



Research Paper

National Education Policy 2020: What to Look Forward To

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ABSTRACT

India's first Education Policy was passed and implemented in 1986. After 34 years, the National Education Policy for India has come in 2020, which signifies a new milestone for India's education system. The policy is based on the pillars of "Access, Equity, Quality, Affordability and Accountability". It can transform the country into a vibrant knowledge hub. It emphasises systemic and institutional improvements to regulation, governance and promotion of multi-disciplinary academics and research in the higher education institutes of India. Its student-centric approach will make learning less stressful and more learner oriented. It also promotes a robust and responsive research ecosystem needed to accelerate the pace of economic, social and academic pursuit in India. Teachers who are the cornerstone of any education system have been given a lot of attention in the policy by creating National Professional Standards for Teachers for building a performance-based reward system for them. The current system of education which has often been criticised for being rigid and redundant, focusing more on content and results, will now pave way for NEP that aims to encourage creativity and innovation. This paper aims to look at the education system through the decades of various commissions to the present with a comparative study of the NEP 2020 and the existing policy.

KEYWORDS - Education, NEP, Teachers

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I. INTRODUCTION: HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

When India became independent, the need for improving the education system in India in conformity to the rising aspirations of free India was recognised. In 1948, the Government of India appointed University Education Commission under the chairmanship of Dr Radhakrishnan. The commission recommended broad sweeping reforms to the then existing education system. This was followed by the Directive Principles of State Policy in 1950, stating that "The state shall endeavour to provide, within ten years from the commencement of the Constitution for providing free and compulsory education to all children up to 14 years of age". In 1952, the Secondary Education Commission was appointed under the chairmanship of Dr. A. L. Mudaliar, which recommended the schooling duration to be reduced from 12 years to 11 and transferring the Senior School Certificate examination to the especially constituted boards of secondary education. However, the first National Policy on Education emerged in July 1968 under the chairmanship of Dr. D. S. Kothari which recommended reconstruction and complete transformation of the Indian Education System.

Till two decades later the Kothari Commission report remained the basic framework for education in the country. The New Education Policy of 1986, emerged from a national debate and Parliament approval. It stressed the imperative of inclusiveness, eliminating all discrimination based on caste, creed, religion, sex and region. The policy saw many political setbacks due to change in governments between the Congress and BJP. However, with the launch of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan in 2000, with the help of the World Bank, DfID of UK and UNICEF, education got universalised. When Congress-led UPA government came to power in 2004, the National Knowledge Commission was appointed under the chairmanship of Mr. Sam Pitroda in 2005, which recommended massive expansion of higher education, increase in private investment in universities and establishing an independent regulatory authority for higher education. When UPA came to power again in 2009, The Right to Education (RTE) Act became effective from 2010, which was a very significant step in the right direction for making education egalitarian. However, five major bills pertaining to higher education were at various stages of finalisation when the BJP led government under Shri Narendra Modi came to power. It envisaged to

bring in global standards in education for which another national policy on education was required. The main emphasis was to be placed on equity, accountability, affordability, accessibility and quality.

Draft report of the NEP 2020

India has had two policies before NEP 2020- one came out in 1968 and the other in 1986, under prime ministers Smt. Indira Gandhi and Shri Rajiv Gandhi respectively. The NEP 1986 was revised in 1992 by the then prime minister Shri P.V. Narasimha Rao. The implementation of the previous policies focused largely on issues of access and equity. The unfinished agenda of the 1986 policy, modified in 1992, is taken up in the NEP 2020. A major development since the policy of 1986/92 has been to move towards achieving universal elementary education. Before the NEP 2020 policy came into being, a five member committee headed by T.S.R. Subramanian submitted its report on the draft national education policy 2016. The key elements included provision of pre-primary education universally, measuring learning outcomes, curriculum reforms, teacher education reforms along with internationalisation of education. This was further followed by the National Education Policy by the committee headed by K. Kasturirangan. Finally, some bold decisions were taken for a far-sighted education policy. With the emphasis on knowledge economy driven growth in 21st century, this is precisely what India needs to take charge of the future decades of growth. A new global standard of education is being set up.

The NEP is the outcome of a mammoth exercise and a firm commitment from the top leadership for drafting an education policy that will change the outlook towards students and consider everyone in the system as a knowledge-seeker. The policy attempts a significant overhaul of the education system - right from terminologies and institutional frameworks to functionality - when it comes to transforming governance, delivery and financing of education. Education is the foundation of any nation and for the last 34 years, India was in dire need of such a futuristic policy. It was imperative to create an education system which is deeply rooted in Indian ethos and can rebuild India as a global knowledge superpower. In the 21st century, wherein the education system requires a holistic and multidisciplinary approach, it was essential to shift focus from the development of 'higher order' cognitive skills to the development of 'soft skills' and build cultural awareness and empathy, perseverance and grit, teamwork, leadership and communication among the children of the nation.

HOW DOES THE NEP 2020 ADDRESS THE DEMANDS OF TODAY AND TOMORROW

A) Multidisciplinary approach to education

The policy seeks to bring in certain important rectifications to the erstwhile system, such as poor literacy and numerical competence - outcomes associated with primary schools, besides the reduction in the number of drop outs from middle and secondary schools. Moreover, it seeks to initiate a multi-disciplinary approach in the higher education system. It helps students understand concepts holistically and retain them longer and better. The policy also focusses on other crucial areas such as restructuring of the curriculum, reforming assessment, and investing in teacher training. The NEP looks at the entire education system from a completely fresh perspective. It talks about revamping the system from its very grassroots level, focusing on identifying the uniqueness of each individual. The NEP talks, at length, about making learning tactile and experiential for which teachers should be trained on giving a practical dimension to their subjects. More excursions, field trips, project and play-based learning, and research-based activities are being proposed in the curriculum. The NEP encourages growth of creative expression in a child. It propounds that from a very early age, the child should be exposed to various activities, like music, dance, theatre, painting, pottery and so on, so that he is able to explore all the avenues and decide for himself where his passion truly lies. A strong Early Childhood Care should be available in each school to provide the right amount of care and guidance from the very initial years of the child's life. NEP clearly outlines that holistic and integrated development of a child can be assured through reducing curriculum content to enhancing essential learning and critical thinking. The syllabus should focus on discovery approach, inquiry-based learning, discussion and analysis-based approach. NEP 2020 aims to achieve 100% Gross Enrolment Ratio in schools by 2030. Instruction in the language which students can understand will make the classroom learning more relatable with the outside social world of the child. Well qualified, amiable and motivated teachers can curtail the dropouts, as they follow a pedagogy that resonates with the children. For instance, giving examples of real-life applications of the classroom learning makes it more meaningful for them. Holistic multidisciplinary education aims to develop overall capacities and capabilities of human beings. The idea of integration of different perspectives can be achieved by providing opportunities for research based on experiential learning. Right from formative years, experiential learning should be integrated into the curriculum to promote independent thinking, team work and collaboration in students.

B) Quality of teachers

Teachers are the cornerstone of an educational system. A robust process needs to be developed for the recruitment of teachers which includes: training in time-tested techniques in pedagogy, multi-level teaching and evaluation, teaching children with disabilities, special interests or talents, use of educational technology, and

learner-centered and collaborative learning. Knowledge of local language must be imperative. To maximise the ability of teachers to do their jobs effectively, they should be provided an improved service environment which also includes more autonomy in choosing aspects of pedagogy in their classroom teaching. Teachers should not be engaged any longer in work that is not directly related to teaching, as is the case with many state schools. Those doing outstanding work should be recognized and promoted, given remuneration based on a robust merit-based structure, including peer reviews, attendance, commitment to CPD, other forms of service to the school and the community. National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST) are being created for a performance based reward system.

C) Enabling Digital Education

The government has plans to set up a new autonomous body—National Educational Technology Forum (NETF) to oversee the capacity building, develop e-content and provide a platform for educational institutes and stakeholders to share best practices leveraging technology. This will be vital to bridge the digital divide in the country and ensure a wider reach of online education in the times to come. The creation of more and more virtual labs will give students remote access to hands-on experiment-based learning. Digital technologies such as virtual field trips, use of AR/VR in experiments, or online lessons reflect that the policy lays a strong focus on experiential learning. Hence, the adoption of these cutting-edge technologies will result in enhancing the immersive learning experiences. Not just this, the policy is futuristic in nature as it aims to make online learning and virtual classrooms accessible to every student in the country. The Smart Classrooms, Diksha and Swayam Portals will provide a strong platform to initiate interactivity through webinars, live discussions, online courses and study material. It is also intended at preparing alternative modes of delivering education, in times of crisis as the current pandemic, when conventional modes of education falter. Technology-oriented new education policy will surely benefit the youth of today and will act as a quintessential tool towards building India as a technology driven educational hub.

D) Making education inclusive

Classroom diversity can offer a climate that produces active engagement, requiring students to think in deeper, more complex ways. Student diversity results in a more affirmative campus environment by creating conditions under which the majority of students can interact with and learn about people who are different from themselves. In-service training programmes for general educators and special educators in all the disabilities are to be made mandatory for equitable and inclusive education. Necessary school supplies such as audio learning or textbooks in Braille should be made available. Suitable modification to examination system may be required, so as to eliminate pure mathematical, practical and logical assessments. Bringing special children into mainstream requires adjustments that schools need to make in advance. Sensitization towards disability should be a part of teaching activities. Transport facilities should be modified to make them disabled friendly, so that these children can move around with relative ease. Architecturally, ramps should be constructed with wheelchair accessibility in service areas. The aim of equity and inclusion is now at the heart of new NEP, which will help in building a more cohesive India.

E) Focus on skill development through vocational education

The policy aims to crack the status hierarchy, that acquiring skill proficiency is inferior to any other stream of study. For this, it recommends integration of vocational programs to impart skill at early ages in middle and secondary level in a phased manner. The NEP 2020 provides that even the students of VI-VIII shall be exposed to hands-on training in vocational skills like carpentry, plumbing, electrical repairing, horticulture, pottery, embroidery, etc. The policy has set the target of providing vocational skills to at least 50% of students by 2025 in such a way that the vocational skills acquired at the school level may be further extended up to the higher education level. Areas like robotics, artificial intelligence, cloud computing, data analytics, the internet of everything, etc, are projected to create many new jobs. Towards this, secondary schools will also collaborate with ITIs, polytechnics, local industry, etc. Skill labs will also be set up and created in the schools in a hub. In higher education, there could be value-added courses in teaching methodology, research methodology, etc. Students who do not wish to pursue the traditional disciplines further should do some skill-based courses including entrepreneurship courses as part of their curriculum. Project-based research training for the students especially in Masters Courses along with their subjects. The education system could be made more practical and job-oriented, thus the employability is automatically taken care of as it enables us to have more job-givers than just job-seekers. NEP has fully covered the components like skill enhancement, developing entrepreneurship, and vocational education to make our graduates and post-graduates develop the ability to get jobs in the market.

E) Better governance for maintaining quality of education

NEP 2020 envisages clear, separate systems for policy making, regulation, operations and academic matters. The main goal of the school education regulatory system is to continually improve educational outcomes. NEP talks about setting up of an independent, state-wide body called the State School Standards Authority (SSSA), to ensure that all schools follow certain minimal professional and quality standards. It is to be made sure that each stakeholder and participant of the education system takes interest in setting up of these bodies. Everyone should be accountable to perform their role with the highest level of integrity and commitment. Also, technology should be employed suitably to ensure efficiency and transparency in all work of the SSSA. Assessment system should be objective and transparent and multiple sources of feedback should be used to have a complete view of the performance. Setting standards is one of the greatest tasks under NEP, because each and every outcome is adjudged on the basis of standards. It will subsequently help us to reflect upon and take necessary steps for further improvement of learning outcomes. SSSA must include various stakeholders like (government representatives, private entrepreneurs and industrialists, educationists, autonomous educational bodies like NCERT, SCERT, civil society and professionals from various walks of the life, nominees of the armed forces, parents, students and people from disadvantaged groups. Greater participation of each and every element of the society will surely help to set the realistically best and achievable standards for school education system.

F) Higher education and skill imparting

Greater linkage is necessary in college courses to bridge the gap between the industry and education. There needs to be a formal industry induction cum internship program in which the students are offered an industry internship. Business and industry share a growing concern that skills available among the work force can not meet the fast changing demands of the economy, creating a major barrier to growth and development. A rapidly changing labour market, affected by technological evolution, globalisation, demographic change and other trends bring greater urgency to skill and knowledge development. At present, the vocational training centres are ill-equipped to handle the demand of changing vocational needs. The NEP 2020 addresses this by mainstreaming vocational education along with academic subjects.

G) Building a research culture

The NEP has brought in many measures for moving towards a strong and robust research culture in the country. Teachers can design few interesting interdisciplinary activities on a monthly basis for the students to develop cognitive competencies from different disciplines. Multidisciplinary research-based projects should be conceptualized and given to students to promote critical thinking. Research funding in our country is very low as compared to the other developed economies. There should be a substantial increase in research funding from the current 0.69% of the GDP as compared to 2.8% in USA, 4.3% in Israel and 4.2% in South Korea. Dedicated and standalone research institutions have to be set up with proper incentives to those who are working there to attract talent not only of the country but also from the Indians working abroad. Case teaching and case discussion should be promoted across all disciplines in the college and school teaching, to inculcate the idea and importance of research in the development of the country.

H) Bringing in greater autonomy

For effective governance and leadership, it is important to have academic autonomy, to decentralize decision making and create an enabling environment for improving the teaching-learning evaluation process. The essential ingredients for quality education are: positive attitudes of students towards learning, commitment of teachers towards educational outcomes and the strength of governance. Autonomy is expected to provide a better framework for fostering these factors. However, successful implementation of autonomy requires committed participation of students, teachers and management. A system of academic audit at every step of implementation should be set up. Students' feedback and its implementation are the vital parameters for academic audit. Carrying out autonomous academic functions like innovation in curricular content, pedagogy, evaluation methods requires both adequate financial resources and continuous training of teachers. Academic leadership should be encouraged and nurtured as it is essential for the sustainability of excellence in education.

I) How the Covid-19 pandemic may impact budgetary allocations

The National Education Policy 2020 envisages an increase in education spending from 4.6% to 6% of GDP, which amounts to around INR 2.5 lakh crores per year. This money must be well-spent in building schools and colleges across the country, appointing teachers and professors, and for operational expenses such as providing free meals to school children. What makes things tricky is that this policy has come at a time when the economy is battered by Covid-19 induced lockdowns, government tax collections are abysmally low, and the fiscal deficit is high. India has been spending around 4.43% of GDP (Analysis of Budgeted Expenditure 2017-18) and only 10% of total Government spending towards education (Economic survey 2017-18). In order to

implement NEP 2020, it should reach at least 6% of GDP which is attainable when central and state government work in collaboration to increase the investment in educational sector.

Summing it up through a comparative study of NEP 2020 and the Existing Policy

S.NO.	TOPIC	NEP (2020)	PREVIOUS POLICY
1.	Universalisation of education	With the help of the new education policy devised by the Government of India, education will be made available to everyone in the country from the pre-school to the secondary school level.	Earlier, compulsory education was available for children aged between six and 14 years due to which the drop out rate was much higher.
2.	Bridging the skills-gap	NEP 2020 is beneficial as it will help about two crore school students to come back to educational institutions, by introducing vocational education. Vocational education programs focus on the acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competencies as necessary equipment for the individual to adapt to the real work situation and contribute to the development of the society.	Earlier education system is non-responsive to the skill demands of the existing and future industry, leading to a supply-demand gap on various counts. There is huge demand-supply skill gap. 90% of the jobs in India are "skill based"; entailing the requirement of vocational training. It is estimated that only 5% of the youth in India are vocationally trained. Most of the Vocational Education Training Institutes existing today are characterized by structurally rigid and outdated centralized syllabi that do not sync with the prevailing market conditions.
3.	Lending a structure to the educational system	The existing 10+2 structure will be replaced by 5+3+3+4 structure which will focus on the formative years of learning of a student. The structure corresponds to the age groups as follow: 3 to 8 years, 8 to 11 years, 11 to 14 years and 14 to 18 years.	Despite the access and retention, the learning outcomes for a majority of children continue to be an area of serious concern. Studies have shown that children have not learnt the basic skills during their schooling. Many children who reach grade V th cannot read simple texts or do simple arithmetic calculations. Concerted efforts are required to ensure that a minimum set of cognitive skills are acquired by all children through various stages.
4.	Bringing the under-privileged into education fold	Emphasis has been given on setting up Gender Inclusion Fund and Special Education Zones. This will be beneficial for underprivileged people.	People from the under-privileged community are still heavily discriminated against and are forced to do menial work such as manual scavenging, with low or no access to education, health care, or minimum wages, depending on their sex, cast and gender.
5.	Credit transfer	There will be an establishment of an Academic Bank of Credit where the credits earned by the students will be stored so that they can be later taken into consideration when the final degree is awarded.	No such provision was there in earlier educational policy, which caused many students to either drop out or stay away from the current education system.
6.	Facilitating a multi-disciplinary system	Multidisciplinary Education and Research Universities (MERUs) will be set up in the country. These institutions will be at par with the existing IITs and IIMs and will aim to showcase multidisciplinary education for the Indian students. For eg., A student interested in physics will be able to do so by also taking up subjects like economics and politics. This was one of the most lauded moves of the NEP. Furthermore, Bachelor's programs too will be multidisciplinary in nature with no rigid separation between arts and sciences.	Most of the universities, except a handful of well-endowed and prestigious ones, do not have a very strong research culture. They lack not only infrastructure but also funding for encouraging students to take up specialised research. Besides, the students had very little choice on taking varied subjects.
7.	Language issue	Language seems to be a debatable factor in the National Education Policy 2020. India has the problem of a disturbing teacher and student ratio. So introducing mother tongue in academic institutions for each subject is a problem. This is simply because finding a competent teacher is a challenge at the best of times. And now the challenge is to bring study material in mother tongue. The Indian Government wanted to follow in the steps of other countries like China, Germany, France where the foreign students need to learn the language of the country to understand the coun-	A committee of experts was launched in 1990 under the chairmanship of Ali Sardar Jafri to examine implementation of the Gujral committee recommendations. This committee recommended modifying the three-language formula to "In Hindi speaking States: (a) Hindi (with Sanskrit as part of the composite course); (b) Urdu or any other modern Indian language and (c) English or any other modern European language. In non-Hindi speaking States: (a) the regional language; (b) Hindi; (c) Urdu or any other

		<p>try's culture better. But India has 22 active languages and not one national language like in the other countries.</p>	<p>modern Indian language excluding (a) and (b); and (d) English or any other modern European language". Hindi was not a mandatory language in non Hindi speaking states.</p>
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II. CONCLUSION

The policy envisions an education system rooted in Indian ethos that sees education as a basic right of every child. It envisages a curriculum and pedagogy that teaches students how to live their best lives and reach their potential. Among the many imperatives, the deadline to achieve universal literacy and numeracy by 2025 should be the top priority as a goal that will crucially determine progress at higher levels. The vision of National Education Policy is also to show the students the way to developing a deep-rooted pride in their culture, not only in thought, but also in spirit, intellect and deed. It is based on the foundational pillars of access, affordability, equity, quality and accountability. It is the way forward to fulfil the aspirations and hopes of a new India. NEP has the wherewithal to improve pedagogies, eliminate structural inequities, address asymmetries and remove rampant commercialisation. Its success will depend on the way it is implemented.

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