



An Overview of India's National Education Policy, 2020: Key Features and the Way Forward

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Abstract

As education is the primary source of economic and social advancement, it is generally understood that each nation must have a futuristic and visionary education strategy. Different nations have implemented various education systems at the school and college levels to make them successful while taking into consideration their traditions and cultures. The NEP 2020, which was approved by the Indian Union Cabinet on July 29, 2020, outlines the goals for India's new educational system. The new policy has taken the place of the previous, National Policy on Education, 1986. The strategy gives a systematic framework for education ranging from elementary to higher education in urban and remote regions of India. It also includes career training. By 2022, the policy expects to change the Indian educational system. The New Education Policy 2020 aims to make high-quality education accessible to everyone to transform our nation into a vibrant and equitable knowledge society. It will cause a paradigm shift in India's educational system and change it into one that is equitable, modern, as well as progressive. This chapter focuses on the policy's main suggestions, its notable characteristics, including schooling and higher education, predicted results, its merits, and any issues that need to be resolved.

Introduction

On the suggestion of the Education Commission, the first National Education Policy was developed in 1964-66 and was introduced in 1968. Later on, the second policy was introduced in 1986. The NPE, 1986, which had been in effect for 34 years, has been replaced by NPE, 2020. For the formulation of new education policy, a committee was created by the Ministry of Human Resource Development in June 2017, which was chaired by Dr. K. Kasturirangan and on May 31, 2019, the Committee turned in its report. The new strategy intends to open the door for fundamental changes in the country's schools and higher education institutions in urban as well as rural India. It aimed to "radical restructure" India's educational system and equalise educational opportunities for everyone. It focuses on to promote national integration and greater economic and cultural

growth. It has emphasized on the Indian Constitution's provision for compulsory education for all students up to the age of 14. It also attempted to improve teacher preparation programs and teacher qualifications.

Other important goals of NPE, 2020 includes boosting public investment in education, establishing a National Education Commission (NEC), and putting more emphasis on vocational education, as well as enhancing teacher training, changing the present test system, and providing early childhood care. Its underlying principles are quality, access, accountability, equity, and affordability. This policy, which is in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, seeks to transform India into a prospering knowledge society and a global knowledge superpower by making school and college education more holistic, flexible, multidisciplinary, appropriate for the needs of the twenty-first century and focused on bringing out each student's distinctive abilities [1-3].

I. Key Recommendations of National Education Policy 2020

1. Early Childhood Care & Education

To better prepare children for school, the NEP recommended splitting the early childhood care and education curriculum into two halves. These guidelines should be followed by parents and educators of children over the age of three to eight. In this, NEP, 2020 talks about the expanding and improving the quality of the Anganwadi system and co-locating them with primary schools.

2. The Right to Education Act of 2009 (RTE Act)

The National Education Policy suggested adding the following educational levels under the scope of the Right to Education Act of 2009:

- Early childhood and secondary education
- All kids between the ages of 3 and 18 will be able to get RTE coverage. Additionally, it advocated for the abolition of children detention up to eighth grade.

3. Curriculum Framework

The development requirements of pupils are the basis for reforms in the scope of the existing curriculum of school instruction. The table below explains the NEP's suggested 5-3-3-4 pattern.

The new 5+3+3+4 Academic Structure

- 12th is the 2-year of education after the tenth grade. According to India's new NEP, 10+2 schooling system in India is set to be replaced by a new 5+3+3+4 system.
- On the basis of the NEP 2020, below is a breakdown of the different school education levels by age.

Five years of Foundational Stage:

Age group: 3 - 8

Classes: Pre-school or Anganwadi, classes 1 and 2

Language skill development and play- or activity-based teaching methods will be prioritized at this time.

Three years of Preparatory Stage:

Age group: 8-11

Classes: 3-5

The development of numeracy and language abilities will continue to be the key priorities in the preparation period. Play and activity-based instruction would be adopted in this stage, along with interactions in the classroom and the aspect of discovery.

Three years of Middle-Stage:

Age group: 11-14

Classes: 6-8

This phase of schooling will concentrate on critical learning goals, which is a significant change from the rote learning techniques that have long been utilised in our educational system. Science, mathematics, the arts, the social sciences, and the humanities will all get some hands-on practice at this phase of the process.

Four years of Secondary-Stage:

Age group: 14 - 18

Classes: 9 - 12

This stage will cover two phases: Classes 9 and 10, and classes 11 and 12. Concepts will be covered in greater depth in this stage [1-4].

School Exams

Reforms in the school exam recommended by the NEP include tracking the progress of the students throughout their school experience.

- State Census Examinations for grades 3, 5, and 8 are included.
- The reconstruction of the 10th board exam to primarily concentrate on and assess just the skills, fundamental ideas, and higher-order thinking & capacity was another significant proposal.

4. Higher Educational Institutions [Accreditations & Structure]

The NEP suggested the following modifications to the accreditation and regulation system:

- The establishment of a "National Higher Education Regulatory Authority" (NHERA),
- Creating an independent organization by separating NAAC from UGC.

5. National Mission on Education [Through Communication & IT]

The National Education Policy made the following recommendations to raise the standard of research in India:

- Forming a national research foundation.
- It would be a self-governing organization that will handle the funds, capacity-building, and mentorship for quality research in India.

6. Education Governance

The NEP advocated creating Rashtriya Shiksha Aayog, or the National Education Commission, an apex organization for education with the Prime Minister as its head. Also, suggested to rename Ministry of Human Resources and Development to Ministry of Education.

7. Financing Education

The NEP 2020 set double public investment for education as one of its main goals.

- The NEP 2020 mandated that 6% of GDP be allocated for educational purposes.
- It was proposed that the current ten percent of all public spending be boosted to 20% during the next ten years.

National ICT (Information & Communication Technology) Mission for Education

The National Education Policy recommended creating an independent organization to simplify decision-making regarding the introduction, implementation, and use of technology. To achieve this goal, NEP said the following measures will be taken:

- Formation of National Education Technology Forum.
- Under this mission, the suggested autonomous body would be worked.
- There will also be remote access to virtual labs in several fields.

8. Vocational Courses

Following is a list of NEP 2020 recommendations for courses in the vocational fields:

- All ninth to twelfth-grade students are required to take at least one vocational subject.
- Schools should develop specialized delivery strategies for their curricula that are in line with the competence levels of the NSQF (National Skills Qualifications Framework).
- The provision of integrated vocational courses within undergraduate education programs is mandatory for higher education institutions.

9. Three Language Formula

The Policy suggested that the “three-language formula” be maintained and that it should be implemented with some flexibility. The three-language formula states that state governments should adopt and implement the study of a modern Indian language, preferably one of the southern languages, apart from Hindi and English in the Hindi-speaking states, and of Hindi along with the regional language and English in the non-Hindi speaking states [1,5-6].

II. Major Aspects of School Education and Higher Education in Detail as per NEP, 2020

1. School Education

a) Providing Universal Access at All Educational Levels in Schools

NEP, 2020 prioritizes expanding access to education at all levels. Open education for classes 3rd, 5th, and 8th through the NIOS: “National Institute Open Schooling” and “State Open Schools” (SOS), programs in secondary education (equal to grades 10 & 12) and vocational education, a dropout reintegration program, student progress monitoring, facilitating multiple routes to learning that combine formal and informal learning methods, a collaboration between counsellors or social workers with the appropriate training. As part of NEP 2020, over two crore children who are currently not in school will be brought back into society.

b) New Curricular and Pedagogical Framework in Early Childhood Care & Education (NCPFECCE)

A 5+3+3+4 curricular framework, with a focus on ECCE, will replace the current 12th Structure of school curricula, which follows students from ages 3 to 8 and then from 8 to 11, 11 to 14, and finally from 14 to 18. The previously uncovered age range of 3 to 6 years, which is widely known as the critical period for a child's development of their mental capabilities, will now be included in the school curriculum. In the new system, there will be three years of Anganwadi or preschool and twelve years of formal education.

The NCPFECCE will be established by the “National Council of Educational Research and Training” for children under the age of eight. ECCE will be provided via a vastly improved and expanded system of centres, including Anganwadis and preschools. Teachers, along with the Anganwadi staff, will be educated in ECCE methodology and curriculum. The “Women and Child Development” (WCD), Ministries of HRD, and Tribal Affairs, along with “Health and Family Welfare” (HFW), will collaborate to develop and execute ECCE.

c) Attaining Foundational Literacy and Numeracy

Ministries of HRD will establish the National Mission on “Foundational Literacy” and Numeracy under the NEP 2020, which recognizes Foundational Literacy & Numeracy as a necessary and urgent precondition to learning. States will prepare an implementation plan for attaining universal foundational literacy and numeracy in all primary schools for all learners by grade 3 by 2025. A National Book Promotion Policy is to be formulated.

d) Reforms in school curriculum and pedagogy

By providing students with important 21st-century skills, reducing the amount of information covered in the classroom to concentrate more on critical thinking and vital learning, and emphasizing experiential learning, school curriculum and pedagogy will work to educate students fully. More academic opportunities and flexibility will be available to students. There will not be clear boundaries between academic and vocational streams or between the arts and science.

e) **From 6th grade, schools will provide internships and vocational education.**

NCERT will create a new, comprehensive “National Curriculum Framework for School Education” (NCFSE 2020 to 21).

f) **Language power and multilingualism**

The policy has emphasized mother tongue/local language/regional language as the medium of instruction at least till Grade 5, but preferably till Grade 8 and beyond. Under the three-language paradigm, Sanskrit will be an elective available to students at the secondary and postsecondary levels. There will also be options for other Indian classical languages and literature. No language will be imposed on any student. Students to participate in a fun project/activity on ‘The Languages of India’, sometime in Grades 6-8, such as, under the ‘Ek Bharat Shrestha Bharat’ initiative. Several foreign languages will also be offered at the secondary level. Indian Sign Language (ISL) will be standardized across the country, and National and State curriculum materials developed, for use by students with hearing impairment.

g) **Assessment Reforms**

Higher-order skills including critical thinking, conceptual clarity, and analysis will be tested more often and in a more formative, competency-based, learning and development-promoting manner under NEP 2020. In Grades 3, 5, and 8, all students will take school exams, which will be directed by the appropriate authorities. Both the tenth and twelfth-grade boards will continue, but they will be evaluated with an aim toward developing more well-rounded students. A new national assessment centre called PARAKH (“Performance Assessment, Review, and Analysis of Knowledge” for Holistic Development) would be developed to serve as a standards-setting body.

h) **Equitable and Inclusive Education**

No child should be denied the chance to study and succeed due to their background or circumstances of birth, according to NEP 2020. A special focus would be placed on “Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Groups” (SEDGs), which include those with disabilities and gender, sociocultural, and regional identities. This approach requires a gender inclusion fund and disadvantaged learning zones. With the help of resource centres, cross-disability training, assistive devices, suitable technology-based tools, accommodations, and other support systems personalized to meet their requirements, students with incapacities would be able to entirely take part in the regular educational system from the elementary school level on up. Children from all around the country will have the opportunity to attend “Bal Bhavans,” an innovative kind of daytime boarding school that combines learning with extracurricular pursuits like play and artistic expression. Using the foundation of public schools at no cost might pave the way for the development of “Samajik Chetna Kendras”.

i) **Robust Teacher Recruitment & Career Path**

We'll use transparent, comprehensive processes to hire new educators. Merit-based promotions, multi-source monthly performance reviews, and pathways to positions as educational administrators and teacher educators will all be in place. By 2022, the National Council for Teacher Education would have created a set of uniform "National Professional Standards for Teachers" (NPST) after consulting with educators, SCERTs, NCERT, and professional associations from various regions and levels.

j) **School Governance**

Schools may be organized into clusters or complexes that will act as the primary administrative unit to make sure that all resources, such as academic libraries, infrastructure, and a formidable expert teaching group, are accessible.

k) **Standard-setting and Accreditation for School Education**

Clear, distinct systems are envisioned by NEP 2020 for problems related to operations, regulation, policymaking, and academia. States and UTs are going to establish their own SSSA ("State School Standards Authority"). For wide public monitoring and accountability, transparent public self-disclosure of all the fundamental regulatory information, as prescribed by the State School Standards Authority, will be employed. Through talks with all interested parties, the SCERT will create a "School Quality Assessment and Accreditation Framework" (SQAAF).

2. **Higher Education**

The main objective is to raise GER to 50% by 2035. According to NEP 2020, the GER for higher education - which includes vocational courses- is anticipated to rise from 26.3 percent in 2018 to 50 percent in 2035. The number of seats in higher education institutions will increase by 3.5 billion.

a) **Holistic Multidisciplinary Education**

The policy envisages broad based, multi-disciplinary, holistic Under Graduate education with flexible curricula, creative combinations of subjects, integration of vocational education and multiple entry and exit points with appropriate certification. Depending on the institution, a typical UG program lasts between 3 and 4 years, during which time students have access to many program completion choices and may get the necessary certification. One-year certificates, 2-year advanced degrees, and 3- and 4-year bachelor's degrees with research are all possible outcomes from such programs.

- An ABC (Academic Bank of Credit) would be developed to transfer and calculate academic credits obtained from different Higher Educational Institutes toward the final degree granted.
- The development of interdisciplinary education and research universities (MERUs), equivalent to IITs and IIMs, functions as national examples of the finest multidisciplinary education of the highest standards.
- To promote a robust research culture and increase the research capability of higher education institutions, National Research Foundation would be established.

b) Regulation

The proposed "Higher Education Commission of India" would serve as a unified, all-encompassing apex body for all of India's institutions of higher learning, with the exclusion of the fields of medicine and law (HECI). The "National Higher Education Regulatory Council" (NHERC) will be responsible for regulation, the "Higher Education Grants Council" (HEGC) will provide money, the "General Education Council" (GEC) will define standards, and the "National Accreditation Council" (NAC) will oversee accreditation. The Indian Higher Education Commission would be able to penalize HEIs that do not adhere to standards and regulations via impersonal technological intervention. Universities that are both public and private will be subject to the same regulations, accreditation requirements, as well as academic standards.

c) Rationalized Institutional Architecture

Higher education institutes will evolve into well-resourced, large, strong interdisciplinary organizations offering top-notch instruction, research, & community involvement. The idea of the university will allow for a range of institutes, including independent schools that give degrees on their own, universities that prioritize teaching, and universities that prioritize research.

In fifteen years, college affiliation will be phased down, and a framework will be set up to provide institutions with graded degrees of autonomy. Every college is anticipated to one day either become an independent institution that grants degrees or a part of a university.

d) Motivated, Energized, and Capable Faculty

NEP offers suggestions for energizing, inspiring, as well as increasing faculty capacity via recruiting that is transparent, independent, and clearly defined; independence in curriculum and pedagogy design; rewards for achievement; and advancement into institutional leadership. Faculty who fails to uphold fundamental standards will face consequences

e) Teacher Education

Together, the "National Council for Teacher Education" (NCTE) and the "National Council for Education Research and Training" (NCERT) will form a new and thorough national curricular structure for teacher education in 2021 (NCFTE 2021). By 2030, candidates for teaching jobs must have a four-year integrated Bachelor of Education. Stand-alone teacher education institutes may face repercussions (TEIs).

f) Mentoring Mission

As part of a National Mission for Mentoring, a substantial group of distinguished senior or retired academics who are willing to mentor university or college faculty members on both short and long-time scales and give professional assistance will be established. This faculty will include individuals who can teach in Indian languages.

g) Financial support for students

The academic performance of OBC, ST, SC and other SEDG students would be improved. The National Scholarship Portal will be enhanced to better provide assistance to scholarship recipients, promote their achievements, and monitor their development. More funding will be allocated to private universities so that they may provide student benefits such as scholarships and free ships.

h) Open and Distance Learning

This is planned to contribute significantly to a rise in GER. The provision of online courses and digital repositories, the enhancement of student services, the recognition of MOOCs for academic credit, funding for research, etc., will all be implemented to bring the quality of the program up to level with the finest on-campus options.

i) Online Education and Digital Education:

In response to the current increase in diseases and pandemics, we have addressed a thorough set of guidelines to promote online education to assure preparation with alternative forms of high-quality education wherever and whenever conventional and in-person methods of education are problematic. The "Ministry of Human Resource Development" plans to establish a specialized organization to oversee the creation of digital material, capacity building, and digital infrastructure to meet the demands of secondary and tertiary e-education.

j) Technology in education

The neutral "National Educational Technology Forum" (NETF) will offer a free exchange of concepts on how technology may enhance lesson preparation, evaluation, and management. To enhance classroom operations, promote teacher professional development, provide access to education for vulnerable groups, and improve educational planning, management, and administration, technology will be successfully utilized at all levels of education.

k) Promotion of Indian languages

The National Education Policy (NEP) proposes several measures to ensure the long-term health of all Indian languages, including the establishment of an "Indian Institute of Translation and Interpretation" (IITI), the formation of a National Institute for Prakrit, Pali, and Persian, the fortification of Sanskrit and all language departments in HEIs, and the increased use of regional language or native language as a medium in more HEI programs.

Institutional collaborations, professor and student mobility, and allowing top institutions from across the world to open campuses in our country will all help the internationalization of education.

l) Professional Education

The system of higher education will include all types of professional education. Stand-alone technical universities, medical schools, law schools, and agricultural universities, among others, will strive to develop into multidisciplinary institutions.

m) Adult Education

The goal of the policy is to attain 100 % adult and youth literacy.

n) Financing Education

Governments at both the federal and state levels are planning to raise funding for public schools such that it represents 6 percent of GDP at the earliest [1,5,7].

III. Expected Outcomes of NEP 2020

- By 2030, SDG 4-aligned universalization from ECCE to secondary education.
- By 2025, the National Mission will have achieved the goal of foundational learning and numeracy.
- By 2030, Pre-School to Secondary Level Education will have 100% GER.
- Bring Back 2 crore Out-of-School Students in to schools
- By 2030, a system of inclusive and equitable education
- By 2023, teachers will be ready for assessment changes.
- Each child will leave school having mastered at least one skill.
- Common Standards of Learning in Public & Private Schools Merits of New Education Policy 2020.
- Board Exams to test core concepts and application of knowledge [1].

IV. National Education Policy 2020 Merits

- **Comprehensive:** - Scope of the National Educational Policy is intended to extend from pre-kindergarten to doctoral studies, as well as to professional and vocational education.
- **Early Childhood Education:** - The New Instruction Policy adopts a 5+3+3+4 paradigm for school instruction starting at age of three, emphasizing the significance of the developmental years from ages three to eight in influencing the future of a child.
- **Easy on Regulations:** -The strong recommendation of NEP 2020 is to remove recurring "inspections" from our schools, colleges, and institutions in favour of self-evaluation and voluntary disclosure.
- **Holistic:** - The policy, inter alia, aims to eliminate problems of pedagogy, structural inequities, access asymmetries and rampant commercialization.
- **Promote Inclusion:** - The Policy suggests establishing "inclusion funds" to aid youngsters who are socially and academically disadvantaged in continuing their education.

V. National Education Policy 2020 Concerns

- The requirement of learning in a non-competitive, non-hierarchical atmosphere is not discussed, nor is the flexibility to follow one's actual passion, the value of creativity and critical thinking, or the importance of either.
- Despite the attention paid to early childhood care and education, implementing the planned modifications connected to Anganwadis may be challenging.
- Volunteering as a teacher, peer tutoring, streamlining the educational system, and pooling resources don't seem like long-term solutions.
- Government initiatives surrounding the Public Sector, such as Kendra Vidyalaya, municipal schools, state-run institutions, etc., are not well defined.
- The creation of a National Testing Agency (NTA) has generated scepticism. The NTA, though envisaged to serve as a premier, expert, autonomous testing organisation to conduct entrance examinations for admissions and fellowships in higher educational institutions may, in reality, lead to loss of autonomy among the universities and departments over admissions.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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