

## NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY 2020: AN EVALUATION

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### Abstract

The term NEP refers to the New Education Policy adopted by the Indian government in the year 2020. It was last drafted in 1986 and updated in 1992. To bring changes in the education system, the present government of India has introduced National Education Policy or NEP. The NEP possesses new 5+3+3+4 design of pedagogical structure. The most important change in the pedagogical structure is the fact that there is going to be an effort to avail the students to study **across** arts, humanities, sciences, sports and vocational subjects. It is an student focused policy. For the students who are currently in grade school or have been in so, a special mission-based dedication and remediation will be provided for their cause. Furthermore, several goals are to be noted such as maintaining a 30:1 pupil teacher ratio at all schools, encouraging parental participation.

**Keywords:** NEP, Pedagogy, Basic Education, University Education, Pupil- Teacher Ratio.



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**DISCUSSION:** After a divergence of 34 years, Indian government finally introduced a substantial change to the present education system through the announcement of the New Education Policy 2020. The National Education Policy or NEP got its approval from the cabinet on 30<sup>th</sup> July 2020. The purpose of this policy is to reform the educational system in India and bring forth “Education System of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century”.

The first attempt in India to establish an education policy rooted in a document published by Prof. DS Kothari in as early as 1966. It was considered a very well-thought and visionary policy, despite the fact that its implementation was not fully recognized. The second such policy for education was not to be seen until after 20 years, in 1986, led by Rajiv Gandhi. However, it was not followed wholly until 1992, after a gap of 6 years. This policy was in practice for 34 long years until the year 2020, when a new education policy was brought up.

The society as well as the education system preferred to promote certain subjects over others. For example, science is still considered an elite stream and arts is seen as the go to stream when every other option has been unsuccessful. Besides these, the education system in India lacked qualified teachers, inclusion of modern technological education systems, and personalised learning for each student according to their learning capabilities. Probably the most important aspect that is missing in the education system today is its purpose; the learning of the reason why we learn, the philosophy behind what actually is education and how it is much more than cramming a few keywords and completing an assignment. With the current status of an outdated and seemingly faulty education system, it is indeed high time for a new and reformed policy to replace the current system and to bring about desirable changes.

### **KEY FEATURES OF NEP 2020**

#### **PROPOSED CHANGES IN SCHOOL EDUCATION**

**Early Childhood Care and Education:** The objective of NEP regarding early education of a child is to ensure that children in the age group of 3-6 years have access to “free, safe, high quality, developmentally appropriate care and education” by the year 2025. There is a compulsive ideology behind this objective which is because of the fact that 90% of a child’s brain development occurs prior to age 6<sup>[2]</sup>. According to a study conducted by NCERT in 1992, it was found that a strong ECCE (Early Childhood Care and Education) program could have resulted in a return of Rs.10 or more for every Re.1 invested. Besides there have been multiple studies that suggest that children who start out behind tend to stay behind throughout their school years. Hence, a qualified ECCE system is essential. This system will not only encompass the studies and well-being of the children at their young age but also includes the health and nutrition of the mother.

**Reintegrating Dropouts and Ensuring Universal Access to Education:** According to a study organised by U-DISE<sup>[3]</sup> the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in 2016-17 for grades 1-5 was at 95.1%. However, for grades 6-8 it was 90.7%, for 9-10 and 11-12 it was 79.3% and 51.3% respectively. This clearly indicated that a significant number of students enrolled began dropping out after grade 5 and especially after grade 8. This raises an issue to bring these children back into their education as soon as possible. The main reason for such dropouts can be attributed to the lack of qualified ECCE and Foundational Literacy and Numeracy as discussed earlier. The NEP aims to solve this problem by rather taking a direct approach. It intends to, firstly, **provide effective and sufficient infrastructure to the students and to achieve universal participation in school by carefully tracking students.**

**Curriculum and Pedagogy in Schools:** The current system of education largely involves rote learning and minimal stress on creativity, problem solving, etc. With the present 10+2 system of educational pedagogy that has been serving the country for well over 50 years, there was observed a need to uniformize the school structure in India. The NEP proposes a new **5+3+3+4 design** of pedagogical structure that is to have the following framework:

- 5 years of the **Foundational** Stage: 3 years of pre-primary school and Grades 1, 2.
- 3 years of the **Preparatory** (or **Latter Primary**) Stage: Grades 3, 4, 5.
- 3 years of the **Middle** (or **Upper Primary**) Stage: Grades 6, 7, 8.
- 4 years of the **High** (or **Secondary**) Stage: Grades 9, 10, 11, 12.

The main focus of the system is not only to have the students learn but also have them *learning how to learn*. The system also aims to reduce curriculum content (which is fondly called the syllabus) to enhance essential learning and critical thinking, by including space for more holistic, experimental, discussion and analysis-based learning. Probably the most important change in the pedagogical structure is the fact that **there is going to be an effort to avail the students to study across arts, humanities, sciences, sports and vocational subjects**. A softer separation of subjects is to be promoted, especially that of arts and science subjects. Another major change to be introduced is the practice of teaching in mother tongue until grade 5. Multilingualism is to be strongly supported in schools, including standardisation of sign language and introduction to ancient Indian languages like Sanskrit.

Apart from these, the NEP also aims to reform the assessment system of a student stressing on the fact that the current system of board exams in grades 10 and 12 pose a serious amount of pressure on the students to the point that they resort to mugging and rote learning rather than actually understanding the concepts. As a solution, the NEP proposes the following:

- Board exams to be given in a vast range of subjects to encourage holistic development
- Students to be free to choose the subjects they want to be evaluated in
- The difficulty of board exams is to be lowered
- Students to be free to choose whenever they want to give the exam and are also free to retake the exam if they felt they could do better
- Board exams to replace the in-school final examinations whenever possible so as to decrease the examination load on students.

**Teachers:** The NEP lays stress on the fact that it aims to ensure that all students at all levels of school education are taught by passionate, motivated, highly qualified, professionally trained, and well equipped. It also provides certain qualities in teachers that would be beneficial for students. These qualities are, in fact, the most essential ones that one can expect in a teacher. However, there has been an observation that these basic skills are not found in most teachers today; the reasons being **privatised teacher education institutions which provide degrees on payment of a price, lack of initiatives to recruit the best teachers, severe shortcomings and suboptimal practices in the deployment of teachers, lack of infrastructure**, and others. The NEP proposes to tackle these problems by introducing measures like **special merit-scholarships with guaranteed employment, incentives to take up jobs in rural areas, decreased number of teacher transfers**, among others.

### **PROPOSED CHANGES IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

Where primary education builds the base of a student, higher education builds the structure on it. The importance of higher education, indeed, is unfathomable in the academic life of a student. Higher education in India, however, suffers from various discrepancies. Some being the extensive fragmentation of the higher education system, streaming of students into particular disciplines with no way to access other streams, and presence of a system which does not provide checks to thriving or fake colleges while constraining excellent institutions. The NEP envisions to completely overhaul the current system and re-energise higher education by achieving the following:

**Approaching a system of multi-disciplinary universities and colleges:** The vital issue regarding higher education today, as discussed, is the presence of fragmentation of higher studies into several exclusive disciplines. If higher education is moved to large multidisciplinary universities, the NEP proposes the following advancements:

- Students will be introduced to a vibrant community of scholars and peers;
  - It would break down harmful distinctions and prejudices against disciplines;
  - It will provide all-round opportunities to students;
  - It would greatly increase the efficiency of resource sharing, both material and human.
- **Moving towards a liberal undergraduate education:** Liberal here means broad. The 21<sup>st</sup> century demands the requirement of a broad-based multidisciplinary education system. Students should be able to choose liberally **between multiple disciplines like arts and sciences independently.**

- **Supporting faculty and institutional autonomy:** The NEP aims to autonomise faculty and institutions to promote motivation and innovations among their teaching and pedagogical approaches.
- **Establishment of a National Research Foundation (NRF):** The objective of the NRF is to grant competitive funding for outstanding research proposals across all disciplines. Its main aim is to facilitate and normalize research in educational institutions where research work is in its nascent
- **Reformed regulation system:** The NEP envisions a regulatory system which lays down basic parameters but enforces them vigorously, including shutting down institutions which do not adhere to these parameters.

### **OBSERVATIONS**

The policies and objectives mentioned are just a mere fraction of the NEP; however, it provides an insight to the motives regarding the formulation of this policy, which is, indeed, for the benefit. If one studies the current draft of the policy available at the official government website<sup>[4]</sup>, one can observe the following:

- The policy appears to be in the right direction and with a right mindset to bring the much-awaited change in the education system of India. It was high time that something of this sort should have been done with regard to evolution of the world around us.
- It aims to provide reschooling to school dropouts who constitute almost 30% of all students in India<sup>[5]</sup>, a very unpredictable approach to solving the problem of increasing the number of school dropouts in certain communities.
- Universities and colleges are to have multiple disciplines and students are free to choose their subjects of proficiency from among a plethora of vocational and academic This will lead to a more open and liberal education of students.
- Although the visions of the policy are dramatic, the policy fails to explain the actual process of implementation of such ideas.
- Besides, much of the stated visions had already been included in previous NEPs; the only thing missing was a proper plan of implementation. The NEP 2020 also suffers from such obscurity.<sup>[6]</sup>
- The introduction to classical languages to school education is a controversial topic because even research scholars find it extremely difficult to learn certain archaic languages.

- Moreover, introducing digital education on a expansive approach will only lead to failure as India still lacks infrastructure to support that idea as evident from the fact that a large number of students are missing online classes in this pandemic due to lack of digital access.
- NEP should not supersede the Right to Education Act, provisions of which only a fraction has been achieved in the last 10 years. The RTE must be given more priority.

### **LIMITATIONS OF NEP 2020**

The choice-based system will put enormous stress on the parents and students who will need guidance and counseling to make wise choices so that the learning outcomes of the student have a place in the job market that is already shrinking because of the growth in Artificial Intelligence, Machine learning and Big Data Analytics.

The choices in the three language formula may or may not provide for one link language for Indians. We at least need to build a diglossia (a situation in which two dialects or languages are used by a single language community competence). It is an student centered policy. Nep 2020 is not in favour of the teachers. It can destroy the teaching profession.

### **CONCLUSION**

The New Education Policy 2020 is a visionary policy. The newly proposed system of education can, without doubt, revamp education in India to a whole new level; that is, if truly implemented and observed. It seems that although the policy on the surface seems sturdy and confident, it needs a lot of work to be done on the inside. There has to be a clearer set of goals and not just statements of objectives with wide scopes and no systematic paths leading to the said objectives. However, this is not something that cannot be achieved. One can surely hope that even if the earlier policies had similar goals and strategies, yet failed to be accomplished, this new policy will be the one that will change the education system, after all.

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