NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY (NEP2020): REFLECTIONS, CHALLENGES AND THE WAY FORWARD

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Abstract

The present Government in a landmark decision on 29th of July 2020 announced the New Education Policy to energize the educational system of India. It covers all the aspects of human resources including elementary to higher education with a proper focus on technical education. The New policy aims at the cohesive and uniform development both in rural and Urban India to realize the new vision of 'Atamnirbhar Bharat'. Although, the New Education Policy (NEP2020), as per its objectives, is quite ambitious and visionary and has the capacity the gear up the entire educational system of the country to open new vistas of future but its real success depends upon the seriousness and the level of resources available for its execution in totality. This paper attempts to identify the challenges in the proper implementation of NEP 2020 and finding its solution as well. The study uses secondary data from the various available sources. There is strong presumption of the Researcher that the challenges anticipated in the implementation of NEP2020, can be very well tackled if all the stakeholders in general and the Government in particular, shows its commitment to change their words into actions.

Keywords: Education system, NEP2020, Government, Challenges, infrastructure, Solution.

Introduction: The NEP 2020 has been introduced after long wait of three decades. The first NEP was promulgated in 1968 by the then government led by Late Smt. Indira Gandhi , followed by the Second NEP in 1986 by the Late Rajiv Government, which was partially modified by P.V. Narsima Rao in the year 1992. Now, after a gap of 34 years of the second NEP , a panel led by former ISRO Chairman K. Kasturiranjan came up with a draft proposal in the year 2018 and the same was put into the public domain by the Modi Government for

public feedback and appraisal. However, the same has been approved by the cabinet without any discussion in the Parliament at this time when the educational system across the country is at grinding halt due to the pandemic and surely was looking for a drastic change. The New Education policy is quite dynamic and parts its way from the previous policy of Linear system of Education which followed sequential pattern starting from selecting objectives to selecting learning experiences and preparing child for a specific goal following a known cycles or step- by – step progression. However, NEP 2020 appears to be sufficiently open , flexible and fundamentally inclusive. The main strength of this policy is the open choice for the students for multiple entries and exits apart from being multi-disciplinary. The other important aspect of the NEP, is in its flexibility for the choice of students in the selection of subjects at school level and giving them open scope to pursue vocational and non-vocational subjects along with co-curricular and extra-curricular activities which, in longer run, will be helpful for curbing the rate of dropouts and bringing back those who have already dropped out.

Research methodology

This research output is the outcome of an overview of studies conducted on the problems of Indian Education System. This is a qualitative research and follows the experiential approach. It uses secondary data for its analysis. Discussions with experts also form part of the research work. It attempts

a) To understand and analyze the previous educational policies   and current NEP 2020.

b) To evaluate the issues and challenges in the implementation of NEP 2020.

c) To ascertain and provide possible solutions and suggestions for improvement .The study exhibits the different structures existing in the Earlier NEPs and their drawbacks, narrates the problems and the challenges in NEP 2020. The study is concluded with recommendations for effective implementation of NEP 2020 for making strong and vibrant educational system in India.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS
Review of Earlier Initiatives along with NEP since Independence:

Educational System of a country requires regular updation to cope up with the changing world scenario. A suitably oriented system can facilitate and promote social change and contribute to economic growth, not only by training skilled manpower, for specific tasks of development by what is perhaps more important , by creating the requisite attitudes and climate, Thakur (2014) .

To cope up with the changing world scenario, GOI has been constituting various commissions time to time with specific objectives followed by NEP 1968 and 1992**. The details of the various commissions is reproduced as below** in tabular form-

Year	Educational commission	Objectives
1948-49	University education commission called as Radhakrishnan commission	To study the problems of University education in India and to suggest improvements for the development of University education. Reconstruction of University for the socio-economic upliftment of Indian Society after Independence.
1952-53	The secondary education commission	To examine the existing system of Secondary education and to suggest measures for its improvement.
During 1958	scientific policy	The Scientific policy Resolution 1958 aims to offer an honored position to Scientist in formulation of national policies as scientific techniques can only make up the growing deficiency of natural resources.
1964-66	The Indian education commission, called as Kothari commission was formed	To examine all aspects of the educational sector, provide a general educational pattern and guidelines and policies for the development of education in India.
During 1968.	The first national policy on education was framed by the Government of India. The national educational policy (NEP) was approved by the parliament on May 1968.	1. Universal education including all community sections 2. Education to women and minorities. 3. Education to disadvantaged and rural population 4. Adult education 5. Education for employability / Vocational education 6. Education for agriculture. 7. Research education 8. Development of sports 9. Emphasis on moral values and social responsibility 10. Quality in education in context of international standards.
During 1990-92	The Ramamurth committee	1. Universal literacy. 2. Lifelong learning . 3. Education to housewives, industrial and agricultural workers. 4. Continual learning . 5. Removal of women literacy. 6. Holistic child development . 7. Integrated Child services programs. 8. Establishment of statutory council for higher education and a National body for policy making, planning and coordination.
During 1991-92	Janardhan Reddy committee	To review the implementation of the various parameters of NPE taking into consideration the report of the Ramurti Review committee.

1992	Revised policy formulations were submitted to the parliament.	

The NEP 1968 aimed to promote national progress, strengthen national integration, and create sense of common citizenship and culture. It gave special attention to science and technology, moral values and to create close relationship between education and life of the people.

The NEP 1986-1992 delineated competency and sharing responsibilities between state and union territories and emphasized the holistic child development and proposed Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) with Integrated Child Development Services (ICS) programs.

The NEP 1986-1992 has foreseen vocational education, which intended students to identify occupations for them , even prior to completion of secondary education. This policy proposed to phase out affiliated colleges and intended to develop autonomous colleges. It also witnessed the establishment of statutory council for higher education and a National body for policy making, planning and coordination in higher education.

The NEP 1986-1992 emphasized the need to raise the outlay on education to six percent of GDP in eighth five-year plan 1992-1997 and to uniformly exceed in subsequent years. This policy was to be followed up by "program of action" designed by MHRD

1. NEED FOR NEW NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY (2020)

A brief survey on National educational policies adopted in 1968, 1986 and 1992 underlines that, even the earlier policies were robust in conception and orientation, but little attention being given for implementation and follow up phase of the proposed policies has not delivered the desired results in terms of acceptable outcomes in the education sectors leading to unfulfilled objectives. according to political criteria is not really education at all; (Furedi,2009) and increasing corruption being the adverse contributing factor for poor educational conditions at the ground level- negating the noble objectives of earlier policies. The dilemma faced by researchers and policy makers in a range of fields; (Young,2007) was a major reason for NEP 2020.A wide disparity between states has contributed to this present state of education where the need of New NEP was felt. 'Some experts argue that India's greatest problem today is its large population, which has led to shortage of food, housing, and health services. To them education is a distant concern, even though they understand its

importance and the benefits they could reap in the long run (Guha, 2002) and finally it derailed the educational system and so the need of New NEP 2020 .

Uncontrolled Involvement of private participation, lack of academic research in institutions, low turnout of women in higher education, rapid growth in ICT, lack of understanding ground realities, overall failure in quality aspects, uncontrolled and unregulated commercialization of education, less accountability and external pressures played a role in the failure of earlier policies which finally led to the birth of NEP 2020.

Critical Analysis of NEP 2020

The National Education Policy 2020 envisions an Indian 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. It draws inputs and disciplines from vast amount of India's heritage and is based upon the basic principle of "leaving no one behind"(Sachs,2012) The country's education system contributed many scholars including Charaka and Susruta, Aryabhata, Bhaskaracharya, Chanakya,Patanjal and Panini, and many others. Through such eminent people, the country made seminal contributions to world knowledge in varied fields such as mathematics, astronomy, metallurgy, civil engineering and architecture, shipbuilding and navigation, medical science and surgery, yoga, fine arts, chess, etc. The entire Indian education system is founded and built with such background, support, and inspiration. As per the NEP, the Goal of Indian Higher Education is to develop good, well-rounded and creative individuals, with intellectual curiosity, spirit of service and a strong ethical compass (Draft NEP,2019). The objective of the draft proposal is to provide multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary liberal education to everybody based on a proposed system .The proposed education system mode under NEP 2020, has integrated yet flexible approach with life cycle stages. Indian education faces challenges of over centralisation bureaucratic structures and lack of accountability, transparency, and professionalism (Sheikh, 2017)

The NEP will have major impact on access, equity and quality, all three of them. One, the universalisation of school education will be up to Class 12. More than two crore children will be brought back to school. In higher education, access will be improved. The GER [gross enrolment ratio] will be raised from 26% to 50% which would mean another 3.5 crore seats. Multidisciplinary colleges including vocation and general education will improve the quality of learning. Similarly, research will be improved by the formation of the National Research

Foundation (NRF) as change is essential in the field of scholarly research (Aithal & Aithal 2019) . For improving equity, there will be gender inclusion fund. For SC,ST and other disadvantaged sections, the policy has recommended provisions. For backward regions, the policy advocates Special Education Zones so that the country's virtuous cycle of economic growth fuelled mainly by its large pool of qualified manpower is sustained (Aggarwal ,2007). NEP, 2020 emphasizes quantitative as well as qualitative Teachers training and therefore teacher education system in India calls for revolutionary changes.(Goal & Goal, 2016). NEP 2020 education quality model explores new approaches to equip everybody with the skills required to solve problems of the society towards the improving the quality of life through supporting radical innovation and continuous improvement in education systems (Aithal et,al, 2018).

In order to assess the impact of NEP 2020, we have to study its structure as Strength and Weakness of the proposal are identified from its structure and implementation (Aithal & Kumar,2015) .The structure of the NEP 2020 can be discussed in the different life cycle stages as follow :

(1) Foundation Stage:

The Foundational Stage will comprise five years of flexible, multilevel, play-based, activity-based, and discovery-based learning, continuously improved based on research and incorporating various time-tested Indian traditions and cultures for cognitive and emotional stimulation of children.

(2) Preparatory Stage:

Three years of education after the foundation stage is considered as the Preparatory Stage. This will comprise, building on the play, discovery, and activity-based pedagogical and curricular style of the Foundational Stage. In addition to it, this stage gradually introduces textbooks for more formal classroom learning. Students are also exposed to different subjects and prepare them to delve deeper insight specialized subjects in future stages.

(3) Middle school education Stage:

The Middle school education which will comprise three years of education aims to build a more formal pedagogical and curricular style of the preparatory stage, focus on more abstract concepts in each subject that students will be ready across subjects like sciences, mathematics, arts, social sciences, and humanities. This stage encourages experiential

learning within each subject, and explorations of relations among different subjects, and emphasize to introduce more specialized subjects and subject teachers.

(4) Secondary education Stage:

Secondary school education comprising of four years duration and will facilitate multidisciplinary studies with appropriate exit options besides preparing for the next phase of undergraduate program of study, including an early introduction to Liberal Arts education. This stage will be built on the subject-oriented pedagogical and curricular style of the Middle stage, but with greater depth, critical thinking, greater attention to life aspirations, and flexibility and student choice .Students will be exposed to the semester system and during these 8 semesters, they will study 5 to 6 subjects in each semester. They will study both common subjects for all and flexible elective courses from liberal arts subjects. The board examinations will be restructured to test principles, concepts, critical thinking, and higher skills in each subject..Eleventh and twelth grades will be considered an integral part of secondary school education stage and there will not be a category such as higher secondary or junior college.

(5) Under-graduation Education Stage :

The Goal of Indian Higher Education is to develop good, well-rounded and creative individuals, with intellectual curiosity, spirit of service and a strong ethical compass [Draft NEP 2019].Liberal education based undergraduate degrees regardless of the subject will be of either three- or four-year duration. Three years of undergraduate degree programs without research components and four years of degree program with research projects may be offered in liberal education. Bachelor of Liberal Arts (BLA) or Bachelor of Liberal Education (BLE) degree (or BLA /BLE with Research) will be offered by those institutions which are ready to run such programs consisting of a broad-based liberal education together with rigorous specialization in a field or fields. The three-year traditional B.A., B.Sc., as well as B. Voc. degrees will continue as well for those institutions that wish to continue such programs, but all Bachelor's degrees will move towards taking a more comprehensive liberal education approach.

(6) Post-graduation Education Stage:

Focus on high quality research. The Master and Doctoral levels are being strengthened with the provision of at least three routes into the Masters' degree – a one-year degree, a two-year degree, and the integrated five-year degree. The Masters' degree will also

have a strong research component to strengthen the appropriate professional competence in the domain area and to prepare students for a research degree.

(7) Research Stage:

Even though research is an integral part of final year undergraduate and postgraduate stages, Graduate's can pursue high quality research leading to Ph.D. in any core, multidisciplinary, o or interdisciplinary areas for a minimum period of 3 and 4 years for full-time and part-time respectively.

During Ph.D. they should undergo 8-credit coursework in teaching/ education/ pedagogy related to their chosen Ph.D. subject. The M Phil program will lose its importance and shall be discontinued.

(8) Lifelong Learning:

The NEP 2020 envisages lifelong learning to avoid human beings becoming obsolete in society in terms of knowledge, skills, and experience to lead a comfortable life. Further education at any stage of life will give further maturity for a happy life.

Apart from this, focus shall be upon Socio-economic disadvantage groups(SEDGs) which can be further divided into Gender Identities, Socio-cultural Identities, Geographical Identities, Disabilities and Socio-economic conditions. Separate strategies will be formulated for the focused attention for reducing each of the category-wise gaps in the School education.

2. **Challenges Ahead:** Although, an extensive exercise has been taken to bring out NEP 2020 and top brain have been involved but still some challenges are anticipated which require immediate attention of all the stakeholders for making it a grand success . The most challenging thing is the process and the resources needed for its implementation .The timing when it has been approved is already a great challenge due to pandemic which has already brought the national treasure under severe stress. Some of the other issues can be enumerated as follows-

1) There is ambiguity in the specialization of the subjects due to flexibility in the combinations as no concrete set of combination is in the policy both in academic as well as professional.

2) Mode of implementation of new structure of different stages of schools and higher education is not clear and may cause confusion in its implementation.

3) There are no specific guidelines for the difference of degrees with three years and four years with a research project in terms of selection in the Government jobs. It will lead to utter confusion with regard to Government job in the similar degree of one year difference.

4) One year and two years Masters degree   programs are also suggested and it is not clear that under what circumstances these different duration Master degree programs have to be offered.

5) Online Distance learning which is one of the major component is devoid of any clear roadmap.

6) Certificate courses and Diploma courses in higher education on different interval of exit from the colleges, is another potential challenge as no guideline is there for its scope in jobs.

7) Free flow of top foreign Universities in India will be a big challenge for the survival if the local Institutions do not have substantial support to improve the quality for contributing global ranking.

8) Proposed changes of the Institutions of a particular discipline into multiple disciplines shall involve huge resources and that shall be a big challenge to manage.

9) The major setback in the quality may be due to absence of strong provision of accountability for the teaching fraternity   in the NEP 2020.

10) Lack of specific yardstick has for monitoring the Private , Public Schools etc. catering different strata of students.

11) Skill learning as a part of regular schooling may be a challenge because of insufficient infrastructure .

12) Full-fledged implementation of the policy is another challenge to get the desired results as it is interconnected, holistic and cannot be placed in piecemeal.

A Way Forward: NEP 2020

Any policy's effectiveness depends on its implementation. Such implementation will require multiple initiatives and actions, which will have to be taken by multiple bodies in a synchronized and systematic manner, including MHRD, CABE, Union and State Governments, education-related Ministries, State Departments of Education, Boards, NTA, the regulatory bodies of school and higher education, NCERT, SCERTs, schools, and HEIs along with timelines and a plan for review. Finally, careful analysis and review of the

linkages between multiple parallel implementation steps will be necessary in order to ensure effective dovetailing of all initiatives. This will also include early investment in some of the specific actions (such as the setting up of early childhood care and education infrastructure) that will be imperative to ensuring a strong base and a smooth progression for all subsequent programs and actions In the decade of 2030-40, the entire policy will be in an operational mode, following which another comprehensive review will be undertaken.

The following suggestions may be appropriate to realize the policy and make it effective and defect free from a public point of reference:

1) Only Type 1 & Type 2 HEIs should be allowed to offer B.Ed. program to improve the quality of teachers in School education.

2) Technology should be used extensively in the student evaluation process.

3) Annual accountability should be set to the faculty members and based on faculty Annual Performance Indicator scores, annual increments should be decided and for every four years, faculty continuation/termination should be decided.

4) The individual colleges and single departmental colleges which fail to acquire autonomy based on attaining accreditation can merge with any other HEIs instead of only merging with affiliating universities.

5) National Research Foundation while funding for research, certain minimum funds should be given to   all types of HEIs irrespective of public and private organizations to provide minimum research facilities as a central facility.

6) National Research Foundation should fund for developing Common Central facilities in each State to help researchers and to avoid repetition and underutilization of repeated facilities in every HEIs.

7) In five years integrated degree programs, multiple exits after 3rd and 4th years should be possible.

8) At least one year Masters degree should be compulsory as a minimum educational qualification to join Ph.D. research degree to maintain uniformity. But the present proposal allows students who completed four years under-graduation with substantial research components eligible to join Ph.D. program. Also one year Masters Degree in the subject and one year Masters Degree in Teaching (M.Ed.) should be compulsory for Lecturer/Assistant professor for teaching under-graduation degree programs.

9) Students should compulsorily register and complete at least one online course from SWAYAM or NPTEL per year as a part of their grading system. Every faculty member irrespective of their seniority also takes at least two online FDP to update them to become eligible for annual increments.

8) CONCLUSION:

A periodic improvement in the education system is essential for human development and sustainable progress in society. Reforms in the education system by considering various success models in developed countries and customizing such things with local needs is the present requirement for a country to prosper. India, being a fast developing country with 130 crore human capital can prosper overtake other developing countries by planning and adopting an appropriate education model. In this aspect, the present National Education Policy NEP 2020 is an inclusive model with many innovations to provide liberal but specialized and customized both school and college education by incorporating research components both at school and college levels

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