

ROLE OF COMMITTEES AND COMMISSIONS ON THE EVOLUTION OF EDUCATIONAL POLICIES IN INDIA

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Abstract

To attain educational opportunity to all without any discrimination and to include marginalized children in getting quality education, the Government of India after Independence appointed various commissions and committees. The main aims of all these attempts were to make systemic changes in the education system from time to time. This paper attempts to find out the impact of various committees and commissions on education in India and how far it succeeded in implementing various educational policies for the development of the education system and especially school education which is regarded as the basic education of every child. The recommendations and suggestions made by various committees and commissions brought about so many qualitative improvements in the school education sector but yet Indian school education system want to go far ahead to bring about structural changes in the coming years. It is a fact that the committees and commissions have tried to address the issues related to school education but attained only partial success and lack of clear cut focus on primary education.

Key words: committees and commissions, educational policies, India

Introduction

The education system at the time of Independence was quite disappointing. There were 17 universities, 636 colleges, and 5297 secondary schools with 870000 pupils, 12483 middle schools with two million pupils and 172661 primary schools with 14 million pupils in India. Vocational and technical education was poorly developed and the supply of high level trained manpower was very limited. To analyze the problems and prospects in this regard various committees and commissions were constituted and suggested the way forward. India after Independence adopted these committees and commission to reform education and to make improvements in the economic and social development of the nation. Educational policies are set of government guidelines and principles that control the education system by certain rules and regulations and to meet a country's educational objectives (National Educational Policy, 2020). Regarding the role of different committees and commissions in educational development, a special subject group on Policy Framework for Private Investment in Education, Health and Rural Development in 2000 was of the view that government must focus on primary and secondary education and leave higher and professional education to the private sector (GOI, 2000).

Historical Evolution of Education System in India

Education in India can be divided into two time periods. In British India, there were Macaulay's minutes (1835), Wood's Despatch (1835), Indian Education Commission (1882), Indian Universities Commission (1902) & Act (1904), Gokhlee's Bill (1910-12), Sadler Commission Report (1917), Government of India Act (1935) and Sargent Report (1944).

In the post-Independence period, several noteworthy attempts were made in this regard. Bhagwan Sahai Committee Report (1972), Secondary Education Commission (1952-53), Indian Education Commission (1964-66), National Policy on Education (1986), Revised National Policy (1992) and National Curriculum Framework (NCF 2005) were prominent among them and intended to make structural transformation in the education system as a whole and that of school education in particular in India.

The present education system in India still fails to utilize the existing resources, by wasting the talents of youth and this could have serious consequences in the future. It is a fact that India

adopted so many programmes, schemes and policies on education since Independence, but still what we are lacking is the quality and equal access of education in all aspects and the structure itself needs more change, review and transformation. All these policies, programmes and schemes were the result of major recommendations of various commissions and committees from time to time. The committees and commissions on education had a profound influence as it helps the policy makers to make changes and revitalize the education system for the betterment of education system as a whole. But so far it is noticed that all these programmes and policies are unsatisfactory or not having any equal access among the vast majority of the stakeholders of education. So it is important to study the implications of major policies and schemes with special reference to school education in India.

The studies on various committees and commissions on the education system and its focus on school education and how far it is succeeded in the formulation of various educational policies and schemes are of utmost importance in evaluating the progress of education system in India as a whole. The studies in this regard are regarded as the need of the present time as it requires inadequate attention. So it is important to focus on the recommendations made by various commissions and committees on school education and its implications in India's education system as a whole. So in this regard it is important to evaluate the various commissions in India after Independence.

University Education Commission

There were several commissions and committees were implemented in India and most important among them are: The University of Education Commission was appointed by the Government of India under the chairmanship of Dr.S.Radhakrishnan also known as Dr. Radhakrishnan Education Commission was the first commission on Education after Independence. The main emphasis was on higher education but it also touched the crucial issues related to school education. The function of school education is to provide suitable education to those who join higher education. The aim of school education is to provide good general education, preparing them not only for university education but also for a better life. Schools should also provide leadership in various walks of life in the best interest of the nation. The commission gave importance to the role of teacher and made so many recommendations to improve their standards and also to improve the quality of education (Ministry of Education, 1962).

The committee studied about the income and expenditure of universities and gave recommendations to increase it and also indicated the need of spending more for primary and secondary education. The commission also stated the function of school education as to provide good general education. It explained the elements of good education as not to prepare them for university course but to prepare for a better earning in their living. The commission also specified the functions of schools different from that of colleges or universities and stressed the need of schools to diversify its outcomes in such a way to participate better in real life by more job oriented and employment oriented. The commission was of the view that the curriculum should be flexible and be framed in such a way to provide general broad based course or an intensive training in one or two subjects (NCERT, 1971). The challenges in curriculum was a crucial concern which need immediate and concrete action to change the curricula in line with the expansion of knowledge (MOE, 1985). The commission was also in favour of reforms in examination reforms and periodic internal evaluation system would require both teachers and students to work harder to optimize the growth of the system.

Secondary Education Commission

A commission appointed under the chairmanship of Dr. Lakshanaswamy Mudaliyar in 1952, also known as Dr A.L. Mudaliyar Commission. It mainly focused on the issues related to school education. The commission stressed the important role of schools in developing democratic citizenship and education opportunities to implement social justice throughout the country. The major recommendations include: installation of higher secondary system, diversified courses, three

language formula, emphasis on education and vocational guidance, improvement in the methods of teaching, text books and system of examination and improvement in building and equipment.

Although the main aim was related to secondary education, the commission also gave importance to elementary education (Ministry of Education, 1953). The recommendations of the commission are a landmark in the history of Indian education. The commission recommended for developing three year of national system of education after eight years of elementary education. Though the recommendations were mainly on secondary education the commission also spelled out the importance of elementary education.

Kothari Commission

It is also known as National Education Commission or Kothari commission. The commission reviewed the entire education system in India in a comprehensive manner. It treated education as the most important weapon for national development. Thus there was an urgent need to re-organize and re-orient the primary, secondary, university and technical education in India. In July 1964, the Indian Government appointed an Education Commission under the Chairmanship of D.S. Kothari, which is popularly known as Kothari commission. The commission gave importance to increase productivity, social and national integration, modernization and development of social, moral and spiritual values. The commission was unique in the sense that it touched almost all the important aspects of education like: social and national integration, introduction of common schools, appropriate language policy, promoting national consciousness, knowledge expansion, improving educational structure and standards, improving teacher's standards, equalization of educational opportunities, expansion of school education, modification of curriculum, adult education, agricultural education, education of the handicapped and gifted students, guidance and counseling, evaluation system, school buildings and administration (Ministry of Education, 1966). The commission also recommended for a 6% of GDP to education but India never spent that recommended target on education. The introduction of common school system, school educational structure with 12 years of schooling, provision of free text books and uniforms, free mid-day meal scheme at schools, ensuring equality in educational opportunities, establishment of school complexes, neighborhood schools, three language formula were all regarded as the steps to democratize school education system as a whole.

National Knowledge Commission

To meet the educational challenges of the 21st century, the National Knowledge Commission (NKC) was appointed. It is not regarded as an education commission but was proposed to bring about quality, access and equity in higher education. It is one of the important and recent initiatives for improving quality of education. It was constituted in June 2005 by the Prime Minister Dr Man Mohan Singh, under the chairmanship of Dr. Sam Pitroda as a blueprint for reforming our knowledge related institutions and infrastructure to meet the challenges of future. The commission has submitted its recommendations in the areas such as Right to Education, libraries, language, translation, portals and knowledge networks. The commission gave importance to elementary and secondary education. Regarding elementary education, high levels of financial and institutional commitment are required to ensure basic infrastructure in schools, to improve teaching quality and improve academic standards. It gave crucial importance to secondary education as it is the intermediate role between elementary and higher education. The quantity, quality, management and access were the crucial concerns related to school education (National Knowledge Commission, 2007). Institutional reforms within SSA, minimum requirements and standards to all schools, improving teacher training facilities, curricular reforms, building more infrastructure and ICT facilities to schools, greater access to school education in backward and remote areas and enhancing the contribution of private sector to school education are the major concerns of this commission regarding school education. It recommended changes in school education system to follow decentralization, local autonomy in management of schools and flexibility in disbursement of funds. As per the recommendations of the commission, the primary responsibility of school education lies with the state government and states needed to be consulted for policy formulation.

Major Education Policies in India

Based on the recommendations of various commissions and committees, several educational policies were formulated and implemented to make India on the path of socialistic pattern of society and to bring about the overall changes in the education system as a whole from time to time. The main aims of all these policies were to make the education system in India more comprehensive and elaborate as it stands at the crossroads. All the educational policies in India also aimed at bringing about more educational improvements by adding more advantage to the qualitative improvements of education system as a whole.

National Policy on Education (1968)

The policy of 1968 was a significant step in the history of India followed by the recommendations of Kothari commission aims at national integration and reconstruction of the education system as a whole with special stress and focus on quality of education at all levels. As per the article 45 of the Indian constitution, the policy strongly recommended for the implementation of free and compulsory education for all children up to the age of 14 and also recommended for suitable programmes to remove or reduce wastage and stagnation in schools to ensure that every child enrolled in schools complete it without leaving and successfully completes the course. Improvement in curriculum, text books and teaching methods along with importance to science education in schools were the major concerns of the policy (NPE, 1968).

National Policy on Education (1986)

The National Policy on Education (1986) popularly known as New Education Policy (NEP) was regarded as a landmark and the 'Magna Carta' of Indian education and a road to the attainment of socialistic pattern of society. It was prepared to improve the quality of education in the country and to provide education facilities to all the citizens of the nation. The policy has been reviewed in various years. The NPE (1986) focused on certain principles to promote the development of education in the country. These principles are: Free and compulsory education, education of teachers, language development, education opportunity for all, uniform education structure and reviewing the progress in the section. The policy also aimed at importance to elementary education and secondary education as it is crucial in the development of the education system as a whole. It proposed 10+2+3 pattern of education and recommended for common school system. The setting up of Navodaya vidyalayas was the landmark in the school education system and the setting up of primary schools in remote areas, equal access and opportunities to girl children in elementary education and access, enrollment and retention were the major concerns (NPE, 1986). The policy also recommended for the introduction of Operation Blackboard in primary schools to improve the physical and human resources.

Revised Education Policy (1992)

The National Policy of Education was modified in 1992 with some additions. The new education policy gave emphasis to retention of children in the schools at the primary level, attention to the backward, physically handicapped and minority child for their development in education, importance to women's education, provision of institutions with more resources like infrastructure, computers and libraries. The Central Advisory Board of Education should play an important role in reviewing educational development and to improve education in the country. State governments may establish State Advisory Board of education to check the progress of states in the education process. Non-government organizations will be encouraged to facilitate the education in the country. Programmes of early childhood care and education, elementary education and secondary education were expanded. It also recommended for the establishment of Navodaya Vidyalayas in all districts and recommended programmes for vocational education and higher education. To provide education for all the policy aimed at the establishment of Balwadis and day care centers.

New Education Policy (2019)

The main aim of the policy was to make Indian education system that transforms our nation sustainably into an equitable and vibrant knowledge society by providing high quality education to all. The main objective of the policy regarding school education is to provide early childhood care and education by providing every child in the range of 3-6 years has access to free, safe, quality,

developmentally appropriate care and education by 2025. Thus access for children aged 3-8 years have a multifaceted, multilevel, play based and activity based education system is of utmost importance. NCERT should provide development of a curricular and pedagogical framework for early childhood education. The policy also aimed at foundational literacy and numeracy by 2025. It is found that India is in a severe learning crisis. For achieving access and participation in free and compulsory quality school education for all children in the age group of 3-18 years is another objective that is to reintegrate dropouts and ensure universal access to education. Another objective related to school education is to transform curriculum and pedagogy by 2022 to minimize rote learning and encourage skills such as critical thinking, creativity, scientific temper, communication, collaboration, multilingualism, problem solving, ethics, social responsibility and digital literacy (NPE, 2019). Thus the new developmentally appropriate curriculum and pedagogical structure for school education is 5+3+3+4 design.

An equitable and inclusive education is another objective to have equal opportunity to learn across all genders and social categories by 2030. Inclusive education and enlargement of underdeveloped groups in education will be an integral part of education. In schools with a high proportion of learners from underrepresented groups, PTR should not be more than 25:1. Education of girls is also important and a gender- inclusion fund will focus on supporting quality and equitable education for all girls. Education of children belonging to Scheduled Caste communities and other backward classes and education of children from tribal communities, education of children from poor families, education of children with special needs, education of transgender children and education of children with special needs is also of utmost importance. Effective resourcing and effective governance through school complexes and Regulation and accreditation of schools are also needed. The Directorate of school education will be responsible for running the public education system. The State Council for Educational Research and Training (SCERT) will be the apex body on all academic matters related to school education. The RTE Act is very important and regarded as a milestone in the history of Indian education. Assessment of the functioning of the school education system is needed. The National Achievement Surveys (NAS) of student learning levels should be carried out periodically. The protection of the rights of the child and adolescent education is of utmost importance. Thus identification of students with learning difficulties, developmental challenges and other kinds of support needs should be carried out within schools and must involve teachers and parents and must be done sensitively.

National Educational Policy (2020)

The new policy on education gives importance to the creation of capable human beings and good educational institutions that promote a wide range of learning available to all students at all stages of education. The fundamental principles of new policy include: To recognize, identify and foster the capabilities of each student, to achieve the students with foundational literacy and numeracy, flexibility, multidisciplinary, holistic education, emphasis on conceptual understanding, creativity, critical thinking, human and constitutional values, ethics, multilingualism, life skills, extensive use of technology, equity, diversity and inclusion, teachers at the heart of the education system, a light but tight regulatory framework, a rootedness and pride in India, continuous review, education as a public service and substantial investment in a strong and vibrant public education system. It aims at transforming India by providing quality of education to all and makes India a global knowledge superpower. The policy modified the structure of school education as 5+3+3+4 covering ages 3-18. It gave importance to Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) as the foundation of learning. The policy aimed to curtail dropout rates and ensuring of universal access to education at all levels. The new educational policy aimed at restructuring of curriculum and pedagogy in schools to make learning as holistic, integrated, enjoyable and engaging. It also gives importance to reduce curriculum content to enhance essential learning and critical thinking. Experiential learning is the focus of the new policy. The new policy intended to implement National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCFSE). The new policy gives importance to regional language as national text books with local content and flavor.

The new policy gives importance to student development and intended to transform the student assessment for their development. Support for gifted students and students with special needs are also to be ensured. The policy also gives importance to the role of teachers thereby promotes their service environment and culture. Continuous Professional Development (CPD), Career Management Progression (CMP) and professional standards of teachers is to be ensured. The approach to teacher education is to be changed. Equitable and inclusive education is the target to attain learning for all. Efficient resourcing and effective governance through school complexes and clusters is to be maintained. School education in India needs changes like standard setting and accreditation (NPE 2020). Thus the main aim of the new policy is to restructure and transform India's education system as a whole by promoting quality of education.

Conclusion and Policy Implications

The policy makers in India since Independence are trying to bring about access, equity and quality of education in the Indian education system. Despite all the efforts to bring about and transform the education system, many aspects of the current educational setup demand more review and change. As education is in the concurrent list, state governments also contribute their own role in developing the education system. The different committees on education after independence also stressed for so many changes and recommendations which are regarded as the need of the hour and as a result, so many educational policies, programmes and schemes in the education sector.

But in spite of all these tremendous achievements since Independence, we still need to go far steps to utilize our existing resources and manpower to bring about more qualitative and structural changes in the education system. It is a fact the policy makers of school education are more concerned with standard and quality in education and they are not giving much importance to academic concerns which yet need to be improved such as reform in curricula, pedagogy, teacher quality, teacher training, evaluation and examinations. The factors like autonomy, accountability and management of educational institutions are also debatable fields which require urgent attention. It is seen that enrollment increased in schools, but regular attendance, retention and satisfactory completion of the course are serious concerns in primary education. It is a fact that lack of public provision in schools continue to affect the school education system as a whole in India. It is no doubt that Indian government formulated several educational policies to bring about qualitative improvements in the education scenario as a whole but so far it is unfortunate that Indian education system not changed to that level of transformation pointing the need for more investment in education and that of school education in particular.

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