient and modern gurukulas. The teacher stopped the learning and gave each student a report on what they had learned through sravana, manana, and nidhidysana, or how well they could understand, draw conclusions, and make valid comparisons. “Students were taught apara and paravidya, which were different types of knowledge based on their needs. Apadravya focused on practical knowledge that could be used to make a living, such as studying basic philosophy, grammar, math, astronomy, medicine, chemistry, physics, and more. On the other hand, the subjects that fell under para vidya were basic philosophy, basic grammar, basic math, and things like the Vedas, Upanishads, and Puranas. Students of para vidya also learned the science of logic, which helped them develop their interpretations of the scriptures.”⁵ In ancient times, scholars wrote bhashyas to explain the principles in the scriptures, while others focused on interpreting the sutras within those texts. Educational institutions, known as vidyapeetas and parishads, facilitated learning by organizing regular debates, or goshtis. These debates and gatherings allowed individuals to demonstrate their knowledge. Gupta elaborates on the core objectives and values of ancient Indian education, emphasizing these differences in the traditional educational systems.⁶ To spread a spirit of holiness and righteousness;

- To build good character;
- To shape the personality;
- To teach civic and social values;
- To encourage social efficiency; and
- To protect and promote national culture.

⁴ M Singh, 'Ancient Education System in India' (History Discussion, 1 March 2020) <<http://www.historydiscussion.net/education/ancient-education-system-in-india/13256>> accessed 23 May 2024.

⁵ Anantha Buddappa (n 31) 29

⁶ M Singh, (n 32) 34

Buddhist System of Education (300 BCE to 100 BCE)

When Buddhism came to the world and spread around the sixth century BC, it changed how people thought about philosophy⁷. In the 6th century, a particular religion gained popularity due to the governance and societal structure of the time. This religion appealed to rulers and merchants because it aligned well with their political and economic interests. In contrast, Hinduism's principles clashed with their secular practices. The Hindu education system was often perceived as focused on rituals and preserving oral traditions, while the Buddhist education system was seen as more practical and applicable. Despite this perception, there wasn't a significant difference between the Vedic and Buddhist educational approaches regarding general theory or practice. Both systems were not designed to restrict individual freedom. Buddhist education aimed to develop individuals who were accessible, intelligent, moral, peaceful, and non-religious. It sought to cultivate students who were knowledgeable, compassionate, logical, and free from superstition, greed, lust, and ignorance. The core principles of Buddhist educational philosophy were discipline, meditation, and wisdom. Monasteries were established to impart Buddhist values through education. A key objective of Buddhist education in these monasteries was to achieve moral perfection by following the Eightfold Path. The curriculum included the study of the Sastras of the five sciences: grammar, arts and crafts, medicine, logic, and inner science. Logic, tours, conferences, and meditation in solitude were also essential parts of Buddhist education as taught by teachers⁸. "The lessons were mostly about spiritual things. It was because getting saved was the main goal of education. It was most important to study the religious books. For monks, this kind of lesson plan was only for them. In addition, Buddhists learned how to spin, weave, print clothes, tailor, draw, do accounting, make medicines, do surgery, and make money. In the early days of Buddhism, education was limited and only available to people who lived in monasteries. But after a while, it became open to everyone, and regular people could get an education in those places. Buddhist education is open to everyone from all walks of life. Buddhist education aims to turn people from being stupid to being smart, from being beasts to being Buddhas. The world changed a lot because of Buddhist education. Buddhists were the first people in the world to make school free for everyone. Students of all castes, creeds, and religions could attend school, which was unavailable to the upper class. On the other hand, ICT, vocational, and industrial education did not get enough attention in Buddhist schools. But because it made fun of family ties, it did a lot

⁷ Balkrishna Govind Gokhale, 'The Early Buddhist Education System: A Historical Analysis' in K.T. Saroja (ed), *Buddhism in Ancient India: Education and Society* (Ancient History Press 2010) 45-67

⁸ Balkrishna (n 35)

of damage to social progress. They gave up their families and dedicated their lives to the sangh and Buddhism”⁹.

Islamic System of Education (Post AD 1200)

Islam first came to the Indian subcontinent when the Arabs took over Sindh in the 7th century. It then spread to the northern part of India when the Ghurids took over in the 12th century and is now an essential part of India's religious and cultural history. Muhammad Ghauri, who lived in 1175 AD, allowed 100 Estelar Muslim education to grow in India.¹⁰ There are schools for Muslims that are connected to the mosques. Mohammad Ghor changed the pathasalas into Maktabas, Madrasahs, and the temples into mosques. Feroz Tughlak built a lot of colleges and a residential university in Delhi. He also gave the university money and scholarships. The goal of Islamic education was to free people from narrow and dogmatic views of Islam. Based on this view of human nature, Islamic education should help Muslims grow in all areas: physically, spiritually, emotionally, and intellectually. In Ibn Sina's plan for education and training, people would study the Quran, metaphysics, language, adab (belles-lettres), ethics, and practical skills. Islamic education was given in two stages. Stage 1: Learn the Quran, metaphysics, language, adab, ethics, and practical skills (the curriculum for girls is different). Bn Sinha called the second stage of schooling "the period of specialization." He thought that all students, no matter their social class, should start learning practical skills during this time¹¹.

The way of thinking taught in the Islamic education system and understanding what the Quran says were the most essential parts of schooling. There are two types of knowledge in Islamic pedagogy: revealed (wahy) knowledge and acquired (iktisabi) knowledge.¹² “In traditional Islamic pedagogy, learning is based on listening, memorizing, and repeating what you hear. The knowledge revealed was holy and only given to a small group called prophets. The learned knowledge included passed-down traditions (naqli) and logical knowledge ('aqli). Gurukulas, Monasteries, and Madararas all had strong philosophical views that focused on the spiritual side of life. However, they also taught subjects necessary for making a living.”¹³

⁹ Anuradha Seneviratna, 'The Buddhist System of Education in Ancient India' (1984) 7(2) Journal of Asian Studies 151

¹⁰ John L Esposito, 'Islamic Education: Past and Present' (The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Islamic World, 2009) <<http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t236/e0379>>accessed 23 May 2024

¹¹ John L Esposito (n 38)

¹² Syed Ali Ashraf, 'The Role of Madrassas in Islamic Education' in Barbara D Metcalf (ed), *Islamic Contestations: Essays on Muslims in India and Pakistan* (Oxford University Press 2004)

¹³ Syed Ali Ashraf, (n 40) 44

The System Education in the Pre-Independent Period

In the history of modern education in India, the East India Company was obliged to take responsibility for educating Indian children. A new law reinforced this responsibility on July 21, 1813, which extended the Company's authority for another two decades. An Act granted the Board of Control the power to permit missionaries to establish schools in India. During this period, British India was divided into five provinces: Bengal, Pune, Bombay, Madras, the Punjab, and the United Provinces. The Bengal Presidency took initial steps to reorganize schools, leading to the establishment of the Central Committee of Public Instruction for the Bengal Presidency on July 17, 1823. The committee played a pivotal role in the education sector, overseeing the restructuring of the Calcutta Madrassa and Banaras Sanskrit Colleges. In 1824, they founded a Sanskrit College in Calcutta. Furthermore, the committee engaged Orientalists to translate English texts into Asian languages and published numerous books in Sanskrit and Arabic. One of the most significant contributions was the introduction of English classes in India. Lord Bentinck outlined the following orders in the 1835 Resolution signed by the Governor-General.¹⁴

- The main goal of the British government was to get Indian people interested in European literature and science. Because of this, all school money should only be used to teach English.
- The Asian institutions should not be thrown out. Teachers and students already working at these schools will continue to get paid and get extra monthly.
- Following the last part, no more school funds will be used to print Oriental-language books.
- Starting now, all the money that the General Committee of Public Instruction has will be used to teach English literature and science to Indian native speakers through the English language.

The Revolt of the Sepoys in 1857 (also called the Revolt of 1857) severely shook the well-developed education system and well-organized government of the British East India Company. The following year, the British Government pulled all its education policies through Lord Ellenborough's dispatch as President of the Board of Control. They did this because they thought that some policies, such as mass education, education for women, and financial aid to mission schools, could lead to the Revolt.

¹⁴ Syed Ali Ashraf, (n 40) 44

Because the Queen's Proclamation of 1858 gave power from the company to the crown, the General Act, which Ellenborough suggested, wasn't seen much. The dispatch of 1854 highlighted the significance of universities, leading to the establishment of the first three universities in Calcutta, Madras, and Bombay in 1857. Since then, the number of universities has steadily increased. These universities primarily focused on granting affiliations to various schools and colleges. In India, the modern education system provides secular education, requiring schools following traditional patterns to adopt this system. By 1871, 137 middle and high schools for girls offered secular education. Between 1880 and 1882, 82,916 primary schools were operated by various organizations across India. The government implemented different educational policies for each province, simultaneously promoting the growth of modern and Indigenous educational systems.¹⁵ For example, in Madras and Bengal-Assam, Indigenous schools were quite successful, while in Bombay, the North-West Province, and Punjab, government schools also performed well. In the central provinces, both Indigenous and government school systems developed simultaneously¹⁶.

Education System in Independent India

There were no other significant reports or commissions after the Sargent Commission during the British era. The Sargent Commission's Report was also never made public. The Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) decided to establish two separate commissions following the change in government. One commission would focus on higher education, and the other on secondary education, anticipating India's evolving needs post-independence. The school system needed reform to fulfill the educational promises during the freedom struggle.¹⁷ The Constituent Assembly talked about making education accessible and required for all children up to 14.

These discussions led to the writing of the Directive Principles of State Policy in the Constitution of India. The country's educational policy was supposed to develop a way for everyone to get into elementary school by 1960. The system of secondary and higher education also went through changes that were needed to meet the needs of the country¹⁸.

¹⁵ Rabindranath Tagore, 'The Centre of Indian Culture' (1916) 5 Indian Journal of Philosophy 149.

¹⁶ Rabindranath Tagore, (n 43)

¹⁷ Radhika Bhattra, 'Evolution of Education Landscape in Independent India: A Comprehensive Analysis,' 12 (2024) <www.ijert.org> accessed 24 May 2024

¹⁸ Radhika Bhattra (n 45)

India's independence marked the start of a new era in education policy. Being so different, Indian society has caused many problems and difficulties. The Indian government set up education commissions to deal with these problems, come up with comprehensive solutions for educational issues, and make the Indian education system better. India adopted the Constitution in 1950 after it became independent. Both the central government and the state governments took over education. The people who wrote the Constitution knew that a well-educated electorate was essential for the stability and progress of a democratic country. The Constitution emphasized both the idea of "equal educational opportunity and the idea of "positive discrimination" as a way to achieve social justice¹⁹. The Education Commissions set up from time to time have significantly impacted India's education policies since it became independent. In the next section, we'll talk about the most essential parts of these commissions' recommendations.

University Education Commission (1948)

The University Education Commission of 1948, led by Dr S. Radhakrishnan, was India's first commission after it became independent. Its job was to report on the state of university education in India and suggest changes and additions that would benefit the country now and in the future. The Commission, which wrote a very long and detailed report, was given the job of not only changing the education system to deal with the problems that came up after a long time of colonization but also making the country richer overall, making democracy work better, and lowering social and economic inequality. For the next generation, one of the main goals of the education policy the country wanted to make was to help them get into college.

The goal of this Commission was to build universities that would give people the knowledge and wisdom they need to grow as whole people. It was thought that going to college was an essential step toward higher education. A university was built in a particular region mainly to make higher education available to everyone, regardless of caste, gender, or region. This report suggested that the education system be rebuilt in a way that fits with the goals of the Indian constitution.

¹⁹ Satyendra Kumar Pandey, 'School Education System in India before and after Independence' [2019] International Journal of Research and Analytical Reviews (IJRAR) www.ijrar.org 612 <www.ijrar.org> accessed May 24, 2024

Secondary Education Commission (1952)

In 1952, Dr. A. Lakshmanaswami Mudaliar was responsible for setting up the Secondary Education Commission. In 1953, the Commission gave the Government its report. The report examined the broader issues faced by the Indian education system and proposed methods to enhance efficiency in educational output. It recommended diversifying high school curricula and establishing multipurpose high schools. Additionally, the report advocated for a uniform educational framework across India and suggested the creation of technical schools.²⁰ The Mudaliar Commission's suggestions have significantly impacted the growth of secondary education in India since it became independent. Most people who work in education have said that its suggestions are efficient and valuable. Some people have, however, pointed out the problems with this report. They felt that the Commission's recommendations were outdated and uninteresting, merely reiterating old policies. Additionally, they believed the suggestions were impractical and couldn't be implemented effectively. The report also failed to offer ideas for promoting women's school attendance.²¹

Indian Education Commission (1964-66)

Following the Mudaliar Commission, the Indian Education Commission was set up, with D. S. Kothari as its chairman. It was given the job of looking into all areas of education and giving the government advice on how to create a National System of Education. It was commonly known as the Kothari Commission. There were suggestions from this Commission that led to the creation of the National Educational Policy of 1968.

In the first few sentences of its report, the Kothari Commission on Education said, The future of India is now being made in her classrooms. Their education determines people's wealth, safety, and well-being in a world based on science and technology. Our success in the big project of national reconstruction, whose primary goal is to raise the standard of living of our people, will depend on the quality and number of people who graduate from our schools and colleges. The Commission thought education could be a powerful tool for changing society, the economy, and the government. Because of this, educational goals need to be linked to long-term national goals. The Commission said education was the only way to change without a violent revolution. The Commission also looked at how Indian education has changed since

²⁰ Ministry of Education, Government of India, Secondary Education Commission, *Report of the Mudaliar Commission* 1952

²¹ Ministry of Education (n 48)

independence and in the modern era. They concluded that Indian education needs a complete overhaul, almost a revolution, to meet the country's constitutional goals and solve its many problems in different areas. The Commission stated that this complete reconstruction has three main parts:

- a) Changes within the country;
- b) Better quality; and
- c) More classrooms.

National Policy on Education (1968)

Based on the suggestions made by the Kothari Commission, the Indian government created the National Policy on Education in 1968. The National Policy on Education wanted "total reformation" and to give everyone in society the chance to go to school so everyone could live together peacefully. The policy suggested that children between 6 and 14 should be required to attend school, which the Indian Constitution says should happen. Besides that, it said that regional languages should be promoted for use in secondary schools.²²

The Commission thought that schools should use English as the language of instruction and that Hindi should be the national language. As part of the National Policy on Education, Sanskrit, India's cultural heritage growth was also pushed. This policy told the Indian government that 6% of the country's income should go to education. Many people didn't like how the National Policy on Education in 1968 pushed the "three language formula." Most students thought they didn't want to learn a third language, but it was forced on them. Additionally, it was noted that the policy was not very clear and specific because it did not explain how the rules in the policy could be put into action. However, the policy got a lot of attention because it was the first in independent India to give the education system a clear direction. In 2004, Sharma wrote that the "three language formula" was seen as a way to bring the country together and as a way to help minorities do better in school. People didn't like this policy, but it was still praised as the first organized attempt to shape Indian education.

Draft National Policy on Education (1979)

The Draft National Policy on Education – 1979 called for creating an education system to help people learn more and improve at school. In addition, The Draft National Policy on Education

²²Ministry of Education, Government of India, National Policy on Education 1968 (17 August 1968)

emphasizes the importance of teaching morals and ethics to students, aiming to cultivate good character and citizenship. It advocates for schools to uphold the values enshrined in the Constitution, with a primary goal of fostering national unity through education. According to Chaube (1988), the policy highlights the need for the Indian education system to adapt to contemporary needs and be capable of responding effectively to various challenges. Additionally, it underscores the importance of bridging the gap between the educated elite and the broader population to prevent feelings of inferiority or isolation.²³ The policy also suggested that communities and schools cooperate and assist each other.

National Policy on Education (1986)

The National Policy on Education was made by the Indian government in 1986. Its main goal was to educate everyone, especially women, people from scheduled castes and tribes, and other backward classes who had not had access to education for hundreds of years. The primary aim of the National Policy on Education (1986) was to ensure that individuals from economically disadvantaged backgrounds had access to education through initiatives such as scholarships, adult education programs, and hiring teachers from marginalized communities. It also emphasized the establishment of new schools and colleges to provide primary education to all. The policy highlighted the importance of open universities, leading to the creation of the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) in Delhi. Reflecting Gandhian principles, it advocated for educational opportunities in rural areas. Furthermore, the policy encouraged private sector participation in technical education and promoted the use of computers in schools.²⁴

National Policy on Education (1992)

Acharaya Ramamurti was in charge of the commission that the Indian government set up in 1990 to look again at the effects of the National Policy on Education and make suggestions. “Once that was over, N. Janadhana Reddy was in charge of setting up the Central Advisory Board of Education. This Board thought about making some changes to NPE. The committee's report was turned in in 1992 and became known as the National Program of Action 1992.”²⁵

²³ Ministry of Education, Government of India, (1979) *Draft National Policy on Education 1979*.

²⁴ Ministry of Human Resource Development (1986), Government of India, National Policy on Education 1986

²⁵ National Policy on Education 1992 (Government of India, Ministry of Human Resource Development) <https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/NPE.pdf> accessed 21 May 2024

The National Policy on Education from 1992 put a lot of emphasis on promoting growth and making the country more integrated. The National Policy on Education (1992)²⁶ She emphasized that the Indian educational system needed to be changed even more, focusing on improving it. The policy also emphasized teaching students morals and making school more relevant to real life.

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)

The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, also known as "The Education for All Movement," was a program the central government ran to make elementary education available to all children by a specific date. Since 2000–2001, this program has been running. It began with the District Primary Education Program (DPEP) from 1993 to 1994. The main aim of the District Primary Education Program (DPEP) was to ensure that every individual could access primary education. On the other hand, the goal of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) was to enhance the quality of education, promote moral and social awareness, and foster strong character development. SSA emphasized the need for the education system to evolve in response to the demands of contemporary society. Building infrastructure was a crucial aspect of providing educational access. From 2002-03 to 2008-09, SSA resulted in constructing an additional 800,000 classrooms and establishing 148,492 new primary schools and 133,277 new upper primary schools.²⁷ This made it much easier for more people to get to the elementary level. The Mission also pushed for more work to be put into creating, funding, and implementing specific plans to help poor urban children, especially in the 35 cities with more than one million people.²⁸

Right to Education Act (2009)

It is essential for kids ages 6 to 14 to go to school, and the Right to Education Act, also known as The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, makes that clear. The Act became law on April 1, 2010; in India, every child now has the right to education, thanks to a law that has been passed. This law requires all private schools to reserve 25% of their seats for children from socially disadvantaged groups. It also ensures that no child can be held back, expelled, or required to pass a board exam until they finish elementary school. Additionally,

²⁶ Npe (n 53)

²⁷ Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, Department of School Education & Literacy, *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan: Framework for Implementation*, (New Delhi: Government of India, 2001).

²⁸ MHRD (n 55)

the law provides special training for those who have dropped out of school. Because education is a matter that involves both the central government and state and local governments, the implementation of this law is divided among them²⁹.

The central government pays 70% of the costs to enact this law, and the state governments pay the other 30%. However, the RTE ran into some problems when it tried to be implemented. Here are just a few of them. First, this plan only applies to kids in grades 1 to 8. Second, the Act makes no special rules for encouraging girls to attend school; it's gender-neutral. Third, it says nothing about the right of disabled children to go to school. Fourth, the Act doesn't mention the stage after elementary school. Once they finish elementary school in a top school, kids from disadvantaged groups won't be able to attend high school or college there. Then, they might have to go back to schools with questionable standards, which will be bad for their mental health. Lastly, many instances of corruption by school administrators have been seen while the Act is being implemented. Along with these centrally sponsored education policies, state governments have also started a lot of support programs, such as the Midday Meal Scheme, the Bicycle Scheme, and the building of pre- and post-matric hostels, to make it easier for people to get to and make the most of educational opportunities. Almost every state government has set up commissions and committees to suggest changes to education policies that will make it more "inclusive," "quality conscious," and "attuned to meet global needs." well-known standards. However, there have been many problems with implementing the policies, which must be fixed in future policies.³⁰ Since before India became independent, education policy has been essential to building up the country's school system. The objectives and approaches of the current education system are closely tied to the prevailing education policies, reflecting the attitudes of those in power towards education. Education policy dictates various aspects of a school system, including the curriculum, courses, and teaching methodologies. In India, educational policies have evolved to address the country's social and economic requirements. Formal education policies were not established during the British colonial period until the Charter Act of 1813 was passed. Subsequent developments, such as the Woods Education Despatch of 1854 and the Report of the Sargeant Commission before independence, have significantly influenced the trajectory of India's education system. Notably, there was a notable shift in elite education during British rule³¹. This was reflected in

²⁹ *Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009* (India).

³⁰ RTE (n 57)

³¹ RTE, (n 57)

the country's educational policies, which saw the need for government support to open schools for everyone, not just the wealthy. Grants, the creation of education departments, and the founding of universities were all steps that led to India's well-developed education system. The Government of India has set up several education commissions since the country became independent almost 70 years ago. There is no doubt that the commissions' reports have changed the way education is handled. Advice has been given, but it hasn't always been followed through because of social and political pressures and mistakes in administration. Current political agendas have also greatly impacted policies, which is why there are still many holes in our education system. The rise in schools at all levels, especially in the private sector, has been a big problem for policymakers and educational planners. In India, our education policies have unfortunately not addressed the deep-rooted social and economic inequalities and the diverse cultural landscape within the school system. While various state-run support services and programs have been implemented across different levels of education to bridge these gaps, they have not been able to curb the rapid expansion of private educational enterprises or enhance the quality of education in many state-run and private schools. The absence of a standardized curriculum or quality assessment framework further complicates the situation. Addressing these challenges will be a significant hurdle for future education policies.³²

Conclusion

The NEP 2020 introduces commendable reforms aimed at revolutionizing India's higher education sector by promoting holistic, flexible, and skill-oriented learning. However, its implementation raises significant concerns regarding social justice, particularly in ensuring equitable access for marginalized communities. While the policy promotes flexibility, interdisciplinary studies, and vocational training, the growing privatization and reduced public funding threaten the affordability and inclusivity of higher education. Additionally, regional disparities, infrastructural limitations, and linguistic barriers further complicate the accessibility of quality education for all students.

To bridge this gap, a more robust framework is needed to safeguard the interests of underprivileged students. Strengthening public institutions, increasing financial aid, and ensuring transparency in admissions are some measures that can mitigate these challenges. Moreover, a participatory approach involving educators, policymakers, and stakeholders is

³² Siddharth Sharma, 'Right to Education Act: A Milestone or a Millstone?' (2017) 4 NUJS Law Review 123

crucial for addressing implementation barriers. This research underscores the necessity of policy modifications to align the NEP's vision with the principles of social justice, advocating for a balanced approach that ensures educational opportunities for all sections of society. Addressing these challenges will be crucial in realizing an equitable and progressive educational system in India, fostering both academic excellence and social transformation.

