

A Study on NEP 2020 with Special Reference to Issues and Challenges

Dr. Dilip Ch. Das

Associate Professor, Department of Commerce, Goreswar College,
Goreswar (BTAD) Baksa, Assam, Pin- 781366

Abstract

Well defined and futuristic education policy is essential for a country at school and college levels due to the reason that education leads to economic and social progress. Different countries adopt different education systems by considering the tradition and culture and adopt different stages during their life cycle at school and college education levels to make it effective. The National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020), which was approved by the Union Cabinet of India on 29 July 2020, outlines the vision of India's new education system. The new policy replaces the previous National Policy on Education, 1986. The policy is a comprehensive framework for elementary education to higher education as well as vocational training in both rural and urban India. The policy aims to transform India's education system by 2021. Shortly after the release of the policy, the government clarified that no one will be forced to study any particular language and that the medium of instruction will not be shifted from English to any regional language.[3] The language policy in NEP is a broad guideline and advisory in nature; and it is up to the states, institutions, and schools to decide on the implementation. Education in India is a Concurrent List subject. Himachal Pradesh has become the first state to implement New Education Policy 2020. The national educational policy should be implemented in all schools over India by 2022.

Keywords: Higher Education, National Education Policy 2020, NEP-2020, Overview & Analysis, Implementation Strategies, Approaches, Challenges, Opportunities of NEP 2020.

Background

The NEP 2020 replaces the National Policy on Education of 1986. In January 2015, a committee under former Cabinet Secretary T. S. R. Subramanian started the consultation process for the New Education Policy. Based on the committee report, in June 2017, the draft NEP was submitted in 2019 by a panel led by former Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) chief Krishnaswamy Kasturirangan. The Draft New Education Policy (DNEP) 2019, was later released by Ministry of Human Resource Development, followed by a number of public consultations. The Draft NEP was 484 pages. The Ministry undertook a rigorous consultation process in formulating the draft policy: Over two lakh suggestions from 2.5 lakh gram panchayats, 6,600 blocks, 6,000 Urban Local Bodies (ULBs), 676 districts were received.

Introduction:

The New National Education Policy is nothing short of revolutionary in the education system in India. After our education policy monotonously followed the same norms for 34 years, the **Ministry of**

Education (formerly known as MHRD) did some serious amendments in it on **29 July 2020**. When the NEP was launched in 2023, its motto was **Educate, Encourage and Enlighten**. The government's purpose to launch this policy was to develop 21st-century skills in the students of India. The amendments in NEP from the previous education policy strive for Research, Innovation, and Quality. For the seamless implementation of this education policy, the government is willing to give big funds. In 2021, Nirmala Sitaraman said that funds of Rs. 50,000 crores will be given to the National Research Foundation, and Rs. 40 crores to Ekalavya Schools. More details of NEP 2023 are in the rest of the article.

India, being a growing liberal country for educational reforms, currently has about 845 universities and approximately 40,000 higher education institutions (HIEs), reflecting the overall high fragmentation and many small sized HEIs in the country which are affiliated to these universities. It is found that over 40% of these small sized institutions are running single program me against the expected reform to a multidisciplinary style of higher education which is an essential requirement for the educational reforms in the country for the 21st century. It is also noted that over 20% of the colleges have annual enrolment less than 100 students making them nonviable to improve the quality of education and only 4% of colleges enroll more than 3,000 students annually due to regional imbalance as well as the quality of education they offer. Some of the reasons found for the fragmentation of the higher education (HE) system in India are: It is predicted that India will be the third largest economy in the world by 2030-2032 with estimated GDP of ten trillion dollars. It is evident that the ten trillion economies will be driven by knowledge resources and not by the natural resources of the country. To boost the growth of the Indian education sector, the present government decided to revamp it by introducing a comprehensive National Education Policy 2020. This is in line with the Prime Minister's recent call on leveraging the Fourth Industrial Revolution to take India to new heights. The currently introduced National Education Policy 2020 envisions an India centered education system that contributes directly to transforming our nation sustainably into an equitable and vibrant knowledge society, by providing high quality education to all.

The Structure of the new education policy.

- The extant 10+2 structure in school education will be modified with a new pedagogical and curricular restructuring of 5+3+3+4 covering ages 3-18.
- Currently, children in the age group of 3-6 are not covered in the 10+2 structure as Class 1 begins at age 6.
- In the new 5+3+3+4 structure, a strong base of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) from age 3 is also included.

Aims of National Education (“Balavatika’s” and “Balbhavans”)

- The new education policy now focuses on pre-elementary education which will create a strong base for children below the age of 5.
- The children below 5 years will be sent to the balalaika's or the preparatory class which will be below the class 1.

- The planning and implementation of the early childhood care and education curriculum (ECCEC) will be carried out jointly by the Ministries of HRD, Women and Child Development (WCD), Health and Family Welfare (HFW), and Tribal Affairs.
- The first five years of schooling will comprise the foundation stage including three years of pre-primary school or the balalaikas as well as classes 1 and 2.
- The National Education Policy 2020 states, the medium of instruction until at least class 5 should be “home language or mother tongue or local/regional language”.
- A National Curricular and Pedagogical Framework for Early Childhood Care and Education (NCPFECCE) for children up to the age of 8 will be developed by NCERT.
- The next three years will be divided into a preparatory stage from classes 3 to 5.
- To track the progress of the students all schools will take examinations in grades 3,5 and 8 which will be conducted through an appropriate authority.
- Besides the preparatory schools and the balvatikas every state/district will be encouraged to establish “Bal Bhavans” as a special daytime boarding school, participating in art-related, career-related, and play-related activities.
- Free school infrastructure can be used as Samajik Chetna Kendras.
- Following the 5+3+3+4 format the early 5 years are for preparatory education and the next three years are for middle education i.e for classes 6 to 8.
- The students of class onward will be taught coding as 21st-century skills such as analysis, critical thinking, and conceptual clarity in school.
- To keep an eye on the progress of every student in each school examinations will be conducted through an appropriate authority.
- The students up to class 8th will be taught in their native language or in their mother tongue.

Targets & Timelines Here are the policy’s key targets as well as the deadlines set for some: -

- The entire policy will be implemented by 2040.
- 100% Gross Enrolment Ratio from Pre-School to Secondary level by 2030.
- Teachers to be prepared for assessment reforms by 2030.
- Common standards of learning in public and private schools.
- Mission to focus on foundational numeracy and literacy of all students by Grade 3.
- Universalizing early childhood care and education by 2030.
- Vocational training for at least 50% learners by 2025.

Opportunities of NEP

2020 New education Policy begins with the unfinished agenda of NEP — 1986. NEP — 1986 was rooted in a very different India. Over the years, remarkable strides have been made in terms of access and equity. Near universal levels of enrolment at primary levels, and subsequent increase in enrolment at higher education levels (GER: 26.3%) have been achieved. However, there has also been a drop in the quality of learning in public school systems, followed by an exodus of elite and middle classes. This also led to the weakening of accountability mechanisms. Despite poor returns on learning, the pay-structures in public systems have seen a gradual increase.

Languages

The National Education Policy 2020 has ‘emphasized’ on the use of mother tongue or local language as the medium of instruction till Class 5 while, recommending its continuance till Class 8 and beyond. Sanskrit and foreign languages will also be given emphasis. The Policy recommends that all students will learn three languages in their school under the 'formula'. At least two of the three languages should be native to India. It also states that no language will be imposed on the students.

Shortly after the release of the policy, the government clarified that the language policy in NEP is a broad guideline; and that it was up to the states, institutions and schools to decide the implementation. A more detailed language strategy would be released in the National Curriculum Framework in 2021. Note was also made that there were already institutions which had implemented this language policy 60 years ago such as Sardar Patel Vidyalaya. Both the Education Policy of 1986 and the Right to Education Act, 2009 promoted usage of the mother tongue too as an advisory guideline.

School education

- Focus on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy: The policy accords the highest priority to achieving Foundational Literacy and Numeracy by all students by Grade 3. The policy states, "The highest priority of the education system will be to achieve universal foundational literacy and numeracy in primary school by 2025. The rest of this Policy will become relevant for our students only if this most basic learning requirement (i.e., reading, writing, and arithmetic at the foundational level) is first achieved. To this end, a National Mission on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy will be set up by the Ministry of Education on priority. Accordingly, all State/UT governments will immediately prepare an implementation plan for attaining universal foundational literacy and numeracy in all primary schools, identifying stage-wise targets and goals to be achieved by 2025, and closely tracking and monitoring progress of the same". Subsequently, the NIPUN Bharat Mission (National Initiative for Proficiency in Reading with Understanding and Numeracy) was launched on 5 July 2021 to achieve this goal.
- The structure will be replaced with model. This will be implemented as follows:
 - Foundational Stage: This is further subdivided into two parts: 3 years of preschool or *anganwadi*, followed by classes 1 and 2 in primary school. This will cover children of ages 3–8 years. The focus of studies will be in activity-based learning.
 - Preparatory Stage: Classes 3 to 5, which will cover the ages of 8–10 years. It will gradually introduce subjects like speaking, reading, writing, physical education, languages, art, science and mathematics.

- Middle Stage: Classes 6 to 8, covering children between ages 11 and 13. It will introduce students to the more abstract concepts in subjects of mathematics, sciences, social sciences, arts and humanities.
- Secondary Stage: Classes 9 to 12, covering the ages of 14–18 years. It is again subdivided into two parts: classes 9 and 10 covering the first phase while classes 11 and 12 covering the second phase. These 4 years of study are intended to inculcate multidisciplinary study, coupled with depth and critical thinking. Multiple options of subjects will be provided.
- Instead of exams being held every academic year, school students will only attend three exams, in classes 2, 5 and 8.
- Board exams will be continued to be held for classes 10 and 12 but will be re-designed. Standards for this will be established by an assessment body, *PARAKH* (Performance Assessment, Review and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development) To make them easier, these exams would be conducted twice a year, with students being offered up to two attempts. The exam itself would have two parts, namely the objective and the descriptive.
- This policy aims at reducing the curriculum load of students and allowing them to be more "inter-disciplinary" and "multi-lingual". One example given was "If a student wants to pursue fashion studies with physics, or if one wants to learn bakery with chemistry, they'll be allowed to do so". Report cards will be "holistic", offering information about the student's skills.
- Coding will be introduced from class 6 and experiential learning will be adopted
- The Midday Meal Scheme will be extended to include breakfasts. More focus will be given to students' health, particularly mental health, through the deployment of counselors and social workers.

Higher education

- It proposes a 4-year multi-disciplinary bachelor's degree in an undergraduate programme with multiple exit options. These will include professional and vocational areas and will be implemented as follows:
 - A certificate after completing 1 year of study
 - A diploma after completing 2 years of study
 - A Bachelor's degree after completion of a 3-year programme
 - A 4-year multidisciplinary Bachelor's degree (the preferred option)
- MPhil (Masters of Philosophy) courses are to be discontinued to align degree education with how it is in Western models.
- A Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) will be set up to regulate higher education. The council's goal will be to increase gross enrollment ratio. The HECI will have 4 verticals:
 - National Higher Education Regulatory Council (NHERC), to regulate higher education, including teacher education, while excluding medical and legal education.
 - National Accreditation Council (NAC), a "meta-accrediting body".
 - Higher Education Grants Council (HEGC), for funding and financing of universities and colleges. This will replace the existing National Council for Teacher Education, All India Council for Technical Education and the University Grants Commission.
 - General Education Council (GEC), to frame "graduate attributes", namely the learning outcomes expected. It will also be responsible in framing a National Higher Education Qualification

Framework (NHEQF). The National Council for Teacher Education will come under the GEC, as a professional standard setting body (PSSB).

- Other PSSBs will include professional councils such as Veterinary Council of India, Council of Architecture, Indian Council of Agricultural Research and National Council for Vocational Education and Training.
- The National Testing Agency will now be given the additional responsibility of conducting entrance examinations for admissions to universities across the country, in addition to the JEE Main and NEET.
- The policy proposes that higher education institutes like the IITs make changes with regard to the diversity of learning.
- The policy proposes to internationalize education in India. Foreign universities can now set up campuses in India.
- The fees of both private and public universities will be fixed.

International branch campuses

After a failed attempt to import international branch campuses in 2012, the NEP 2020 renewed the effort by explicitly allowing for foreign universities to establish campuses in India as well as giving permission for IITs to set up campuses overseas. The policy sets a grand goal of utilizing international education to reestablish India as a *Vishwa Guru* (or world teacher), which was reiterated by India's Vice President, M. Venkaiah Naidu, who expressed a desire to establish India to attract global academic talent. Scholars have raised question about the idea of importing higher education institutions from other questions in order to advance a goal of positioning the country as a world teacher.

Other changes

Under NEP 2020, numerous new educational institutes, bodies and concepts have been given legislative permission to be formed. These include:^[1]

- National Education Commission, headed by the Prime Minister of India^[42]
- Academic Bank of Credit, a digital storage of credits earned to help resume education by utilising credits for further education
- National Research Foundation, to improve research and innovation
- Special Education Zones, to focus on the education of underrepresented group in disadvantaged regions
- Gender Inclusion Fund, for assisting the nation in the education of female and transgender children

The policy proposes new language institutions such as the Indian Institute of Translation and Interpretation and the National Institute/ Institutes for Pali, Persian and Prakrit. Other bodies proposed include the National Mission for Mentoring, National Book Promotion Policy, National Mission on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy.

Implementation

- In early August 2021, Karnataka became the first state to issue an order with regard to implementing NEP.
- On 26 th August 2021, Madhya Pradesh implemented NEP 2020.
- Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said the National Education Policy-2020 will be implemented in phases by 2022.
- The Telangana State government has decided to implement the newly announced National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) in the State.^[72]
- Maharashtra CM Uddhav Thackeray directs to appoint experts' committee for implementation of new education policy.
- Andhra Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has directed officials of the Education Department to implement the National Education Policy 2020 in letter and spirit across the State.
- Rajasthan Governor Kalraj Mishra said that NEP 2020 will be implemented in phased manner.
- The Chief Minister of Assam, Himanta Biswa Sarma said that NEP 2020 will be implemented from 1 April 2022.
- In April 2022, the UGC (University Grants Commission) approved simultaneous dual degrees, both in physical and online modes.
- In October 2022, Ministry of Education released New Curriculum Framework for 3-8 years children and National Credit Framework inline of NEP 2020.

Conclusion

NEP 2020 is a document that has been perceived with a lot of hope and optimism in bringing about a paradigm changes in the overall education system of the country. Change is the law of nature and it is important to adapt with the changing environment. The old education system and practices are no longer holding any relevance in the modern times. For example we have seen during the COVID- 19 that how important it is to make ICT an active part of teaching learning process, And how we as a country need to train our students and teachers to learn this skill to make the overall process of learning more enriching and satisfying. It has become meaningless to continue with outdated education system. On the part of the Indian government a lot of changes would be required to be brought to the curriculum of higher education absorbing the global demand for receiving skilled manpower. Thus, implementation NEP 2020 would be a great challenge. Overall, NEP 2020 is largely a very progressive document, with a firm grasp on the current socio-economic landscape and the prospect to meet future challenges. Well, no policy bears any fruit if that is not implemented in an appropriate way. The policy seems like a well thought and genuine attempt to reshape Indian Educational System. This policy highlights the integration of professional education in HEI for skilling and employment generation. It won't be wrong to conclude that NEP 2020 has laid a concrete roadmap for India 2.0 and if implemented properly then it has got everything to make India global hub in education by 2030. (Kumar).The future of the nation depends heavily on the kind of education imparted within that state .NEP 2020 is a ray of hope in that direction .But India as a country need to ensure that the promise made under this should not remain on papers and become a reality and that will only be possible with effective implementation of its provision with proper coordination from all the stakeholders.

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