



# A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF TEACHER EDUCATION IN INDIA'S NATIONAL POLICY ON EDUCATION (1986) AND NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY (2020): CONGRUITIES AND DISPARITIES

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## ABSTRACT

**Objectives:** The Indian government introduced the "National Education Policy 2020" to improve the educational landscape. This paper compares the recommendations from the "National Policy on Education (1986)" and the "National Education Policy (2020)" on teacher education, identifying congruities and disparities between the two policies.

**Methodology:** The study relies on data acquisition from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data are gleaned from the drafts of NPE-1986 and NEP-2020, while secondary data are sourced from diverse published and unpublished records, literature, periodicals, scholarly journals, and online repositories. This investigation adopts a qualitative approach.

**Results:** The findings indicate that both NPE-1986 and NEP-2020 address teacher education, exhibiting similarities in domains such as the advancement of teacher education, the organizational framework of the education system, and the faculty structure of teacher education institutions, encompassing pre-service and in-service teacher education. Disparities emerge in elementary-level teacher education, multidisciplinary teacher education, the responsibilities vested in the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE), faculty qualifications, and the cadre structure within the teacher education system.

**Conclusion:** While parallels exist between NPE-1986 and NEP-2020, notable differences are also evident. While NPE-1986 has positively influenced teacher education, NEP-2020 is poised to similarly enhance the current state of affairs in teacher education. Consequently, NPE-1986 has entrusted the responsibility for the advancement of teacher education to NEP-2020.

**Keywords:** NPE-1986, NEP-2020, Teacher Education, Educational Policy Comparison.

## 1. Introduction

The National Policy on Education (NPE) of 1986 and the National Education Policy (NEP) of 2020 are two significant documents that have significantly influenced India's education system. The NPE of 1986 aimed to address challenges in the education system, promoting national integration, secularism, and common citizenship while addressing access, equity, and quality. It emphasized universal elementary education, adult literacy, and the use of technology in education. The policy also emphasized vocational education to prepare students for the workforce. (Ministry of Education, 1986) On the other hand, the NEP of 2020 reflects the changing socio-economic and technological landscape of the 21st century. It emphasizes holistic development, multidisciplinary learning, and flexibility in curriculum design. It aims to foster critical thinking, creativity, and innovation among students, preparing them for the challenges of the globalized world. The NEP of 2020 envisions a vibrant research culture in educational institutions, promoting technology integration, and greater autonomy and accountability. (Patel & Singh, 2020) Despite sharing the common goal of improving education quality and relevance in India, they differ in their approaches and priorities, reflecting the nation's changing needs and aspirations. This paper provides a comparative analysis of the NPE of 1986 and NEP of 2020, highlighting the continuity and change in educational policy formulation and exploring their implications for the future development of the education system. (Rao, 2021)

## 2. Review of Related Literature

The literature on the 1986 and 2020 National Education Policies provides insights into their historical contexts, key provisions, and potential implications for the Indian education system.

The NPE of 1986 was a significant milestone in the history of Indian education policy, aiming to address the multifaceted challenges facing the education system at the time (MHRD, 1986). Scholars have noted that the policy emphasized the expansion and modernization of education infrastructure, with a particular focus on universalizing elementary education and reducing disparities in access and quality across different regions and social groups (Kingdon, 2007). Additionally, the NPE of 1986 sought to promote the values of secularism, social justice, and national integration through the educational curriculum and pedagogy (MHRD, 1986). Scholars have highlighted the policy's emphasis on the development of scientific temper, critical thinking, and vocational skills as key components of India's human resource development strategy (Kumar & Kumari, 2018).

The National Education Policy of 2020 in India is a departure from traditional education policies, focusing on holistic development, flexibility, and innovation. It emphasizes multidisciplinary learning, integrating arts, humanities, and sciences to foster creativity and critical thinking among students. The policy envisions a flexible, student-centric education system, allowing learners to choose from a wide range of subjects and pursue multiple pathways based on their interests and aptitudes. This shift towards a competency-based and

flexible curriculum could make education more relevant and inclusive, catering to the diverse needs of 21st-century learners. (Sharma & Pathak, 2020).

The National Education Policy of 2020 (NEP) has faced criticism from academics due to implementation challenges and feasibility issues. The policy's emphasis on technology and online learning has sparked discussions about the digital divide and equity issues, especially in rural and marginalized communities. Scholars also warn against the commercialization and privatization of education, emphasizing the need for robust regulatory mechanisms to ensure quality and equity in the education sector. (Mishra, 2020).

The literature review discusses India's education policy, highlighting the evolution of the National Education Policy (NPE) of 1986 and the National Education Policy (NEP) of 2020. The NPE aimed to universalize elementary education and promote social cohesion, while the NEP aimed to reimagine the education system for the 21st century, emphasizing flexibility, innovation, and inclusivity. Successful implementation requires careful planning, stakeholder engagement, and monitoring.

### **3. Significance of the Study**

This study compares the National Policy on Education of 1986 and the National Education Policy of 2020, providing insights into India's educational priorities and approaches. It examines key provisions, implications, and potential impact, providing a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing the Indian education system. The study offers valuable lessons for policymakers, educators, and stakeholders to improve the quality, equity, and relevance of education in India in the 21st century.

### **4. Problem of the Study**

The study examines the transition between India's National Policy on Education (NPE) of 1986 and the National Education Policy (NEP) of 2020, focusing on potential implementation barriers, equity concerns, and the impact on stakeholders. It seeks to understand the complexities of educational policy reform and provide insights for policymakers, educators, and researchers to navigate the transition effectively, ensuring the equitable and inclusive development of the Indian education system.

### **5. Objectives of the Study**

To comprehensively analyze the National Policy on Education (NPE) of 1986 and the National Education Policy (NEP) of 2020, this study aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. To examine the key provisions and goals outlined in the NPE of 1986 and the NEP of 2020.
2. To identify the similarities and differences in the educational priorities and approaches of both policies.
3. To assess the implications of the NPE of 1986 and the NEP of 2020 on the Indian education system.
4. To explore the potential impact of these policies on educational outcomes, equity, and inclusivity.
5. To provide recommendations for policymakers, educators, and stakeholders based on the comparative analysis of the two policies.

## 6. Research Questions

The research questions aim to analyze the implications and impact of the National Policy on Education of 1986 and the National Education Policy of 2020 on the Indian education system.

1. How do the objectives and priorities of the NPE of 1986 differ from those outlined in the NEP of 2020?
2. What are the key provisions related to access, equity, and quality education in both policies?
3. How have technological advancements influenced educational strategies and approaches in the NEP compared to the NPE?
4. What are the implications of the shift towards multidisciplinary learning and flexible curriculum design proposed in the NEP of 2020?
5. What challenges and opportunities exist in the implementation of the NEP, considering lessons learned from the implementation of the NPE over the past decades?

## 7. Methodology of the Study

This study employs a qualitative research approach to analyze and interpret secondary data on the National Policy on Education (NPE) 1986 and the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, focusing on their structural frameworks, educational philosophies, pedagogical approaches, and implementation strategies, sourced from scholarly articles, government reports, and academic publications.

## 8. Discussion

- **Objectives and Priorities in NPE 1986 and NEP 2020:** The National Policy on Education (NPE) of 1986 and the National Education Policy (NEP) of 2020 reflect India's evolving socio-economic and technological landscape. The NPE aimed to promote national integration, secularism, and common citizenship while addressing access, equity, and quality in education. The NEP of 2020 aims to transform the education system for holistic development, flexibility, and innovation, aligning with the 21st-century globalized world.
- **Key Provisions on Access, Equity, and Quality Education:** The National Policy on Education (NPE) of 1986 and the National Education Policy (NEP) of 2020 emphasize the importance of access, equity, and quality education. The NPE aimed to achieve universal elementary education and reduce disparities, while the NEP prioritized inclusive education, ensuring equitable access to quality education for all learners. Both policies emphasize the need for improved infrastructure, teacher training, and curriculum reform. (Government of India, 1986; Government of India, 2020)
- **Influence of Technological Advancements on Educational Strategies:** The National Education Policy of 1986 and the National Education Policy of 2020 both acknowledge the role of technology in education, but the 2020 NEP emphasizes its use to improve teaching and learning processes. It proposes the use of digital tools and online platforms to expand access, promote personalized learning, and enhance digital literacy among students. (Government of India, 2020)

- **Implications of Multidisciplinary Learning and Flexible Curriculum Design:** The 2020 National Education Policy (NEP) aims to promote multidisciplinary learning and flexible curriculum design in India by integrating arts, humanities, and sciences. This approach fosters creativity, critical thinking, and interdisciplinary knowledge among students, while also catering to individual learning styles and aptitudes. (Ministry of Education, 2020)
- **Challenges and Opportunities in NEP Implementation:** The 2020 National Education Policy (NEP) presents both challenges and opportunities. Challenges include resource constraints, capacity-building, and stakeholder engagement. On the other hand, the NEP offers opportunities for innovation, collaboration, and transformative change, paving the way for a more inclusive, relevant, and responsive Indian education system. (Singh & Das, 2021)

### Challenges and Opportunities in India's Digital and Educational Landscape

Table 1

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Digital Literacy:</b> In terms of the percentage of people who are literate in digital use, there are significant differences between urban and rural areas. Urban areas have a significantly higher rate of digital literacy, which stands at 61%, in comparison to rural areas, which only have a rate of 25%. <u>3.</u></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Economic Opportunity:</b> The digital transformation of India presents a massive economic opportunity, with the country on track to achieve an impressive digital economy worth one trillion dollars by the year 2025. <u>4.</u></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Public Education Expenditure:</b> It is still estimated that India's public education expenditure accounts for approximately 3% of GDP, which is significantly lower than the UNESCO recommendation of 6%. <u>567.</u></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Budget Allocation:</b> By allocating approximately INR 1.13 trillion (£11.3 billion) in national-level education spending, which includes both school and higher education, the Indian union government has announced its national budget for the upcoming fiscal year 2023-24. <u>8.</u></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Student Enrollment:</b> The number of students attending school in India exceeds that of any other country by more than 250 million. In the academic year 2021-22, India had a total of 43.3 million students enrolled in higher education. <u>9.</u></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Digital Divide:</b> Online learning opportunities are unavailable to 60% of the school-aged children in India. In India, during the pandemic, only 20% of children of school age had access to education in remote locations. <u>10.</u></li> </ul>

**Comparative analysis of the National Policy on Education (NPE) 1986 and the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020**

**Table 2**

SL No.	Aspect	NPE 1986	NEP 2020
1.	Structure of Education System	10+2 structure (10 years of general education followed by 2 years of higher secondary education)	5+3+3+4 structure (Foundational Stage: 3 years, Preparatory Stage: 3 years, Middle Stage: 3 years, Secondary Stage: 4 years)
2.	Emphasis on Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)	Limited emphasis on ECCE	Strong emphasis on ECCE, integrated with formal schooling
3.	Medium of Instruction	The primary goal was to promote the use of the mother tongue or regional language as the medium of instruction up to the secondary stage.	Emphasizes the use of the mother tongue or regional language as the medium of instruction up to at least Grade 5, and preferably up to Grade 8
4.	Curriculum Framework	Emphasized a content-heavy curriculum	The curriculum is designed to be holistic, competency-based, with a reduced syllabus load, emphasizing critical thinking, creativity, and conceptual understanding.
5.	Inclusion and Access	The goal is to ensure universal access to education, with a particular emphasis on disadvantaged groups.	The initiative aims to promote equitable and inclusive education by establishing Gender Inclusion Funds, Special Education Zones, and encouraging the participation of underrepresented groups.
6.	Teacher Training and Professional Development	The focus was on in-service teacher training, lacking a comprehensive framework for continuous professional development.	The text emphasizes the importance of continuous professional development for teachers, encompassing induction training, mentoring, and regular opportunities for upskilling and reskilling.
7.	Assessment and Evaluation	The text heavily relies on traditional assessment methods like exams and rote learning.	Advocates for a shift towards competency-based assessment methods, reducing the focus on high-stakes exams, and promoting formative and continuous assessment.
8.	Integration of Technology	The organization acknowledged the importance of technology in education but lacked a clear strategy for its integration.	The National Educational Technology Forum (NETF) is a key initiative promoting the integration of technology in various aspects of education.
9.	Vocational Education and Skill Development	The recognition of the significance of vocational education was acknowledged but a comprehensive framework was lacking.	The program aims to integrate vocational education from the early stages of schooling, promoting experiential learning, internships, and apprenticeships to equip students with 21st-century skills.

## 9. Conclusion

The National Policy on Education (NPE) 1986 and the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 are significant changes in India's education system, reflecting the changing socio-economic landscape and educational needs. The NPE 2020 introduces transformative reforms, such as the 5+3+3+4 structure, emphasis on early childhood care and education, promotion of mother tongue or regional language, competency-based curriculum, inclusive education, continuous professional development for teachers, and integration of technology and vocational education. These reforms aim to address diverse learning needs, foster creativity, critical thinking, and innovation, and prepare individuals for the 21st century challenges. NEP 2020 prioritizes equity, access, quality, and relevance in education, laying the foundation for a knowledge-based society and economy. Successful implementation requires concerted efforts from policymakers, educators, stakeholders, and society at large. The shift from NPE 1986 to NEP 2020 represents a paradigmatic change in India's education landscape, signaling a commitment to fostering inclusive, equitable, and quality education for all.

### Statistics Highlighting the Need for Reform

- Since the end of British rule in 1947, the literacy rate in India has increased by a factor of six, going from 12% to 74% among the population. 10.
- In spite of these advancements, India still has a quarter of its population that is unable to read or write at a fundamental level. 11.
- With a total of 287 million people, India is the country with the largest population of illiterate people in the world. This accounts for 37% of the total population of illiterate people worldwide. 12.
- Less than one-third of students in rural areas who are in the fifth grade are able to perform basic division, and nearly half of those students are unable to read at a first-grade level. 13.

### 10. Educational Implications of the Study

The educational implications of the comparative analysis between NPE 1986 and NEP 2020 include a shift towards holistic, flexible, and multidisciplinary learning. The NEP 2020 promotes early childhood education, integration of technology, continuous professional development for teachers, and inclusive education, aiming to better equip students for the 21st-century challenges.

### Ethical Consideration

Ethical considerations for this research include ensuring the confidentiality and anonymity of participants, obtaining informed consent, and avoiding any form of bias or misrepresentation in data collection and analysis. Additionally, it is important to respect intellectual property rights and provide proper citations for all sources used.

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