

National Education Policy 2020 – Reforms in Indian School Education System

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Abstract

The year 2020 has been an exceptional year for countries across the globe. In India, apart from Covid19, one of the important changes that took place was the development of the New Education Policy (NEP) 2020. The National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) is being advertised as the first education policy of the 21st century, and it has the objective of revising and redesigning the education structure in India, as well as moving towards the development of a new system that is in accordance with the inspirational goals of education in the 21st century. NEP 2020 is based on the premise that the development of cognitive skills should not be the only focus of education. This paper focuses on the reforms that have been done in Indian School Education System. This paper identifies three crucial aspects of the policy – course, language and students for the higher education sector.

Keywords: New Education Policy (NEP), India, Development, Students, Language

1 INTRODUCTION

On July 29, 2020, the “National Education Policy” 2020 (also known as "**NEP 2020**") was finally revealed by the “Union Cabinet” after much anticipation. The National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) is being advertised as the first education policy of the 21st century, and it has the objective of revising and redesigning the education structure in India. To promote education at all economic classes

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and for the inclusion of common or ordinary people in the mainstream the Government of India (GOI) has formulated National Policy on Education (NPE). This policy has broader coverage, starting from elementary school education (literacy level) to colleges for higher education (focusing specialization) – in both the settings, i.e. rural and urban. The first NPE was proposed and disseminated in 1968 by the GOI, the second policy was in 1986, and the third major reformatory policy was in 2020, by the incumbent Prime Minister of India Mr. Narendra Modi (Govt. of India, 2020). Additionally, it has the goal of moving towards the formation of a new system that is in line with the aspirational objectives of education in the 21st century. Reading and mathematics are examples of foundational cognitive skills, and higher-order cognitive skills like critical thinking and problem solving are examples of higher-order cognitive skills. Instead, the educational system need to place a greater focus on the development of a child's "soft skills," which include social and emotional competencies such as cultural awareness and empathy, perseverance and grit, cooperation, leadership, and communication.

A great educational organization is one in where every learner feels welcomed and cared for, in which there exists a safe and stimulating learning environment, in which a broad variety of learning experiences are provided, in which there is a decent physical infrastructure and suitable resources that are accessible to all students and are conducive to learning, and in which there is a wide range of learning experiences that are offered. The acquisition of these attributes should be the major goal of any educational institution. On the other hand, simultaneous integration and coordination are required across the board for all educational institutions and levels of study.

The fundamental principles that will guide the education system as well as the individual institutions are:

- Acknowledging the unique talents of each student and fostering those talents through promoting awareness among educators and parents of the need of supporting each student's holistic development in both the academic as well as non-academic areas;
- Allow students to select their own learning paths and programmes, so that they may pursue their interests in accordance with their abilities and interests. This gives them the freedom to pursue their dreams in accordance with their abilities and interests in life.
- In order to preserve the coherence and consistency of all information, it is necessary for there to be multidisciplinary as well as a comprehensive education that encompasses not just the natural sciences but also the social sciences, the arts, and the humanities.
- It is more important to focus on conceptual comprehension than on memorization or studying only for tests.
- To foster rational decision-making and innovation, we need to foster creativity and critical thinking.
- These include values such as empathy and respect for others, cleanliness, politeness, democracy and service, respect for public property, scientific temper, liberty, responsibilities, pluralism, equality, and justice. Scientific temper.

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- Fostering multilingual and awareness of the transformative power of language in educational settings
- Communication, collaboration, teamwork, and resilience are all examples of soft skills.
- Rather of relying on summative assessments that promote today's 'coaching culture,' focus on frequent formative assessments.
- As a result of the significant use of technology in teaching and learning as well as educational planning and administration, Divyang students would have simpler access to an education.
- Always remembering that education is a contemporary subject, respect for diversity and respect for local context should be included into all parts of the curriculum, pedagogy, and policy.
- When it comes to education, it is very necessary that all students have equal access to the same materials and the same opportunities to be successful.
- Integration of pedagogy throughout all stages of education, beginning with pre-kindergarten and continuing through college.
- Teachers' effectiveness in the classroom depends on a variety of factors, including the availability of qualified candidates, a supportive work environment, and a competitive salary.
- To maintain educational system integrity, transparency, and resource efficiency, a "light but tight" regulatory framework is needed, one that promotes innovation and creative thinking by giving schools autonomy, strong governance, and the freedom to experiment.
- An exceptional level of research is an essential prerequisite for an exceptional level of education and growth.
- Monitoring of development on the basis of ongoing research and frequent evaluation by educational specialists.

a. Reforms Introduced in the School Education System:

K-12 education is the cornerstone of a child's holistic growth, spanning from infancy through adolescence. NEP 2020 has implemented a number of significant changes to the Indian educational system, including:

- **Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE):** NEP 2020 places a strong emphasis on early childhood care and education (ECCE), with the goal of promoting and achieving proper care and stimulation of the brain in the early years of a child's life, which is necessary for healthy brain development and growth. National Council of Educational Research and Training (also known as "NCERT") has been given the responsibility of developing a National Curricular and Pedagogical Framework for Early Childhood Care and Education for children up to the age of 8 years old in order to facilitate the implementation of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE). The Department of Human Resource Development will soon be known as the Department of Education. The Departments of Women and Child Development,

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Health and Family Welfare, and Tribal Affairs will work together to plan and carry out the execution of this initiative.

To ensure that all children in India have access to Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) of a high standard, it has been suggested that the government provide funding for improvements to Anganwadi Centers. These improvements could include new buildings, playground equipment, as well as Anganwadi staff and teachers. Another one of the projects that are being considered for implementation as part of the NEP 2020 is the Comprehensive Training of Anganwadi Workers and Teachers. This training will be delivered in the form of a certification programme that will be governed by the Cluster Resource Centres, which are a component of the School Education Department.

- **Change in Curricular and Pedagogical Structure:** The old academic structure, which consisted of a 10+2 structure (ages 6-16 and ages 16-18), has been replaced with the framework of a 5+3+3+4 structure, with the framework being as follows:
 - **Foundational Stage (ages 3-8):** Anganwadi, also known as pre-school or balvatika, is where children ages 3-6 get an education based on many levels of play and activities. Classrooms 1 and 2 are where children ages 6-8 receive their education.
 - **Preparatory Stage (ages 8-11):** Students in grades 3 to 5 participate in play, exploration, and activity-based classroom learning in this stage.
 - **Middle Stage (ages 11-14):** Classes 6 to 8 are part of this level, which emphasises hands-on education in a variety of disciplines, including the arts, sciences, social sciences, and humanities.
 - **High School (ages 14-18):** During this phase, students in grades 9 through 12 are encouraged to develop critical thinking skills, as well as the ability to pick their own subjects. With an emphasis on critical thinking and life goals, the high school stage will build on the middle school's subject-focused pedagogy and curriculum. Students will also have more freedom and control over their education.
- **Curricular Integration of Essential Subjects and Skills:** In addition, NEP 2020 requires certain classes and abilities to be learned by all students in order to support them in maturing into successful, imaginative, adaptive, and productive human beings in a world that is always changing and improving. Some examples of the kinds of skills needed to succeed in this field include the ability to think logically, the ability to communicate effectively both orally and written, the ability to think critically, the ability to work in a team to solve problems and the ability to think creatively. These are just a few examples of the kinds of skills needed to succeed in this field.

As a consequence of this, it is expected that curricular and pedagogical efforts, including the introduction of contemporary subjects such as artificial intelligence, design thinking, holistic health, organic living, and other relevant themes, would be done as a part of a student's formal education in order to encourage the development of the essential skills that have been identified. In addition to this, it is also intended that these efforts would be done in order to ensure that the abilities that have been identified would be used in the workforce.

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- **Transformation in Assessment for Student Development:** In addition, it is advised that the evaluation method be transformed from one that primarily measures rote memory skills to one that is more formative and competency-based. Assessment is an essential component of educational learning. For holistic development, it is suggested that the Board exams be reorganised so that each student may choose their own path of study and take their Board exams in the areas they are most interested in. In doing so, the Board examinations would become more relevant to the students' life.
- **Standard-setting and Accreditation for School Education:** NEP 2020 has established four entities to carry out the functions of governance and regulation:
 - **Department of School Education:** However, the department will not be in charge of building or running schools, nor will it be in charge of enforcing any kind of systemic control. Instead, it will be tasked with overseeing and formulating system-wide policies to guarantee that it is always being improved.
 - **Directorate of School Education:** This department is responsible for implementing rules related to educational facilities and services, as well as making sure they are properly maintained and used.
 - **State School Standards Authority:** States/Union Territories will set up the "State School Standards Authority" (SSSA), an independent, state-wide agency tasked with establishing minimum standards for all schools, based on a set of fundamental principles. The SSSA will also be responsible for ensuring that all regulatory information is made available to the public in a timely manner.
 - **SCERT:** As a joint effort with the "National Council for Educational Research and Training", ("NCERT") and the "State Council of Educational Research and Training" ("SCERT") will oversee educational standards and curriculum in the state.
- **Professional Development for Teachers:** In the "New Education Policy" 2020 (NEP 2020), teachers will have the chance to learn about the most recent advancements in their area and to further their own professional development. This is a nod to the reality that a world-class educational system cannot function without its professors. In addition to traditional in-person seminars, instructors will have online access to a variety of resources such as professional development modules and webinars. In addition, it is anticipated of each and every educator that they would engage in a continuous development opportunity of fifty hours each and every year for the purpose of furthering their own professional growth.

b. Review of NEP 2020: Pros and Cons (Educational Policy)

1. Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)

Pros:

- To qualify for free public education, a child must be between the ages of three and 18 years. All children must have access to ECCE by 2030 in order to guarantee that they are "school-ready." The policy advocates for this.

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- Investment in infrastructure like as play equipment and child-friendly facilities, as well as continuous professional development (CPD) of early childhood care and education (ECCE) instructors and anganwadi workers via a certification programme that lasts for six months and includes some online components.

Cons:

- Retaining the current system of one ministry overseeing curriculum development and three others handling implementation. Early childhood care and education (ECCE) has so far been poorly integrated into the primary school curriculum because of this strategy. The formation of a "joint task group," which is a suggestion made by the NEP, does not seem to be an adequate answer to the situation.
- Uncertainty as to whether or not each anganwadi or pre-primary learning centre will be staffed by a trained educator and a worker (sevika).

2 Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN)

Pros:

- It is recommended that students undergo a preparatory course that lasts for three months, that access to digital material be offered through electrified textbooks (ETB-DIKSHA), that student-led peer learning and community tutoring be made accessible, and that this objective of reaching 100 percent foundational level (upto Grade 3) learning by 2025 be achieved.
- The vacant teaching posts are to be filled in a timely manner, with the primary emphasis being placed on providing priority to marginalisedneighbourhoods and demographics of the population.

Cons:

- Without a clear definition of what constitutes a fundamental text, the ability to read and write is impossible to assess.
- An apparent reference is made to a National Book Promotion Policy. However, providing students with age-appropriate reading materials in several languages should take precedence over imposing a book ban. Government programmes like SamagraShiksha place a high priority on this issue.

3 Universal access to education at all levels

Pros:

- An assurance that the Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) would be raised to one hundred percent across the board by the year 2030.
- Investment in resources such as infrastructure and instructors for children up to grade 12; as well as ensuring that social workers and counsellors are made available to pupils, in order for

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them to address reasons that contribute to dropout rates. Dropout rates will be reduced if more money is invested in these resources.

- An infrastructure that is dependent on technology is used to track each and every one of the youngsters in order to ensure that no child is neglected.
- Encourage several models of public-private school partnership so as to cut down on the number of students who choose not to continue their education and the number of young people who are not currently enrolled in school.

Cons:

- No one knows how many social workers or counsellors will be assigned to each kid, where they will be employed (for example, at the school or cluster level), or whether they will be drawn from other ministries' pools of qualified employees.
- Underage marriage and child labour are not mentioned as contributing factors to a high proportion of school dropouts in the article.
- Students who are unable to attend regular institutions may take advantage of open learning courses, however the value of these courses has not been clearly defined, both socially and professionally (economically).

4 Curriculum and pedagogy in schools

Pros:

- The policy supports bilingual education and the use of bilingual textbooks for learning, as well as the use of several languages at the middle school and high school levels. It also encourages the use of local languages as the medium of teaching for at least the first five grades.
- By focusing on fundamental learning abilities and establishing learning levels at each important juncture, the 5+3+3+3+4 class system aims to bring together several disciplines and reduce the amount of knowledge that students are exposed to.
- At the middle school level, students are exposed to a variety of modern-day subjects for the first time, including coding and computational thinking, amongst others.
- At the secondary level, pupils now have the opportunity to choose their own academic schedules (primarily in arts, physical, and vocational education).

Cons:

- When it comes to the vocabulary that is taught in schools, there is no response that is applicable to everyone's situation. The native languages should be employed "wherever practical," according to the guideline, for example. This provides a lot of opportunities for the status quo, which is the present formula consisting of three languages, to stay in place, which is especially crucial in the case of high-performing government-run school systems like Kendriya Vidyalayas (KVs).

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- A seemingly limitless list of pedagogies, attitudes, abilities, and methods that are all "good to have" is provided by the policy. It has been shown that many of these concepts are already incorporated in the National Curriculum Framework from 2005; nonetheless, it has been observed that putting these concepts into practise in classrooms or altering the behaviour of pupils has proved to be challenging.
- In the case of migrant families and Adivasi families, the issue of the children's "mother tongue" and home language being unique from the local language that is used for instruction in schools has not been addressed. This is a concern since it might affect the children's ability to learn. This is especially true with regard to families on the path of migration.
- According to the policy, "Indian knowledge systems," which includes subjects like as yoga, Indian philosophy, and Adivasi or indigenous means of learning, should be included into the curriculum. It is not a simple effort for educators, who are now battling to teach even the most fundamental curriculum, to include these complex ideas in a manner that is secular and inclusive.

5 Testing and assessments

Pros:

- The new suggested education system should be tested at the 3rd, 5th, and 8th grade levels to measure learning results.
- Teachers should encourage formative assessments (those done on a regular basis covering minor areas of curriculum), peer evaluation, and holistic progress reports to monitor development of students.
- State board of education has decided to add student choice into the examinations given to students in grades 10 and 12. To this end, the policy recommends enabling students to choose their own subjects, allowing for the better of two tries, and allowing them to select their own degree of difficulty (standard and higher level).

Cons:

- "PARAKH and NTA"—"Performance Assessment Review Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development" and the "National Testing Agency", respectively—are proposed as new agencies under the strategy. There is a risk that these new institutions may lead to an over-centralization of children's testing at the national and state levels.
- Common university admission tests after 12th grade have an overlap in significance with the priority given to 12th standard board exams
- It is possible that in the near future, states with low incomes and poor performance would be unable to receive central money because of their low incomes and poor performance; this will lead to growing inequality.
- The strategy calls for the creation of a comprehensive report card on student and parent success, accessible through AI-based software and used to monitor children' progress over

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time. Although no specifics are given, it's not clear how the already-existing digital gap will be closed.

- According to the proposal, increasing Olympiads and other forms of competitive testing would help improve access to IITs and NITs by focusing on 'talented kids.' As the proposal suggests, including preparation and test costs for Olympiads as part of a top college's admissions criteria will exacerbate the socioeconomic disparities that already exist within the higher education sector. Poorer families are unable to pay the costs of participating in Olympiads, which include both preparation and exam fees.

6 Teachers and teacher education

Pros:

- Policy recommends a four-year B.Ed undergraduate programme as the least teacher education degree requirement by 2030, from the existing two-year “D.El.Ed/B.Ed degree”.
- Teaching staff turnover is to be reduced, with the hope of improving student-teacher relationships and ensuring that teachers have the opportunity to live and work in the area where they are employed.
- Instead of taking into account teaching experience and level (elementary, primary, or secondary), the policy strongly advises that promotions should be based on merit. There are other opportunities for teachers to rise through the ranks, such as being promoted to a district or state level position.
- MOOCs for blended learning teacher training should be mandatory for all teachers and school officials to complete a minimum 50 hours of professional development each and every year.

Cons:

- A missed chance to improve the efficiency of in-service training for teachers by tying it to credits that are linked to growing degrees of seniority. "Credits" should be provided for successfully completing each teacher training programme; the accumulation of credits over the course of a 10-year term may be connected to qualifying for increments and/or form the basis of some weightage for promotions. 'Credits' should be awarded for successfully completing each teacher training program.
- People aren't really enthusiastic about improving the support that is available to pupils with special needs. A step-up course for teachers who currently deal with students with disabilities is required, but this is not enough until the number of special educators is increased in an appropriate ratio to the number of students.

7 Standard setting and school accreditation

Pros:

- The “State Schools Standards Authority” (SSSA), which is a specialised institution that establishes standards and incorporates learning-related indicators and student input into

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school evaluations, is making a concerted effort to increase transparency and accountability throughout the nation's educational institutions.

- Development, performance, and accountability are the three pillars of support for officials and instructors inside the system. This supports increased alignment and clarity in work objectives, periodic performance evaluation methods, and quick feedback systems.

Cons:

- It may seem as if there is an excessive amount of scrutiny on the operation of the school due to the existence of oversight frameworks such as the “School Quality Assessment and Accreditation Framework” (SQAACF), standards established by SSSA, monitoring conducted by the education department, and frequent testing administered by the SSC Board.
- In the policy, it is recommended that public schools should work toward being the most attractive option for parents, but at the same time, the restrictions for establishing private schools should be reduced. This would be done in order to encourage more parents to choose public schools.

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