

A STUDY ON ‘THE NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY (NEP) 2020’**Dr. Preeti Dharmik**Assistant Professor, UGC Human Resource Development Centre, RTM Nagpur University,
Nagpur, Maharashtra**Abstract**

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 aims to transform education, keeping the learner at the centre. The NEP builds on recommendations from the Education Commission (1964–66) and Justice J. S. Verma Commission (2012) as well as the previous version of the policy – National Policy on Education 1986, modified in 1992 (NPE 1986/92), Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 and Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act, 2016. The NEP 2020 is a huge stride in the right direction-it focusses on the holistic development of students by ensuring access, relevance, equity, quality and strong foundational learning. The new policy has numerous takeaways for education sector stakeholders. This paper, which is KPMG in India’s point of view, analyses the impact of the NEP and puts forth various opportunity areas emerging from the new policy. Significantly, the policy lays emphasis on four key areas of reforms viz. curricular changes to build strong foundational skills, improving quality of learning across all levels of education, shift in the ways of assessment and, finally, need for systemic transformation.

Key Words: approaches, assessment, challenges, education, NEP 2020, opportunities**Introduction**

The NEP envisages creating synergies in the curriculum across Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) to school and the higher education segments. The NEP stresses on creating a national curricular and pedagogical framework, which is competency-based, inclusive, innovative and focuses on comprehensive development of children. School curriculum is expected to imbibe the human value system and provide greater flexibility and expose students to acquire future skills in the areas of computation, coding, design thinking, digital literacy, ethical and moral reasoning etc. The NEP promotes building of strong foundational skills right from early childhood. Also, there is a new way of envisioning vocational education in the policy by integrating it across secondary and higher education and developing a credit framework to offer vertical and horizontal mobility between vocational and higher education. One of the stronger themes across the entire policy document is around quality improvement in the learning outcomes. A series of initiatives has been highlighted in the NEP around quality learning environments, use of ICT tools for training, experiential learning, improving the quality of faculty among others. Recommendations on moving ECCE and school pedagogy to the 5+3+3+4 structure and a three-tiered institutional architecture in the higher education segment (research focus, teaching focus and autonomous degree-granting colleges with strong employability focus) are welcome steps from the sector standpoint. Educational institutions must plan to leverage suggestions in the policy. It has rightly translated the learners’ needs by offering them increased flexibility in choosing subjects mapped to their aspirations. Furthermore, multiple entry and exit points along with

the concept of academic credit bank will ensure their continued learning. The next focus area is around assessment reforms, a much-awaited change. The NEP emphasises upon the need for formative assessments, making the examinations less strenuous and thereby inducing a practice of self or peer review among the learners.

The transformational dimensions highlighted in the policy are well supported by the systemic changes that unfold for the ECCE, school and the higher education segments coupled with critical digital elements. The NEP has certainly created a need for perspective planning at the central as well as the State level to be able to achieve the policy goals. Themes such as scale, autonomy, accreditation reiterate the requirement of efficient usage of academic as well as non-academic resources, i.e. faculty, infrastructural capacity (such as school complex), digital mode of delivery, greater funding etc. to be tuned for purpose. The vision is to institutionalise national-level accreditation and standard-setting bodies, which will drive quality and will focus on enhancing learning outcomes in their core and, at the same time, instil the optimal amount of flexibility and autonomy in the overall administrative framework. The NEP 2020 is expected to put India on the track to attain goal four of the 2030 agenda for sustainable development by ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all in the next decade. In the subsequent sections, this report highlights the transformational changes as laid out for the ECCE, higher and the vocational education segments followed by stakeholder-wise action takeaways.

The NEP 2020 enacts numerous changes in India's education policy. It aims to increase state expenditure on education from around 3% to 6% of the GDP as soon as possible.

Languages

The National Education Policy keeps the mother tongue as the medium of instruction till Grade 5 while recommending its continuance till Grade 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', of which at least two 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 the 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 universal foundational literacy and numeracy in the primary school by 2025", identifying the goal as the "most basic learning requirement". To this end, it proposes to set up a National Mission on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy, and require all State/UT

governments to prepare an implementation plan, including identification of stage-wise targets and goals to be achieved by 2025, and measures for proper tracking and monitoring progress of the same. It recommends additional recruitment of teachers to ensure a pupil-teacher ratio (PTR) of under 30:1, with a preference for 25:1 in socio-economically disadvantaged areas. Additionally, it proposes the establishment of a national digital repository of high-quality resources, development of "enjoyable and inspirational" books for students at all levels in all local languages, and ensuring easy availability of resources for both teachers and students, via an expanded network of school, public, and digital libraries. Finally, it reinforces the critical need for addressing both the physical and mental health of students, via proper and timely nutrition, and periodic health check-ups.

The "10 + 2" structure will be replaced with "5+3+3+4" 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 3–7 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 counsellors and social workers.

Higher education

The policy proposes a 4-year multi-disciplinary bachelor's degree in an undergraduate program with multiple exit options, ranging from a certificate after completing a year in a discipline or field, to a Bachelor's degree 'with research' if the student completes a four-year degree program which includes a 'rigorous' research project in a chosen major area of study. Likewise, the master's program is intended to be flexible in its duration, depending on the prior experience of the student. A Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) has a minimum requirement of a Master's degree or a 4-year Bachelor's degree with Research.

The policy proposes to transform the regulatory landscape in higher education by ensuring that the four tasks of regulation, accreditation, funding, and academic standard setting are each performed by "distinct, independent and empowered bodies", and within one umbrella institution viz. the to-be-established Higher Education Commission of India (HECI). It cites the need to "create checks-and-balances in the system, minimize conflicts of interest, and eliminate concentration of power" as the reasons behind the delegation of tasks to independent bodies. The proposed four verticals of HECI are:

National Higher Education Regulatory Council (NHERC): to regulate higher education, including teacher education, while excluding medical and legal education.

National Accreditation Council (NAC): to supervise the work of accrediting institutions and specify "phased benchmarks for all HEIs to achieve set levels of quality, self-governance, and autonomy", i.e. to act as a "meta-accrediting body".

Higher Education Grants Council (HEGC): to fund and finance universities and colleges, based on transparent criteria. This will replace the existing University Grants Commission.

General Education Council (GEC): to create a framework, the National Higher Education Qualification Framework (NHEQF), for charting "graduate attributes" i.e. the expected learning outcomes for higher education programs.

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. It proposes to fix the fees of both private and public universities.

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.

It proposes that higher education institutes like the IITs make changes with regard to the diversity of learning.

It proposes to internationalize education in India by allowing selected foreign universities to set up campuses in India, making the country an attractive destination for foreign students in search of quality education at an affordable cost, and promoting research collaborations and student exchanges between Indian and global institutions.

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 countries in order to advance a goal of positioning the country as a world teacher.

Teachers

The NEP 2020 puts forward many policy changes regarding teachers and teacher education. To become a teacher, a 4-year Bachelor of Education will be the minimum requirement needed by 2030. The teacher recruitment process will also be strengthened and made transparent. The National Council for Teacher Education will frame a National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education by 2021 and a National Professional Standards for Teachers by 2022.

EdTech

Under NEP 2020, EdTech companies and startups are provided with necessary guidelines and impetus to develop learning management systems, ERP software, assessment platforms, online labs etc. for schools and universities. National Educational Technology Forum (NETF), an autonomous body is also created to facilitate exchange of ideas on technology usage to improve learning. In September 2021, in line with NEP, NITI Aayog partnered with Byju's to provide free access to its tech-driven learning programmes to engineering aspirants from 112 districts.

Indigenous knowledge

The NEP emphasises the importance of India's native knowledge traditions and inspiring 'Indianness' in people; in this vein, various Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) initiatives have been undertaken to guide research and propagate understanding of indigenous knowledge.

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
2. Academic Bank of Credit, a digital storage of credits earned to help resume education by utilising credits for further education
3. National Research Foundation, to improve research and innovation
4. Special Education Zones, to focus on the education of underrepresented group in disadvantaged regions
5. 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.

NEP has signalled a new vision for school education, providing a much-needed revision and reform agenda to the system. It has set the vision for a fundamental change in how education is delivered, opening up new opportunities for education sector stakeholders while ensuring that every school-aged child in India has access to and is provided with an equitable and high-quality education.

Changing the way students learn: NEP's biggest impact will be on how students learn. The policy places a focus on ensuring students 'learn to learn' and advocates moving away from the rote learning based system currently in place to a more activity-based, experiential learning methodology, with an increased emphasis on choice for students in the secondary grades. This will allow the education system to shift to a more personalised, student-centric model and adopt new curriculum and technology solutions that will enhance this process

Developing skills for future jobs: NEP has recommended a change in curriculum and pedagogy to ensure students are developing higher order cognitive skills, 21st century skills, mathematical and computational thinking, critical thinking skills amongst others. The development of these skills will result in a future ready workforce, with an increased ability to meet the changing needs required for future jobs

Assessments inform teaching-learning in schools: one of the most critical aspects of the NEP is to move away from annual examinations to a system of formative assessments to support the teaching-learning process

Students demonstrate competency in multiple ways: a low-stakes board exam in Grade 10 and multiple assessments through the year, focussed on demonstrating learning will reduce the fear of examinations and allow students to demonstrate what they have learnt to the best of their abilities.

Conclusion

An education system is defined as a roadmap of everyone deciding progress in every aspect of life by generating ability to meet challenges of current scenario. Government of India has announced and accepted new National Education Policy 2020 at school and college level based on recommendations of Dr. Kasturirangan committee for strengthening Indian education system according to modern needs. This paper discussed the education systems, national education policy-its structure, implications especially focused on higher education revolutions during implementation age of 2020 to 2030. It also explores the merits of national education policy 2020 followed by few suggestion for its implementation achieving its goals, beneficial in concern to humanity.

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