

The Evolution Of India ' s Education Policy

Education Under British Rule

- British colonial rule brought with it the concept of a modern state, a modern economy and a modern education system.
- The education system was first developed in the three presidencies (Bombay, Calcutta and Madras).
- By linking entrance and advancement in government service to academic education, colonial rule contributed to the legacy of an education system geared to preserving the position and prerogatives of the more privileged.
- In the early 1900s, the Indian National Congress called for national education, placing an emphasis on technical and vocational training.
- In 1920 Congress initiated a boycott of government-aided and government-controlled schools and founded several 'national' schools and colleges. These failed, as the rewards of British-style education were so great that the boycott was largely ignored.

Aspirants can know in detail about [Education in India during British Rule](#) on the linked page.

Nehru's Vision for Education

- Local elites benefited from the British education system and eventually used it to expel the colonizers. Nehru envisaged India as a secular democracy with a state-led command economy.
- Education for all and industrial development was seen as crucial tools to unite a country divided on the basis of wealth, caste and religion, and formed the cornerstones of the anti-imperial struggle.
- Following Independence, school curricula were thus imbued with the twin themes of inclusiveness and national pride, placing emphasis on the fact that India's different communities could live peacefully side by side as one nation.
- The legacies of this Nehruvian approach to education are considerable; perhaps most notable is the entrenchment of the pluralist/secularist perspective in the minds of the Indian people.
- Subsidized quality higher education through institutions such as the IITs and IIMs formed a major contribution to the Nehruvian vision of a self-reliant and modern Indian state, and they now rank amongst the best higher education institutions in the world.
- In addition, policies of positive discrimination in education and employment furthered the case for access by hitherto unprivileged social groups to quality education.
- It has been argued that while access for some marginalized communities continues to be limited, the upward mobility of a few Dalit and tribal households resulting from positive discrimination in educational institutions and state patronage has created role models that help democracy survive in India.

The Kothari Commission

- Education for modernization, national unity and literacy drawing on Nehru's vision, and articulating most of his key themes, the Kothari Commission (1964–1966) was set up to formulate a coherent education policy for India.
- According to the commission, education was intended to increase productivity, develop social and national unity, consolidate democracy, modernize the country and develop social, moral and spiritual values. To achieve this, the main pillar of Indian education policy was to be free and compulsory education for all children up to the age of 14.
- Other features included the development of languages (Hindi, Sanskrit, regional languages and the three-language formula) equality of educational opportunities (regional, tribal and gender imbalances to be addressed) and the development and prioritization of scientific education and research. The commission also emphasized the need to eradicate illiteracy and provide adult education.
- India's curriculum has historically prioritized the study of mathematics and science rather than social sciences or arts. This has been actively promoted since the Kothari Commission, which argued that India's development needs were better met by engineers and scientists than historians. The perception has remained that students only study social science or arts subjects as a last resort, though recently commerce and economics have risen in stature.

To know in detail about the [Right to Education Act \(RTE\)](#), aspirants can visit the linked article.

Need for Change – National Policy on Education

- In 1986, Rajiv Gandhi announced a new education policy, the National Policy on Education (NPE), which was intended to prepare India for the 21st century. The policy emphasized the need for change: 'Education in India stands at the crossroads today. Neither normal linear expansion nor the existing pace and nature of improvement can meet the needs of the situation.'
- According to the new policy, the 1968 policy goals had largely been achieved: more than 90 percent of the country's rural population were within a kilometre of schooling facilities and most states had adopted a common education structure. The prioritization of science and mathematics had also been effective. However, change was required to increase financial and organizational support for the education system to tackle problems of access and quality.

UPSC and other Government exam aspirants can also refer to the links given below for exam preparation:

National Education Policy	State of School Education in India
The Evolution Of India's Education Policy	Education System In India During British Rule
Digital Education in India	Higher and Technical Education in India

Other Problems also Needed Addressing

- India's political and social life is passing through a phase that poses the danger of erosion to long-accepted values. The goals of secularism, socialism, democracy, and professional ethics are coming under increasing strain.
- The new policy was intended to raise education standards and increase access to education.
- To this end, the government would seek financial support from the private sector to complement government funds.
- The central government also declared that it would accept a wider responsibility to enforce 'the national and integrative character of education, to maintain quality and standards.
- The states, however, retained a significant role, particularly in relation to the curriculum. The central government committed itself to finance a portion of development expenditure, and around 10 percent of primary education is now funded under a centrally sponsored scheme. The key legacies of the 1986 policy were the promotion of privatization and the continued emphasis on secularism and science.

Another consequence of the NPE was that the quality of education in India was increasingly seen as a problem, and several initiatives have been developed since, in an attempt to counter this:

1. Operation Blackboard (1987) aimed to improve the human and physical resources available in primary schools.
2. Restructuring and Reorganization of Teacher Education (1987) created a resource for the continuous upgrading of teachers' knowledge and competence
3. Minimum Levels of Learning (1991) laid down levels of achievement at various stages and revised textbooks
4. National Programme for Nutritional Support to Primary Education (1995) provided a cooked meal every day for children in Classes 1–5 of all government, government-aided and local body schools. In some cases grain was distributed on a monthly basis, subject to a minimum attendance.
5. District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) (1993) emphasized decentralized planning and management, improved teaching and learning materials, and school effectiveness.
6. The movement to Educate All (2000) aimed to achieve universal primary education by 2010 through microplanning and school-mapping exercises, bridging gender and social gaps.
7. Fundamental Right (Article 21A) involved the provision of free and compulsory education, declared to be a basic right for children aged between 6 and 14 years.