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## **Knowledge Production & Dissemination: An Analysis in the Context of the National Youth Policy**

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### **Abstract**

Great institutions or traditional universities of Takshashila, Nalanda etc. have played a great role in knowledge production and dissemination in societies during different stages of civilizational transition. The institutional context has undergone dramatic changes in modern societies. In India, for considering a specific context of knowledge sharing and knowledge management, one of the national policies of the government is an appropriate choice for the production and dissemination of knowledge through development institutions. The National Youth Policy 2003 and the subsequent exposure draft of National Youth Policy 2012, released recently by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Government of India, recognizes that an inter-sectoral approach is a pre-requisite for dealing with youth-related issues. It, therefore, advocates the establishment of a coordinating mechanism among the various Central Government Ministries and Departments and the community-based organizations and youth bodies for facilitating convergence in youth-related schemes, developing integrated policy initiatives for youth programmes. This paper examines the policy perspective of development institutions in India in the context of the National Youth Policy and its contribution towards knowledge production and dissemination for the development of the nation. This paper tries to find the answer to critical questions like what sort of knowledge is being produced by development institutions and how it reflects in society by following the dictum: knowledge for development, and what changes institutions were able to make through the National Youth Policy.

### **Introduction and Background**

In every society's growth, developmental institutions – whether it be Plato's Academy or traditional universities, such as the Nalanda and the Takshashila or Taxila – played a great role. The exercise of knowledge production and dissemination was considered pivotal in advancing the society. The institutional context has undergone dramatic changes in modern societies. The role played by development institutions in understanding how societies acquire and adapt knowledge and thus placing knowledge at the centre of development has led to paradigm changes in development process. The duty of every development institution is to place knowledge at the centre of development and disseminating the same in such a way that it is easily accessible by underprivileged sections in the society, because it is the

poor and the underprivileged who suffer a lot when they fail to acquire and use information in their lives. In today's society, the gap between the poor and the rich is widened by information as it is easier for the rich to gain knowledge than it is for the poor. The growing literature of World Bank Publications rightly points out that in order to attack poverty, the window of learning should be opened to the poor. To tackle such issues, policy frameworks, which are formulated by governments and adapted by development institutions, mainly focus on minimizing vulnerability and decreasing poverty through expansion of knowledge, the foundation of development. The basic purpose of knowledge dissemination through development institutions is the upliftment of vulnerable sections of the society who lack accessibility to knowledge.

### **Policy as a Tool for Knowledge Production and Dissemination**

Policies are imperative for growth and development. Policies are created, disseminated, updated, and enforced for development of an organization, a community, or a country. A policy at the government level is a vision document that also deals with plan of action for knowledge dissemination. Public policies objective is to achieve a desired goal that is considered to be in the best interest of all the members in a society (Torjman, 2005: 4). A public policy is a document that shows inherent commitment of government and is a planning guide directing a country's development. The overall aim of public policy is to improve services available to all and to provide an easily accessible source of information, advice, and guidance to the citizens. Development institution's role is to disseminate such information so that it is accessible to all sections of the society. It is considered to be an effective medium to provide equal access to the disadvantaged and the excluded groups. Thus, it is a kind of knowledge dissemination through government policies. It is also the fastest and the best available strategy for knowledge production and knowledge dissemination since it has far reaching effects through public involvement.

This paper focuses on the National Youth Policy (NYP) 2003 and the subsequent exposure draft of NYP 2012. The reasons for considering the youth policy is that it serves the purpose of developing youth in various socio-economic and cultural spheres and encourages the involvement of development institutions in preparing the young people to tap the growing stock of global knowledge and assimilating and adapting it to local needs. There has been an increasing concern about the youth population all over the world and especially in the Asian countries in view of their numerical importance and growing problems of development and welfare. In many Asian countries, youth population had doubled in the 40 years between 1960 and 2000 and this has accelerated the pressure on many services – education, employment, health, and so on (Saraswathi 2008).

To address these issues NYP 2003 stresses that the youth of the country should enjoy greater participation in the processes of decision making and execution at local and higher levels. Such participation would be facilitated by identifiable structures, transparent procedures, and wider representation of the youth in appropriate bodies, with the emphasis being more on working with the youth than for the youth. The primary role of the development institutions in youth development is that of creating, disseminating, implementing, and updating vital sources of knowledge pertaining to youth development. The role of the youth in contemporary society is decisive factor for development; as young

people can act as strong force in receiving, carrying out, and imparting as well as disseminating knowledge for development. Young people hold the key to society's future. Their ambitions, goals, and aspirations for peace, security, development, and human rights are often in accord with those of society as a whole (United Nations 2005).

### **Knowledge Economy and Development Institutions**

Knowledge economy is being defined as an economy in which knowledge is being created, acquired, transmitted, and used more effectively by institutions, individuals, and communities for economic and social development (World Bank 2000). In today's competitive economy, the crucial factor for sustained growth is the strength of the foundation of the knowledge base of the economy. In the process of widening knowledge base, government will have to encourage private parties in the knowledge-making exercise. But the issue lies in the fact that if knowledge is publicly available, so that it can be accessed and used by public, the private parties will lose interest because of less return from the exercise (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development 2000). To counter this issue, developmental institutions in the public sector should work in tandem with government for production of knowledge to make knowledge production and dissemination a publicly available activity (Nelson 1959). Knowledge assets is considered as untapped human capital that is capable of giving increased returns than assets such as land, labour, and capital that gives diminishing return (Malhotra 2000).

The notion of a knowledge economy is not new or foreign to India. The country's past achievements in science, philosophy, mathematics, and astronomy reinforce the notion that India has for millennia been a leading knowledge society (Dahlman and Utz 2005). But India's contribution to knowledge stream weakened because of different political contexts over the course of time. But today's India is at the threshold of a knowledge revolution because of innovations in science and technology. Moreover, India's demographic condition gives us a new horizon of hope as India will be one of the youngest nations in the world. In order to strengthen the country's youth, we need to strengthen the youth development institutions. India may not be able to benefit from its investments in education, ICT, and research and development unless our broader institutional and incentive regime stimulates the most effective use of resources in these areas, permits their deployment to the most productive uses, and allows entrepreneurial activity to flourish to contribute better to India's growth and overall development (ibid).

### **Importance of Development Institutions in Knowledge Production and Dissemination**

The major shift from energy creation and traditional factors of production to knowledge assets and intellectual capital (Malhotra 2003) is a landmark event in the history of all developmental institutions. This stress on knowledge assets and human capital paved way for increased social benefits and better functioning of markets (World Bank 1999). Development is a continuing process that occurs when individuals, enterprises, and organisations effectively use knowledge for optimum utilisation of resources (World Bank 2007). Creating facilities to access knowledge is the fundamental way of increasing opportunities to reach out to the individuals and groups (National Knowledge Commission 2007). Knowledge played a crucial role in shaping growth and knowledge as personified in human capital and technology was an important ally of growth. This human intellectual

capital will be the greatest source of an economy's growth (National Knowledge Commission 2008).

There is increasing pressure over researchers and development institutions to produce socially relevant, accountable, and transferable knowledge, which is productive in addressing socio-economic problems of the society. This pressure raised concerns over the role of development institutions, for instance universities' role in knowledge production and dissemination. The important question to be addressed here is that will public investments in development institutions like universities contribute adequately to the society? How well they are disseminating the quantum of knowledge?

These questions are well addressed by international scholars working on knowledge production. They argue that the production of knowledge and the research process are in a transformative stage and there is a paradigm shift in the institutional context of knowledge production and about the kind of knowledge that is being produced (Gibbons *et al.* 1994). Most development institutions where the research is being carried out produce mode 1 knowledge, known as 'traditional knowledge'. Characteristics of such knowledge are that it is formal and strictly discipline based - generated within a specific discipline. Whereas mode 2 knowledge, which is context-driven, problem-focused and interdisciplinary, points out that the production of knowledge is a trans-disciplinary activity, which is generated mostly outside the academic institutions pertaining to social and economic contexts.

#### **National Youth Policy: Key for Youth Development**

The ultimate criterion for development is determined by the extent in which each individual in a society is provided with opportunities to contribute to and gain from the development and advancement of the society. The youth plays an integral role in this process as future citizens and as individuals full of energy and enthusiasm. But the youth faces a series of disparities that cripples them from participating in the development process. The situation of the youth in today's world is riddled with uncertainties because of the age as well as the changing socio-economic structures - as they considered to be in a transition stage from adolescence to adulthood, facing many aspects of vulnerability.

In countries with weak growth, youth faces the difficulty of school-to-work transition and unemployed school dropouts are a vocal, frustrated, and volatile group (World Bank 2005). Every country needs effective strategies to help young people participate in all spheres of society (UNESCO 2004). The effective strategy includes formulation of a youth policy aiming for their empowerment. A youth policy is a document that represents a declaration and commitment of the priorities, directions, and practical support that a country intends to provide for the development of its young men and women (UNICEF 2007). To stress this point, UNESCO remarks that a progressive national youth policy obliges traditional decision makers to work not only for young people, but with them and let their experiences inform the development of appropriate interventions and services. It is essential role of governments to ensure that the concerns of young people are taken into account in all areas of government policy and decision making, and not just those deemed to be 'youth issues'; and that young people's views, priorities, and desires are encouraged, listened to, and acted upon (UNESCO 2004).

National youth policies aim to cover two basic objectives (ICNYP 2003):

- (1) To set forth an inspirational vision and an advocacy plan for a national youth policy
- (2) To add an operational plan to implement the vision, policy, and programme at local and national levels for, by, and with the young people.

The formulation of a national youth policy needs to have a bottom-up approach in which vast arrays of social actors are involved. In formulating national youth policy, due attention and focus may be given to youth not only as beneficiaries but also as larger segment of society and to the role youth can play in ensuring sustainable development. Youth are known as critical segment of any society, who can contribute in making larger consensus in different issues in the background of diverse settings that exists in India.

National youth policy holds that a nation's development is directly related with the development of its young women and men. Nearly half of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are directly related to youth and all MDG's are indirectly related to youth. So investment in youth is a crucial factor for development and not investing in youth will prove to be very costly. World Bank points out that youth in critical circumstances are more likely to be a drain on public and private resources because of their lower economic productivity, their higher rates of school dropout and unemployment, and the higher health and social welfare costs they impose on society (as a result of higher crime and conviction rates, early pregnancy and its associated risks, greater substance abuse, and other risky behaviours) (World Bank 2005).

Investments in young women and men denote three important categories (United Nations 2007):

- (1) improving their health prospects
- (2) expand education and employment opportunities
- (3) provide opportunities for participation in all aspects of development.

National youth policy is an important document which mobilizes all stakeholders and outline strategies for development, and any development addressed to youth is addressing development in a sustainable way.

### **An Assessment of Indian National Youth Policies**

National youth policy is a planning document outlining the country's approach towards youth development. The policy document reflects the commitment that a country is showing towards its future citizens in shaping them as responsible adults. The policy responds to the changing conditions of young people and prepares them to face the challenges of time. A national youth policy is a document of national significance. It represents a nationally agreed formula for meeting the needs and aspirations of young men and women and provides a framework for youth development. It is both an acknowledgement of specific needs of young people as well as a formal recognition of their potential and unique contribution to national development (ICNYP 2003).

The first National Youth Policy of India was formulated in the year 1988 commemorating International Year of Youth - 1985, as declared by the United Nations. The most important

component of the NYP 1988 was to implement programmes for the removal of unemployment, rural and urban, educated and non-educated. But the policy spelled out a weak strategy to address the above issue. In the policy it was planned for a Committee on National Youth Programmes (CONYP) to bring together the various representatives of concerned ministries, departments and national youth organisations, to advise the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports in discharging its duties in the effective implementation of the National Youth Policy. But CONYP could not materialize in realizing the objectives of NYP 1988.

### **National Youth Policy (2003)**

The preamble of India's National Youth Policy mentions that the Policy is based on the recognition of the contribution that the youth can, and should, make to the growth and well-being of the community. The policy endeavours to ensure effective co-ordination between the policies, programmes, and delivery systems of the various ministries, departments and other agencies. The NYP 2003 points out that youth development in India has been hampered because of lack of adequate research on youth. Even though India is becoming one of the youngest nations in the world, thanks to demographic dividend, there were no efforts to coordinate research based on youth. To address these issues, Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development (RGNID) was established in the year 1993 as an apex information and research centre on youth development issues.

NYP 2003 is a refined version of NYP 1988 and the thrust of the Policy centres on 'Youth Empowerment' in different spheres of national life. To achieve this end, the policy elaborates on the thrust areas and identifies key sectors of youth concern as well as priority target groups.

Though the NYP 2003 is a departure from the earlier NYP 1988, it could not advance further as even though the policy spelled out an implementation mechanism, the later events showed that there was less clarity about the implementation mechanism. It was mentioned in the NYP 2003 that the policy will be reviewed after five years from the date of commencement of implementation. But the review process was a rather weak mechanism.

### **Exposure Draft of National Youth Policy 2012**

The exposure draft of the NYP 2012 was unveiled by Minister for Youth Affairs and Sports on 31st May 2012. There are a number of departures from NYP 2003 as it recognizes youth as a heterogeneous group and most importantly, the draft policy proposes to bring down the target age group from 13–35 to 16–30 years and divides the age group into three subgroups so that effective mechanism for addressing the concerns can be identified.

A major departure from the NYP 2003 is that the draft policy not only spells out the objectives but also elaborates the details of desirable interventions and identifies partners accountable for realizing the objectives enshrined in the draft policy. Another added feature is the introduction of Youth Development Index (YDI) with sub-indices like Youth Health Index, Youth Education Index, Youth Work Index, Youth Amenities Index, and Youth Participation Index. The draft policy mentions that YDI would help to recognize youth as a population category that needs separate consideration and the development of a summary

index would help to make comparisons across regions. The policy further states that apart from measuring achievements made, the YDI would help in advocating youth development.

### **Knowledge Dissemination and National Youth Policy: Role of Youth Development Institutions**

Effective policy making is one of the important ways to streamline knowledge sharing and dissemination. Every aspect of policy is directly linked with the purpose of improvement in learning and development of all sections of society. Most importantly, public policies help to translate or carry out intentions of government into action.

National youth policy aims to promote youth participation in nation-building process. As youth is in a transformative stage, the issues of knowledge gaps can be addressed effectively through youth. The duty and function of development institutions working for and working with young people is to produce socially accountable knowledge, which can be easily accessible by marginalized and vulnerable communities. The basic foundations development institutions in the public sector are laid on the fact that their accountability rests in the production of socially accountable knowledge. A policy in the public sector like the National Youth Policy of India is a vision document in this aspect and it has three important elements: (1) political context, (2) evidence from the field, and (3) linkages.

*The political context:* In India's context, the political setting plays an important part. With regard to research – policy link - in the context of the draft NYP 2012, the policy makers should strengthen the research work on youth development. It is more relevant in today's context as India is experiencing 'demographic dividend' and more than 40 percent of the population falls in the youth category. Efforts need to be taken to give more thrust to the skill development in the draft NYP 2012. A permanent mechanism should be envisioned in the draft NYP 2012 to address the skill requirement and employment opportunities.

*Evidence:* The NYP 2003 rightly points out that youth development efforts in India have been hampered by lack of adequate information and research base on youth development. There needs to be some mechanism in the policy to identify and strengthen local agencies in the field level to collect quality data on youth development, which can support effective policy formulation and review process. The draft NYP 2012 aims to address this aspect as provision is made for setting up a resource centre for information related to youth.

*Links:* To implement the policy's perspectives on youth development, more emphasis may be given on establishing links with various agencies working in the field. There should be a platform to share the views and opinions of researchers and policy makers, and develop possible course of action in formulating and implementing National Youth Policy. The role played by civil society organizations is very crucial in this aspect.

### **Conclusion**

The draft NYP 2012 mentions that the policy would be reviewed in 2022 after collation with the data generated through census 2021. The review process will be highly beneficial if it is established on evidence-based policy making. Evidence-based policy making is the effective strategy to implement a policy and with valid output from the end users. In fact, World

Development Report 2007 mentions that policies addressed to youth often fail because of three main reasons.

- (1) Countries are not taking a coherent approach to establish clear lines of accountability for youth outcomes. Many countries' national youth policies fail to set priorities or coordinate action. The youth policies are not coherently matched with national development policy.
- (2) Young people lack voice in the formulation and the implementation of policies that affects them.
- (3) There are few models to adopt.

Evidence-based policy making is an effective strategy to address all these issues as, from policy formulation to policy implementation, the stake holders are consulted for appropriate measures. An evidence-based youth policy will ensure youth participation. Major benefits of evidence-based youth policy are as follows:

- (1) An evidence-based youth policy promotes development of young people.
- (2) It leads to better services.
- (3) It promotes the learning of essential skills and competencies in the youth.
- (4) It broadens learning environments for the youth.
- (5) It is a powerful tool for social integration.

In an evidence-based policy making, the evidences from research are incorporated into the policy which in turn, when implemented, will be an integrated one.

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