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Realizing the Sustainable Development Goals through National Education Policy 2020 in India

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Abstract

United Nations introduced the seventeen "Sustainable Development Goals" in 2015 in order to achieve holistic or all-round development of individuals in global context. Similarly, philosophy of Indian culture "Vasudeva Kutumbhkam" is deeply rooted in the concept of holistic as well as inclusive development. "Ram Rajya" the Visionary ideology of Mahatma Gandhi also aligns with this idea of sustainable and all-encompassing progress (Wardha Scheme of Basic Education, 1937)). To ensure the continued relevance of these development goals and their alignment with various development plans, it's crucial that they all move in the same direction. When we examine the Sustainable Development Goals in the Indian context, we can see a strong similarity. The Indian government, under the leadership of K. Kasturirangan, has formed a committee that proposed a new national education policy based on these SDGs (Aithal & Aithal, 2020). The primary objective of this policy is to address both India's immediate needs and long-term aspirations. The overarching aim is to cultivate a self-reliant and empowered society, fostering "Productive Citizens" who embrace values like equity, justice, global peace, and universal truth. In such a society, every individual's development becomes a collective responsibility. This mirrors the core values on which the Sustainable Development Goals are founded. This paper discusses the National Education Policy 2020 with its specific relevance in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Key words: Sustainable Development Goals, National Education Policy 2020, Wardha Scheme of Basic Education, Universal Development and Empowered Society, Productive Citizens

Introduction

The fundamental building block of society is the human being. Society's overall empowerment can only be achieved through

the empowerment of individuals. To facilitate this empowerment, the United Nations introduced new objectives after the completion of the Millennium Development

Goals in 2015, known as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These encompass 17 core goals and 169 specific targets. The primary aim of these SDGs is to foster a form of development that addresses the present needs without compromising the future, while simultaneously promoting values such as fairness, justice, equality, and peace within society (Banerjee, 2021). Consequently, the Sustainable Development Goals are designed to enhance the well-being of individuals worldwide. They encompass specific objectives such as poverty reduction, the elimination of hunger, the provision of universal and high-quality inclusive education, the eradication of gender discrimination, the creation of a pollution-free environment, sustainable development, and the promotion of peace and cooperation for problem-solving.

National Education Policy 2020 and Sustainable Developmental Goals

Education is the most important and powerful means for empowerment of human beings. Only through education, a peaceful change be brought about in the society, which will be relatively permanent. Therefore, the education system becomes the most important for any nation. In view of

this importance of education, after the Millennium Development Goals, education has also been included in the Sustainable Development Goals. Taking important steps towards achievement of the sustainable development goals in India, a committee was constituted under the chairmanship of Mr. K. Kasturirangan. The main objective of this committee was to formulate a powerful education policy in the context of the immediate and long-term needs of the Indian community (Aithal & Aithal, 2020). Along with this, the responsibility of this committee was also entrusted to include all those issues in the education policy by which the goals of sustainable development can be achieved. In this regard, suggestions were invited from various educational institutions, academicians, social workers, teachers, student organizations, scientists, etc. of the country. Keeping all these suggestions in mind, in 2020, the third education policy of independent India was formulated by Shri K Kasturirangan. In July 2020, the Education Minister of India 'Shri Ramesh Kumar Pokhriyal Nishank' announced this education policy. This education policy recommends moving forward by incorporating changes in the fundamental structure of education. The

main goal of this policy is to prepare the learners to be productive citizens while preparing them in the global scenario and at the same time prepare them as personalities who are proud to be Indian. Thus, this education policy not only reflects the glimpse of Indian culture but also envisages the creation of strong and capable citizens in the context of the global scenario by incorporating modern thought, innovation, and techniques in education. The aim of this education policy is to build a capable nation that can stand on the pillars of equality, equality, universal fraternity, non-violence, and justice as expressed in the Indian Constitution and can present an ideal to all the nations.

SDG 1 & 2: End of poverty and hunger

The National Education Policy 2020 stated that entrepreneurship education has been included in the school education system and it has been tried that every student should choose skill-based courses from class 6. This course can be based on the culture, needs, resources of the particular local community. Thus, the Policy recommends the removal of poverty by productive citizens, nutrition of children through nutritious breakfast and Mid-day meals in schools and further, ensuring food security through improved

quality products by promoting research has also been recommended in this policy.

SDG 3 Medical Safety and Care: -

Education is the first and essential condition for a better life. The National Education Policy, 2020 has recommended opportunities for all to acquire the basic ability to read and write so as to ensure opportunities for a better life through education. The early years of life are the most important for development. Therefore, the care taken at this time affects the whole life of the person. The Policy recommends linking pre-primary education with the formal school system, considering it important. Along with this, regular check-up of school children, vaccination, development of habits related to nutrition, health and hygiene is also an important part of pre-primary education and training of Anganwadi workers is also included in the recommendation of National Education Policy 2020.

The Policy recommends an integrated health education system. In this, the student of medical education will also develop an understanding of all systems of medicine such as the Allopathic system of medicine, Ayurvedic system of medicine, Yoga, Homeopathy system of medicine,

Naturopathy, etc., which will help him to become a better doctor. This will improve health facilities. Along with this, it has also been recommended to give special emphasis on community medicine.

SDG 4: - Inclusive, quality education and lifelong learning opportunities: -

- Education is the only means of achieving social justice and equality (Parimala 2010). In the NEP 2020, special emphasis has been laid on the inclusive and quality nature of education. The policy acknowledges the quality of good teaching and learning can be achieved by qualified teaching faculty (Pathak & Pathak, 2021). Efforts have also been made to ensure that everyone has access to education. Access to education for all is the milestone of sustainable development (Aithal & Aithal, 2020). Some specific suggestions have been made for inclusive education in the National Policy on Education, which is as follows:
 - Geographical diversity exists in India, here some specific geographical areas have been identified where the spread of education is very limited, by

declaring these areas as special education zones, special efforts should be made for these.

- There are also some specific communities and cultures in India, which are still outside from the school walls, special efforts should be made to connect these communities with education, the art & culture of their area, local business, etc., should be recognized by connecting it with the school. Influential persons associated with them should also be appointed as guest teachers in the school so that enrolment and stay can be ensured by reducing the distance between the community and the school.
- Even today female education and third gender-related education is a victim of neglect in the Indian community. In such a situation, the National Education Policy demands the provision of a Gender Inclusion Fund. Along with this, the issue of safety for them in the school environment has also been raised in the National Education Policy 2020.

The Policy calls for inclusive education for students with special needs, keeping in mind

the needs of these students, options-based schooling, home-based education, etc. have been arranged while expanding the scope of inclusive education.

- The recommendation to establish sign language as a subject has also been made in the policy.
- The Policy recommends that the physical environment of the school should also be based on an inclusive culture. Principals and teachers create an inclusive environment in the school.
- The Policy recommends the inclusion of gender sensitivity and sensitization development towards underrepresented groups in teacher training programs.
- To ensure quality in education, the teacher-student ratio would be 1.30 and for socio-economically disadvantaged children this ratio to 1.25 has also been recommended in the NEP 2020.
- In order to ensure lifelong learning opportunities, the NEP not only talks about expanding the scope of open schooling (expanding it up to classes 3) but adult education centres have also been included in it.

- The Ministry of Human Resource Development has also recommended running a national mission to ensure basic literacy and numerical knowledge in the National Education Policy 2020.

SDG 5: Gender Equality: -

The sensitivity towards gender equality is visible in the National Education Policy 2020. In this policy, on the one hand, makes special economic provisions to encourage girl child education through Gender Inclusive Fund, while on the other hand, efforts have also been made to make them financially self-reliant through entrepreneurship education. Along with this, to ensure access to school, the opening of new schools on the lines of Navodaya Vidyalayas and Kasturba Gandhi Vidyalayas, distribution of cycles, expanding the scope of open schooling up to class 3, the establishment of adult education centres, digital learning, etc. specific efforts have been made in the policy to bring the reach of.

SDG 6, 13, 14,15, 16: -

National Education Policy, 2020 demands to develop sensitivity among students on various environmental-related issues such as availability of sanitation and drinking water,

cheap and sustainable energy sources, pollution-free environment, etc. For this, awareness of the environment will be included in all B.Ed. programs, its conservation, and sensitivity towards sustainable development so that better environmental education can be given. The Policy also seems to be making efforts to highlight local resources, art, and crafts through which alternatives to products can be presented. Apart from this, the demand to encourage better qualitative investigation at a higher level is also seen in the new National Education Policy so that work can be done on the qualitative aspect of environmental protection.

SDG 8 & 9: Inclusive and Sustainable Economic Growth

Demographic data of India shows that at present around 65% of India's population is below 35 years of age (World Bank Report, 2018). Thus, the problem of unemployment will be at its peak in the coming times (Anand, 2017). Apart from this, it will also be challenging to ensure employment opportunities for all. In such a situation, in order to ensure employment opportunities for all and to make them partners in the economic development of the country, it is necessary that the nature of

education should be such which can develop skills in them. Coordination of industries with institutions has a positive impact on skill development (Chand, Tiwari & Phuyal, 2017). Therefore, this Policy considers it important to provide internship opportunities to students in production units located in the local environment. Simple, basic, and cheap techniques ensure high dividends (Tiwari & Anjum, 2018). That is why the NEP 2020 also seems to encourage local arts and crafts. The Policy envisages the student as a skilled, innovative, adaptable, and productive citizen, for which the harmonious development of skill development and capabilities is essential. The association of educational institutions with entrepreneurs accelerates the learning outcomes and learning curve (Tiwari & Anjum, 2015). In this context, a suggestion has also been made in this policy to constitute a national level committee for education and industries integration, which will be addressed as the National Committee for Integration of Vocational Education.

SDG 10: - Reducing inequality within and between countries: -

Indian culture always talks about 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam'. In such a situation, the National Education Policy

2020 also seems to highlight this value. In order to remove the developmental disparity between different parts of the country, the promotion of local industries has been talked about and along with this, the school cluster has been talked about again in the policy to ensure access to quality education for all. Quality education can be ensured with limited resources through the school cluster. Along with this, these school clusters will also try to inculcate social consciousness values in the society which is a necessary condition for the goals of sustainable development like equity, equality, justice, and peace.

SDG 11 Sustainable Cities & Development of Human Settlements: -

- In the present time, unplanned urbanization and the development of slum settlements have come before the nation as a major problem. People migrating to cities in search of employment put additional pressure on the resources in the cities. In such a situation, it is a big challenge to make quality resources available to all. The National Education Policy 2020 seems to be striving for this challenge. In the Policy a special emphasis has been laid on skill development from the early

years of education and along with this, the talk of giving recognition to local crafts and arts so that by establishing them on international forums, the local community and villages can also be made self-reliant. Unemployment can affect the economic development of any nation (Anand, 2017). The availability of employment opportunities in villages can limit migration to cities to some extent, thereby reducing the pace of unplanned urban development. The campaign to take quality education to the villages through digital education will also provide relief to the families migrating to the cities in search of education. Information technology will empower farmers in rural areas and it will also empower women (Tiwari and Anjum 2012; Tiwari et al, 2020).

Thus, analysing the National Education Policy 2020, it is known that this policy is committed to achieving the goals of sustainable development. Multiple exits, credit system, development of online portal to villages, special economic provision for the second gender, third gender and underrepresented communities, the importance of local art and culture in education, integration of schools with

industrial units, etc. also ensure the quality and productivity of education. But access to education is the basis of sustainable development (Mukherjee, & Wood 2021).

Key Challenges

- Analysing the National Education Policy 2020, it looks very effective in itself. Undoubtedly, the goals of sustainable development can be achieved under its guidance. (Tilak, 2016). But moving forward in this direction will face some challenges which need to be effectively resolved. The following are some of the major challenges in the path of the National Education Policy 2020 towards achieving the goals of sustainable development:
- India is a country with a huge population base, in which wide variations exist on the basis of linguistic, religion, caste, culture and geography, etc. In such a situation, taking everyone together and moving forward is a complex problem in itself.
- Due to the unique geographical location and structure of India, there is a very rare settlement of population in many areas, so it will be a tough challenge for

them to arrange education in the nearest area.

- The RTE Act implemented in India demands free education for children between the ages of 6 and 14 whereas the National Education Policy 2020 talks about the universalization of full school education for children of 3 to 18 years, which is not possible without making it a free and fundamental right. Therefore, here there is a discrepancy between the RTE Act and the National Education Policy 2020.
- The initial years of life determine the entire life of an individual. Hence there is a need for skilled and effective workers at this level. Whereas Anganwadi workers with limited educational qualifications and limited training period (only 6 months) will find it difficult to perform this challenging task.
- Enrolment in education at the higher level cannot be increased by providing schooling only in the mother tongue. Therefore, in order to increase enrolment and ensure the quality of education at higher levels, it is imperative that the medium of instruction should be the mother tongue

even at higher levels. For this translation will have to be started on a large scale as well as financial provision will have to be made for it. Apart from this, emphasis should also be laid on the system of linking technology with mother tongue and other Indian languages.

- India is a union of states in which powers are divided between the centre and the states. Here both the centre and the state have the right to make rules on education. In such situations, it would be a challenging task to effectively implement a single central policy across India.

In this way, by solving the above challenges, qualitative improvements can be made in education in India and access to education can be ensured to the masses and the goal of sustainable development can be realized by 2030.

Conclusion

Education is the carrier of peaceful change in society, through which the changes made leave a relatively permanent effect. Therefore, education plays a leading role in giving direction to the development of any nation. In view of this importance of education, the National Education Policy,

2020 was formed in the direction of achieving the goals of sustainable development in India. The country has envisioned itself as a "Global Knowledge Superpower" and a "Vibrant Knowledge Society," through the implementation of National Education Policy, 2020 (Hossain, (2020). This education policy recommends a radical change in the present structure of education and at the same time demands a qualitative change in the basic nature of education. National Education Policy, 2020 put special emphasis on elementary education, inclusive education, special provision for the third gender, entrepreneurship education, awareness for special children, awareness among students and public about environmental issues, adopting modern ideologies, adopting the culture of research to nurture as well as to preserve local art and culture (Ahmed, Vij & Qureshi (2021). Henceforth, if this Policy is implemented effectively with all its stakeholders, then it will undoubtedly prove successful in realizing the goals of sustainable development in the context of India.

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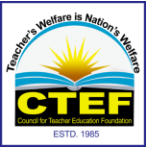
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