

**National Policy on Education 1986**

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**Introduction-**

In 1986, the government led by Rajiv Gandhi introduced a new National Policy on Education. The new policy called for "special emphasis on the removal of disparities and to equalize educational opportunity," especially for Indian women, Scheduled Tribes (ST) and the Scheduled Caste (SC) communities. To achieve such a social integration, the policy called for expanding scholarships, adult education, recruiting more teachers from the SCs, incentives for poor families to send their children to school regularly, development of new institutions and providing housing and services. The NPE called for a "child-centered approach" in primary education, and launched "Operation Blackboard" to improve primary schools nationwide. The policy expanded the open university system with the Indira Gandhi National Open University, which had been created in 1985. The policy also called for the creation of the "rural university" model, based on the philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi, to promote economic and social development at the grassroots level in rural India. 1986 education policy expected to spent 6% of GDP on education.

The Parliament during the Budget Session in 1986 discussed and adopted the "National Policy on Education 1986". A promise was made at that time by the Minister of Human Resource Development that he would present in the Monsoon Session a Programme of Action for the implementation of the policy. Immediately after the Budget Session, the Ministry undertook an intensive exercise to prepare the promised Programme of Action.

**The Need and Goals of NEP 1986-**

This policy was formulated to improve and equalize educational opportunities within the nation. Besides, it also aimed at addressing the unique needs of the learners (including the special and marginalized students). It envisioned an educational structure that could support the all-round development of the country and focused on the quality of education imparted within the institutions.

**Features of NEP 1986-**

### **1. Quality Improvement and Student Preservation-**

The first and foremost step under this education policy was to get all children under 14 years of age into schools. For this, it aimed at improving the school environment, student handling, and teaching methodologies. It intended a no-failure policy at the elementary school level and also introduced arrangements for non-formal education for out-of-school students.

The government opened Navodaya Vidyalayas and primary schools in remote areas. In addition, it also made arrangements for motor handicapped children either in normal schools or at district headquarters.

### **2. Structure of Education-**

As suggested by the Kothari Commission, the uniform pattern of 10+2+3 was the proposed structure for nationwide schools. This structure included 5 years of the primary stage to be followed by 3 years of the upper primary.

NPE 1986 aimed to achieve the aims of free and compulsory education for all by the year 1995. And it focused on extending the schooling facility within a distance of one kilometer.

### **3. Elimination of Disparities and Special Events-**

Another important aspect of this policy was the accessibility of good quality elementary education for all. It aimed at promoting the holistic development of students through better quality schools. The policy focused on creating opportunities for non-formal education (part-time), till the time full-fledged schools were set up.

### **4. Focus on Retention in the Conventional System-**

Most of the education policies in India considered the task of retaining students within the mainstream system. NPE 1986 too came up with an idea to shift the focus from enrollment to retention. For this, it suggested surveys (house to house) to check the regularity of attendance and relevance of schooling.

It suggested creating non-formal centers (similar to the educational alternatives like online schooling) for students who are not able to attend full-day school. For regulating attendance, teachers and the members of the village education commission were expected to follow up with the families of the absentees who miss school for 2 to 3 days at a stretch.

### **5. Provisions for the Girl Child-**

Support services for girls included incentives to encourage the education of the girl child and those of the weaker sections (such as the SC's, ST's, minorities, etc.) Especially for the girl

child, two sets of free uniforms, free textbooks, attendance initiatives and stationery, etc. were to be given free of cost. Apart from this, students attending elementary school were also given free transportation facilities in the state roadways buses.

### **6. Operation Blackboard-**

To ensure minimum essential facilities in primary schools the operation blackboard was launched with clear goals. It proposed the below-mentioned assistance for the schools under the operation. Two large rooms, necessary toys and games material, charts, maps, blackboards, and learning material to be provided. The resources required for the construction of buildings etc. were to be supplemented with other schemes. All in all, the policy aimed at making optimum use of the available material.

### **7. Delinking Degrees from Jobs-**

This legendary step of manpower planning created a new trend of reducing the importance of degrees from jobs. It focused on re-designing job-specific courses to help the right candidate with the required skill sets to take up a suitable job. The policy opposed undue preference to graduate candidates. Instead, it promoted the vocationalisation of education.

### **National Education Policy: Recommendations and Current Scenario-**

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 was released on July 30, 2020. It will replace the National Policy on Education, 1986. Key recommendations of the NEP include:

- (i) Redesigning the structure of school curriculum to incorporate early childhood care and education,
  - (ii) Curtailing dropouts for ensuring universal access to education,
  - (iii) Increasing gross enrollment in higher education to 50% by 2035, and
  - (iv) Improving research in higher education institutes by setting up a Research Foundation.
- In this blog, we examine the current status of education in the country in view of some of these recommendations made by the NEP.

### **References-**

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