

Education Policy in India: Analyzing Outcomes and Challenges

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Introduction

According to an old African Proverb **“If you educate a man, you educate an individual. But if you educate a woman, you educate a nation”**. But the fact remains that in this day and age too women’s basic rights are overlooked throughout the world (Vohra and Sen, 1986). From an early age woman bear the brunt of nutritional, physical, social and intellectual differences and disparities in upbringing. In many developing and underdeveloped nations of the world this situation becomes profound where women are ‘often deprived of the right to school, education and never taught any skill of worth’ (Abdalla, 1982; Williams, 2013).

Education is a dynamic force in the life of every individual, influencing his physical, mental, social, moral, emotional and ethical development. UNESCO (1997) construes Education as “organized and sustained instruction to communicate combination of knowledge, skills and undertaking valuable for all activities of life.” In the words of Mahatama Gandhi “By education, I mean an all-round drawing of the best in child and man in body, mind and spirit”. But this all-encompassing force has remained reserved for males, for a long time. The differences in educational attainments for males and females are ubiquitous across cultures and across globe (Finn, Dulberg, and Reis, 1982). Though the World Bank Report of 2014 points the importance of Education, but in reality, females do not enter schools or are forced to discontinue schooling, as education is considered worthwhile only for men to fulfil their roles as breadwinners.

Long before India’s independence, it had realized the importance of women education and its potential both for women and societal development. That education provides the means to women to move from passivity to assertiveness and that it was also one of the primary conditions for women’s empowerment. Realizing that education enables women to participate proactively and positively in economic, social and political processes the Policy makers started framing education Policies aimed at promoting woman education from the pre-independence era itself.

This module will focus on the various Education Policies that have existed in India from time to time. The focus of review of these policies will be from the point of women's education. It will also analyse the outcomes and challenges posed by these policies and their implications for woman education in India.

Objectives of the Module:

Through this online Teaching Learning Material (TLM), developed by the National Resource Centre, UGC HRDC, Jamia Millia Islamia in Gender/ Women's Studies it is envisaged that the Teachers undergoing the Annual Refresher Program through the MOOCs on SWAYAM platform will be able to:

- i) Understand the need for Education Policies especially for woman in India
- ii) Examine the evolution of Education Policy in India
- iii) Review and examine these policies from the point of women's education
- iv) Analyse the outcomes and challenges posed by these policies

Content

What is Education Policy?

An Education Policy is a formal usually written statement or a series of statements, or a collection of laws and rules or principles that elaborate and explain the purpose of education; also including societal and individual objectives pertaining to why education; the rules by which the education system operates including methods used for attaining these objectives and also the tools that measure the success and failures of educational attainments; and an entire set of dos and don'ts, recommendations for actions or exclusion of actions to be undertaken for the entire education system in a country.

What is the need for Education Policy?

Education is the cornerstone to the development of human potential. Education occurs in many forms that cater to different individuals belonging to varying age groups. Education may be formal, non-formal or informal. Education maybe disseminated through public funded education system and institutions or through private means. It may include many different levels including early childhood, primary, middle, secondary, senior secondary levels, followed by the higher education including undergraduate to post graduate, Ph.D., Post-doctoral level and also includes technical, vocational, professional education, adult

education and many skills enhancement & on-job training courses and programs. Education maybe learner centred or teacher centred, carried face to face or use the open distance learning modes or carried online.

An Education Policy therefore systematically and pointedly lays down specifics of education for each age-group; level; type; purpose of education; it specifies the objectives; content; methodologies; who will be the mentors/facilitators/teachers their qualifications, roles, responsibilities, recruitment process; the monitoring & evaluation systems to be followed; infrastructural facilities required; the expenditure allocation for the entire education system and the ways and means of countering problems that may crop up from time to time. In a nutshell an Education Policy shapes and guides the entire education system of a country.

What is the need for including women in Education Policy?

Education holds the key to the advancement of girls and women, improving lives of individual families and facilitating economic development of the poor communities worldwide (World Bank, 2014). However, strong social traditions prevailing in the developing nations sustain gender discrimination. They become a bottleneck for woman education which keeps them out of the portals of school and education. Child Marriage is common in traditional societies. Child Marriage opens floodgates for sexual activity at an age when the bodies of these girls are still in the throes of growth and development. These marriages lead to ‘adolescent pregnancies’ and ‘motherhood in childhood’ impacting both the maternal as well as child health. Further illiterate women produce more children compared to their literate counterparts. The Demographic and Health Surveys (1988-2011) carried in Ethiopia, Ghana and Kenya, the sub-Sahara Africa show that illiterate women on an average have 6.7 birth, while it falls to 5.8 for those with primary education and for women with secondary education it comes down to 3.9 (Dreze and Murthi, 2001; UNESCO, 2013). Illiteracy puts the individual and family health and nutritional status at risk too. Subsequently these ignorant, ill-informed, poverty-stricken women with little or no education and with limited cognitive abilities recurrently fall prey to domestic violence. When it comes to employment, they are usually employed at low wages and incomes. The hope of a better job and earning exposes them to the risk of being trafficked, exploited and face endless violence- sexual, domestic, and workplace. Illiterate women also suffer from extreme poverty and hardships.

Hence the need for education of girls and woman is not only from the point of view of their overall development but also the development of their overall personalities and potentials. It

is a catalyst in facilitating social development of their families, that can ultimately help in nation building and also ensuring a better future for the mankind. Over the years, the Indian government's commitment to education and woman education has been very well expressed through 5-Year Plans pertaining to Education, numerous Education Commissions, Education Policies, Programs of Action and the various governmental Schemes. Even the Constitutional provision for free and compulsory education of children till the age of 14 years, and equality in access of education and other facilities and the recent Right to Education Act and other initiatives are the steps in the right direction to enhance and promote women's access to education. However, India even after 73 year of its Independence has the world's largest population of illiterates. It has an overall Literacy-rate of 74.04% with male literacy-rate was 82.14% and the female literacy-rate was only 65.46% as per the Census of India, 2011. This is definitely not one of the best scenarios. Hence while the education policies are being drafted, it is important that pro-woman education policies need to be drafted. Besides drafting pro-woman education policies, it is imperative that proper implementation should follow so that it acts as a tool to change the status of woman in the Indian society.

Evolution of Educational Policy in India- Analyzing Outcomes and Challenges

In order to understand the evolution of Educational Policy in India one has to be view the education system that has prevailed in India since ancient times. The education system can be broadly divided into three stages from ancient times till today.

1. Pre-British period
2. British period
3. Post-Independence period

1. Education Policies during Pre-British period

The Pre-British period is somewhat long and traces the education system from the Vedic Period up to the Muslim invasions.

1.1 Education Policies during Vedic Period (1500-500 B.C.E.)

Aryans entered the Indo-gangetic plains of India around the 2nd millennium B.C. Dravids were the original inhabitants of the land were pushed southwards or towards the jungles and mountains in north India and some subjugated themselves as the 'dasas' or servants. Gradually the four-fold Varna System or '*Chaturvarna*' in which 'dasas' were

absorbed as 'sudras'. By about 500 B.C. the caste hierarchies were deeply entrenched in the society. Religion played a vital role. It even influenced education. It was compulsory for the higher castes to study the Vedic literature. During Vedic times women enjoyed equal status as that of men. They had full right to be educated and perform rituals and sacrifices without any males by their side. *Upanayana*, the Vedic initiation ceremony for education was performed for both boys and girls. Girls also wore the sacred thread, lived life of celibacy, devoting themselves in the pursuit of higher education, philosophy and pursuit of religion. Atharvaveda in fact declared a woman could not marry till she had completed her education. In fact, child marriage was unknown in the Vedic period. Many woman scholars like Maitreyi, Gargi were well-versed in Vedas and sacred texts. Educated women became teachers or *Upadhyayinis* and there were boarding schools for girl students under their tutelage. Women who had knowledge about *Brahma* the Supreme Being were the *Brahmavadinis*. The *Mantranids* were well-versed in *Mantras* or the Vedas (Kausalaya mother of Rama in Ramayana and Draupadi in Mahabhartara were *Mantranids*) and *Pandita* was the learned one. Rigveda is a collection of hymns composed by 20 different poetesses, a few being Lopamudra, Urvashi, Ghosha (Vohra and Sen, 1985; Pruthi, 2004 and Sharma, 2007).

1.2 Education Policies during Buddhist Period (500 B.C. to 1100 A.D.)

During this period, schools were established and teachers admitted students of all castes. *Takshashila* emerged as a great centre of learning of international. This is the time of emergence of two new religions Jainism and Buddhism. The founders Mahavira and Buddha rejected the supremacy of 'Vedas' and imparted education to people irrespective of caste, creed or sex in their common language. By about 500 B.C. women education received a great set back as the Vedic ceremony *Upanayana* became prohibited for girls. Gradually the religious status of women declined. However, Buddha permitted women to enter the Buddhist Monasteries- the *Viharas* which led to spread of education among women of aristocratic and business communities. These women led life of celibate and studied Buddhist philosophy and religion and spread Buddhism in India, Burma, Ceylon etc. The famous *Viharas* were the Vikramasila, Odantupuri and Jagaddala. *Manusmriti* was composed around 200 B.C. Dr. Radhakrishnan in his book "Religion and Society" points that *Manusmriti* verse declares that the marriage ritual of girls is akin to the *Upanayana* ritual for boys. This is indicative that child marriage became a norm of the society and marriage of a girl was given importance over her education. With the beginning of the Christian era the status of women corresponded to the status of the *Shudras* the lowest caste among the Hindus. Vedic

education including recitation of Vedic Mantras, performances of Vedic rituals and sacrifices became prohibited for women. Only girls of rich families received education while other girls and women fell in a deep abyss of educational deprivation and neglect. Manu's social codes left indelible restrictions on the education and status of Indian women.

The 8th century AD saw emergence of Universities of Nalanda and Valabhi Indian sciences, mathematics and astronomy advanced significantly. Prior to Muslim invasions in the 10th century nearly every village had its schoolmaster supported by local contributions. These Hindu schools of learning or the '*Pathasalas*' were conducted by Brahmin acharyas at their residences. Hindu 'maths' (monk's residences) and temple colleges teaching spiritual and pedagogic functions also emerged. Interestingly religion dominated education and the growth of temples in India was an indication of growth of education. It should be noted that girls were usually educated at home and vocational education was imparted through a system of apprenticeship.

1.3 Education Policies during Muslim Period (11th Century A.D.-1857)

Muslim invasions from 11th Century A.D. narrowed the social liberties of Indian women and further deteriorated their position and status. Hindu women adopted the *pardah*, or the veil to protect their dignity and chastity. This became restrictive and impediment to woman's education. Only the daughters of the rich and privileged families were educated that too home schooled. Mughal Princesses like Razia Sultan, Nur Jahan, Jahanara Begum were educated (Vohra and Sen, 1985). At the beginning of 19th century, the indigenous Indian educational institutions or schools of learning were the *Pathasala* of the Hindus and *Madarsaas* of the Muslims. Both had traditional methods of instruction, followed narrow curriculum which however was flexible to local needs. They received assistance from rulers, chieftains, opulent or religious citizens. While the Hindu girls were taught at home. Muslim girls were sent to *Madarsaas* for gaining Islamic education that included study of religion and Islam. Two prominent social reformers, Raja Ram Mohun Roy and Pandit Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar played an important role in promoting women's education with Government's support.

1.4 Education Policies during the East India Company

East India Company arrived in India around 1600 for trade purposes. Company rule in India effectively began in 1757 and lasted until 1858, when, following the Indian Rebellion of 1857, the Government of India Act 1858 led to the British Crown's assuming direct control

of the Indian subcontinent in the form of the new British Raj. The British Crown assumed direct control of India in 1858.

1.4.1 Macaulay's "Minute Upon Indian Education"

Thomas Babington Macaulay's "Minute Upon Indian Education" observed the inferiority of the native (particularly Hindu) culture and learning (Evans, 2002). His famous note of February 2, 1835, emphasized that selective natives must be educated "as interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes and opinion, in morals and intellect".

1.4.2 Bentinck's Educational Policy or the English Education Act 1835

Subsequent to Macaulay's "Minute" the English Education Act 1835 a legislative act was passed under Lord William Bentinck the then Governor General of British India for "promotion of European literature and science. All funds appropriated for the purpose of education would be best employed on education alone" (Sharp, 1920). Henceforward this led to introduction of modern education in India and teaching of Western curriculum with English as the language of instruction. In 1837, English replaced Persian as the official and court language'. In 1844, Harding announced preference for English educated Indians in the Civil Service. These two steps effectively sealed any growth of education other than English education.

1.4.3 Wood's Despatch of 1854

The Charter of the East India Company had to be renewed after every twenty years. When the time for renewal came in 1853, Sir Charles Wood, President of the Board of Control issued "Wood's Despatch" a very important educational document. This was sent to the Governor General Lord Dalhousie. It holds a unique place in the history of Indian education. It placed the responsibility of education of the Indian people fully on the company and stated quite explicitly that it must never be neglected. The Despatch gave new direction to education in India and in a way this direction has its clear impact on today's education in the country. The salient features included-

- Educate Indian people in order to create a class of civil servants.
- Impart Western knowledge and information and disseminate Western Culture to the Indian people.

- Wood's Despatch recommended creation of Department of Education in Bengal, Madras, Bombay, Punjab and the North Western Provinces.
- It recommended the promotion of mass education by placing importance on primary education and elementary education through establishing both public and private schools.
- Introduction of network of Graded Schools all over India imparting primary, to middle to high school. This was to be followed by higher education through the colleges and Universities.
- Wood's Despatch gave importance to teaching of English, but at the same time, it also stressed on the teaching of Indian languages and learning of students through their own mother tongue.
- Three universities on the model of the London University was recommended to be established in the Presidency towns of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras.
- These Universities along with promoting the study of English, would promote study of classical languages like Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit and also the Indian regional languages.
- A grant-in-aid system was recommended for schools and colleges.
- Establishment of teacher training institutes of engineering, medicine and law was recommended realizing the importance of teachers training.
- Improvements in working condition, salaries of teachers and that the qualified teachers be given better pay scales was also suggested.
- It encouraged professional education through setting up of medical, engineering, law and other institutes of professional education.
- It recommended imparting of vocational education to meet unemployment.
- The Wood's Despatch supported women education. It encouraged the private enterprises to promote women education. And schools for girls to be included among those to which grants-in-aid would be given.

2. Education Policies during the British Rule (1858–1947)

Before the British Government's intervention, the Christian missionaries were spreading education in India. Subsequent to the assumption of power by the British Crown in 1858,

development of India's education system was determined by the needs of the colonial powers. English Education supporting Western curriculum spread.

Continued impact of Wood's Despatch was that between 1870 and 1882, 2,600 primary schools, 81 secondary schools, 15 training institutions and one college for education of women was setup.

2.1 Indian Education Commission or the Hunter Commission (1882-83) was a landmark commission headed by William Wilson Hunter. Viceroy Lord Ripon appointed this commission to look into the complaints of the non-implementation of Wood's Despatch of 1854. This was the first education commission that emphasised on women's education by setting up girl's schools, establishing scholarships from public funds. Medical as a field of study was opened for women and by 1901-02 there were 76 women in medical schools.

In 1902 with the establishment of Indian Universities Commission the control of education was transferred from the British to the Indians. SNDT Indian Women's University was established in 1916 at Bombay. By 1921-22 there were 19 women's colleges, 675 secondary schools and 21,956 primary schools for girls were established. The teachings of Mahatma Gandhi awakened the Indian women and by 1947 there were 59 Arts and Science Colleges for Women, 21,479 primary schools, 2,370 secondary schools and 4288 professional & technical institutes for women.

Five decades after the Wood's Despatch at the turn of century, Britishers suddenly realised the connect between the English education and rise of the Indian nationalism. In order to curb the rising nationalism, Lord Curzon initiated certain steps to reform the education system.

2.2 Indian Universities Commission 1902: Lord Curzon appointed Indian Universities Commission in 1902 under Sir Thomas Raleigh. The recommendations were turned into Indian Universities Act of 1904. In spite of strong opposition Act was implemented. The Act were actually measures to derecognise and regulate indigenous institutions which fell into disfavour of the Raj. (Krishnaswamy and Krishnaswamy, 2006).

3. Education Policies during the Post-Independence India (After 1947)

In 1941 there prevailed 24.9% male literacy rate while the female literacy rate was only 7.3% in the country. India obtained freedom in 1947 from the British Colonial Rule after a long struggle. Government of India took a major step in the field of education and appointed

University Education Commission 1948 or the Radhakrishnan Commission under the Chairmanship of Dr. Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan.

University Education Commission (1948)

Major aims and recommendations of the University Education Commission pertained to higher education. University education was seen as an important precursor for national development, cultural resurgence and to meet the scientific, technical and other man-power needs for socio-economic development of India in wake of its independence in 1947. University Education Commission was aimed at suggesting improvements and extensions to meet the present and future requirements of the country.

Regarding the women education, the Commission suggested for providing the same facilities to the women colleges and universities as provided to men's colleges and universities. The curriculum should also be prepared for them, considering them as both women and citizens.

Secondary Education Commission (1952)

The Secondary Education Commission was chaired by Dr. L.S. Mudiliar. The report was tabled to the first Parliament in 1953. It recommended setting up of technical schools, polytechnics, strengthening multi-purpose education, central technical institutions etc., in fact the infrastructure that would procure a large technical manpower.

Secondary Education Commission stated that boys and girls should be provided same education through co-education but there should be provision of home science teaching for girls. It also recommended opening of girls' schools in the areas where required.

Education Commission (1964-66) or 'Kothari Commission'

The Education Commission (1964-1966) popularly known as the Kothari Commission was Chaired by Dr. D.S. Kothari. This Commission highlighted the importance of education for national development. This Commission studied various problems of plaguing Indian education and suggested extensive measures in all possible areas of development for their removal. Besides development of finance, social security and welfare activities, it emphasized women's education and it categorically went on to state that "...for full development of our human resources, the improvement of homes and for moulding the character of children during the most impressionable years of infancy, the education of women is of even greater importance than that of men".

National Policy on Education (NPE) 1986

The National Policy on Education (NPE) (1986), aimed at taking India for the next century.

The 1986 policy goals were:

- a. To bring more than 90% of the country's rural population within a small distance from schools
- b. To encourage the governmental and non-governmental efforts for wiping out illiteracy and to emphasize the necessity of adult education, formal education and open schools
- c. Vocationalization of education
- d. And prioritization of science and mathematics by awakening people towards scientific and technological developments

Special attention was paid to women's education for raising their standard in the new educational policy. In order to minimize the prevailing distinction between men and women, it has been recommended that in technical and vocational education women should be accorded due place. It was also suggested that textbooks hinting at distinction between men and women in providing facilities should be rewritten according to the new education policy. The NPE Programme of Action (POA) 1992 continued its special focus to women education.

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) 2001

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), was started in 2001. It was a precursor of District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) launched in 1993-1994. Aim of DPEP was achieving the objective of universal primary education, with the intent to provide quality basic education to children between 6 and 14 years by 2010. The programme especially focuses on girls and those children challenged social or financial backgrounds. The idea was to provide infrastructure and relevant resource material/s in the form of free textbooks to children in remote areas. The results show that its net impact on minority children was impressive, while there was little evidence of any impact on the enrolment of girls. Nevertheless, they concluded that the investment in DPEP was not a waste.

Right to Education Act (RTE)

The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act or Right to Education Act (RTE), is an Act of the Parliament of India enacted on 4 August 2009, and came into force on

1st April 2010. This Act under Article 21a of the Indian Constitution, makes education a fundamental right of every child and ensures provision of free and compulsory education for children between 6 and 14 in India.

The Act requires all private schools to reserve 25% of seats to children (to be reimbursed by the state as part of the public-private partnership plan). Under the Act no child is held back, or expelled, or required to pass a board examination until the completion of elementary education. The RTE brought in girls to school but upto elementary level.

Current Scenario

India has many achievements to its credit. Since the past 70 years of independence, India has made great leaps and bounds in various arenas of development (Kapur, 2016). Whether is being nuclear power, or leading in computers or communication technologies, or having successful Mission to Mars in its very first attempt, or the indigenously manufactured satellites...it has done it all. The success of Chandrayan 1 in 2008 and the recent near successful Chandrayan 2 mission of ISRO speaks volumes of we have made leaps in our indigenous space programs. But inspite of these achievements the social face of India is from satisfactory. India with over 1.25 billion people is the second most populous nation in the world after China. India fails very poorly on education parameters which is still worse for women. The Commissions and Policies that have continued since pre-Independence era in the country have failed to counter the disparities existing in women's education. India has an overall Literacy-rate of 74.04% with male literacy-rate was 82.14% and the female literacy-rate was only 65.46% as per the Census of India, 2011. India has the world's largest population of illiterates. State wise disparities in women's education are startling. Kerala has an overall 92.07% female literacy while Bihar has only 51.5% female literacy rate.

If one examines school education one finds that primary school enrolment ratio of female to male was at 1.167%. The Right to Education Act keeps girls in schools upto elementary level but thereafter there is a high dropout among girls. According to Pratham's Annual Survey of Education Report (ASER) 2017, by 18 years 32% girls are not enrolled compared to 28% boys. In rural India the picture is dismal. For every 100 girls who join school only one reaches class 12th. This study also reveals 70.7% of out of school have mothers who have never been to school and are illiterate. Eighty nine percent of all females between 14-18 years whether enrolled in formal education or not do household chores.

At present there are 864 Universities, 40026 Colleges and 11669 Stand Alone Institutions at higher education level in which the total enrolment of girls is 46.8%. There are only 9.3% Colleges exclusively for Girls and only 59.34% Colleges are located in rural areas. The All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2016-17 by Ministry of Human Resource Development, GOI shows a reduction in gender gap in India's institutes of higher studies. But Under Graduate Technical and Professional courses like BTech, Law and Management have significant gender gaps. The Diploma Courses show a skewed picture with 70% males.

While all out efforts have been made in school education and tertiary education in India, women's access, participation and utilization of education is determined by the interplay economic, social including parental and school/institutional factors.

Conclusions

In the words of Jawaharlal Nehru 'You can tell the condition of a nation by looking at the status of its women'. Education is indeed the keystone to nation building and women development. Formulation of sound educational policies is a must for human resource development. In spite of a large number of Commissions and policies that India has implemented since pre-Independence era till today, in the 21st century, education is still not a basic human right for women. Woman's education faces many challenges in terms of accessibility, participation, retention and utilization. If the women of India remain educationally backward then definitely the progress of our country is affected. Better future of a nation depends on women's education. Formulation of policies does not ensure their utility and positive results till there is fool proof mechanism of implementation and dedicated will of the Policy makers and the implementers that is both the Government and the Officials involved in the implementation. There are many villages which still do not have schools. Fewer than one third of primary and middle school teachers are women. In such a situation it is impossible for girls from conservative families to access school. Lack of flexibility in school timings because of pressures of the market and labour demand of girls keeps them out of schools and portals of education. Suggestions of creches for working women and girls are another impediment to access to school. Further if in a country the differential in male and female literacy continues at about 20% then the State has to intervene in radical ways to bridge the gap and not just rest on Education Commissions and policies. Further having area specific Educational Policies will always help achieve intended targets. Innovative mechanisms of implementation of policies have to be used along with their timely review in

light of the goals set under each policy. Some of these strategies can be the key to overcoming challenges encountered in woman education leading to success and achievement of educational policies and educational goals in the country.