



Significance of National Education Policy-2020 on education system in India: A study

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Abstract

The National Education Policy (NEP) in India addresses the challenges of education system in the areas of quality, affordability, equity, access and accountability in the present globalized world. The policy minimizes the evil effects of capitalization and privatization to make it equitable and vibrant of high-quality education for the wellbeing and prosperity of Indian society at large. An attempt has been made to figure out the shortcomings of the previously adopted NEPs that lead to the emergence of the current policy to restore education system and lay down road map for new India to be more competitive with the global counterparts. It is found that one of the main objectives of this policy is to increase the enrollment of students in all the educational institutions such as elementary school, professional studies and higher education by the year 2030. The study suggests that government needs a progressive reform in the education policy, i.e., NEP-2020 and its governance system to play the leadership and significant roles at global arena. The article also recommends that vocational training need to be integrated with the regular degree courses to enhance the competency and quality of students to be more effective for the present competitive employment markets around the world. The study concludes that the universities and higher educational institutions will have to be free from political influences and should be academically, administratively and financially autonomous for their better and reliable performances in the present era of privatization, digitization and globalization prevailing throughout the globe.

Keywords: NEP-2020, development of education, opportunities and challenges and science and technology

Introduction

The two 'E's viz., economy and education, hold the key for the development and growth of any economy, irrespective of their nature, in the world. The NEP-2020 was approved by the Union Cabinet of India on 29 July, 2020. The Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) formed a committee headed by former ISRO Chairman Dr. K. Kasturirangan, who outlined the vision of New NEP-2020 in India. Education is the basic need to explore and refine the human potential for all round development of individual and country as well. After the implementation of the policy, the Indian education system consisting of three levels beginning from Primary followed by Secondary at school level and then Higher Education which includes three/four years of graduation, one year of Post-graduation and four/five years of Doctoral studies respectively. Times to time upgraded education policies are framed to fulfill the requirements of present and future needs to become competitive with others in the globe. India has, so far, three NEPs, viz., 1968, 1986 and 2020 respectively. The world is growing with a faster pace due to rapid development of science and technology induces changes in the lifestyle and social processes to bring more challenges along with opportunities in day to day lives of human resources of an economy. In the 21st century, the new education policy proposes to introduce numerous strategies in the education system in the areas of research, innovation, infrastructure, multidisciplinary approach, etc., to enhance the development of science and technology for facing the upcoming global challenges. The policy envisions India to

become a global knowledge powerhouse in the upcoming few decades on giving a special thrust to maintain academic leadership and enhance employability that transform the nation as one of the leading countries in the development of science and technology at global level.

Literature Review

The study has the following literature reviews

Kanungo (2024) critically examined the India's NEP-2020 in analyzing its potential to achieve the UN sustainable development goal of quality education. It highlights the historical context of India's education system, outlines challenges of access, equity and theme learning. The paper analyzes the potential policies that transform education system and contribute to achieve for sustainable and equitable future in India.

Shagaonkar (2021) ^[3] highlighted the implementation of NEP-2020 in higher education; some strategies have suggested on creating academic leadership and enhancing employability of the University graduates through vocational training. He opined that the universities and educational institutions will have to be free from political influences and should be academically, administratively and financially autonomous.

Sharma (2023) ^[4] studied the new NEP policy-lab to land vision for science and technology in exploring the role of science education in the development of learning skills of human resources in 21st Century which has been recommended with the intent to prepare the learners to face the demanding situations. She argued that if the

recommendations be implemented properly then it leads India to be more competitive in science and technology in global level.

Kumar (2021) [6] depicted the NEP-2020: A roadmap for India 2.0 vision towards overall transformation of education system to meet challenges of 21st century. He concludes that the policy is largely a very progressive document and if implemented properly then it has got everything to make India global hub in education by 2030.

Shubada and Niranah (2021) made an attempt to make a comparative analysis of NEP-2020 and NEP-1986 to achieve the target goal by 2035. As NEP-2020 is one of the most promising policies which have been introduced and the question relies on to what extent the objectives of the policy will be achieved in the years to come.

Sarkar (2020) [14] made an attempt to study the impact of covid-19 on education sector in India. The study designed to understand the central and state government’s initiatives that have been taken and have to be taken to boost the online learning system in the years to come.

Objectives of the Study

The NEP-2020 has many initiatives to improve the quality of education system in India. The prime objectives of this study are as under

1. To highlight the overview of the NEPs in pre and post independence of India.
2. To pinpoint the merits and shortcomings of NEP-2020 in the present era of globalization and privatization prevailing throughout the globe.
3. To compare the current policy with the previously adopted education policies in India to induce students to be more competitive with the global counterparts.
4. To suggest appropriate policies and valuable opinions that should be implemented by the government to become more effective in the international arena.

Data Base and Methodology of the Study

The study is based on secondary sources of information available time to time in various reputed journals, books, newspapers, conference proceedings, social media, e-contains and government reports, etc. Internet surfing has also been done for collecting information regarding NEPs and their salient features, merits and challenges, main thrusts of NEP-2020 for the development and prosperity of Indian society, etc.

NEPs in India: An Overview

NEP (1968)

In India, the social work education was commenced in the year 1936, with the establishment of Tata Institute of Social Sciences. In the post-independence reforms, education was given prominence. In the year 1968, first education policy was announced. This was “Radical Restructuring” and aimed at equal education opportunities in order to achieve complete education with national integration. This policy aimed at promoting the significance of education among the Indians at primary and secondary levels in giving priorities to establish schools in both rural and urban areas simultaneously.

NEP (1986)

The NEP-1986 aimed in promoting minority education, education for women, education of SC, ST and backward sections and priority was given on equal education opportunities in every sections of the society. The NEP-1986 had given highest priority in solving the problems of school dropouts and adopted an array of meticulously formulated strategies based on micro planning and applied at the grass root levels of the country. Based on the literature review, NEP-1968 emphasizes on equal education to all and the NEP-1986 prioritizes to women and minority education to combat the reduction of dropouts from the schools.

NEP-1992 (modification)

This was the modified version of the NEP-1986 which was led and amended by the government of P.V. Narasimha Rao and his associates. The targets of this policy were of universal enrolment and retention of kids, reducing rural-urban disparities and common entrance examination for admission to technical and professional courses across the country.

NEP (2020)

The NEP-2020 is a comprehensive education policy introduced by the Government of India to transform the education system in providing access for all, promoting diversity, equity, inclusion, and shifting (10+2) to (5+3+3+4) systems to be more effective and quite competitive with the global counterparts in the after the late of third decades of 21st century.

Table 1: highlights the comparative analysis of education systems in India

Education System	NEP 1986 (10+2 System)	NEP 2020 (5+3+3+4 System)
Structure	Existing academic structure	New academic structure
Stages	2 Stages	4 Stages
Age period	(6-18) year	(3-18) year
Time period	12 yrs. in School	15 yrs. (12 School yrs + 3 Pre-School yrs)
Stage wise	1. First stage - age 6-16 yrs (Class 1-10) 2. Second stage - age 16-18 yrs (Class 11-12)	1. Foundational stage -3 yrs (Pre School) (Age 3-6) + 2 yrs (Class 1 to 2) (Age 6-8) = 5 yrs. 2. Preparatory stage - 3 yrs. (Class 3 to 5) (Age 8-11) 3. Middle stage - 3 yrs. (Class 6 to 8) (Age 11-14) Secondary stage - 4 yrs. (Class 9 to 12) (Age 14-18)

Source: Collected from frequent search of e-contents regarding NEP, India.

The NEP-2020 brings the following key changes in the education system of India as under

1. Moving towards multidisciplinary universities and colleges, with higher educational institutions (HEIs) across India that offer medium of instruction in local/Indian languages.
2. Moving towards a more multidisciplinary undergraduate education system.
3. Moving towards faculty and institutional autonomy rather than the direct control and regulation of government or government agencies, viz. UGC, ICAI, IMA, etc.
4. Revamping curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and student support.
5. Reaffirming the integrity of faculty and institutional leadership positions.
6. Motivating towards the establishment of a National Research Foundation.
7. Governance of HEIs by independent boards having academic and administrative autonomy.
8. "Light but tight" regulation by a single regulator for higher education.
9. Increasing access, equity, inclusion and accountability in HEIs.

Table 2: depicts the major features of NEP-2020 in India

Major Features	Key Notes
Universalization of education	NEP-2020 wholeheartedly lays the definite vision of universality in education. The policy ambitiously aims to achieve a Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) of 100% in school education by 2030. This Nobel goal seeks to ensure that no child is left behind, firmly establishing education as an undeniable right for every Indian child.
Reviving to cut the rate of dropouts	This initiative give emphasis to the policy's inclusivity and determination to rectify the existing gaps in the educational fabric of the country in ensuring that every child gets a fair chance to learn and grow irrespective of their family background and income.
Curricular paradigm shift: the 5+3+3+4 framework	The policy undergoes a revolutionary change in the school curriculum structure with the introduction of the (5+3+3+4) framework. This transformation replaces the traditional (10+2) structure, aligning education more closely with developmental stages. The new structure spans ages (3-18), encompassing the foundational stage, preparatory stage, middle stage, and secondary stage.
Foundational literacy and numeracy	Recognizing the pivotal role of foundational literacy and numeracy, the policy establishes a National Mission on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy. This focus aims to equip learners with essential skills that serve as building blocks for all future learning endeavors.
Integration of streams	It advocates a paradigm shift in education by promoting a holistic approach that dissolves rigid boundaries between academic, extracurricular and vocational streams. This integration is designed to foster well-rounded learners capable of critical thinking, creativity and adaptability.
Language as a medium	The policy places language at the forefront of education, emphasizing the use of mother tongue or regional language as the medium of instruction to facilitate effective learning and celebrate the rich linguistic diversity of India.
Higher education	In the realm of higher education, NEP-2020 envisions an ambitious goal of increasing the gross enrollment ratio to 50% by 2035. This target is coupled with the addition of 3.5 crores new seats in higher education institutions ensuring greater access to quality education.
Digital transformation	It recognizes the potential of technology to revolutionize the education. The policy leads to the expansion of online education, making quality education accessible to all irrespective of geographical, economical and other constraints.
Focus on research	A research and development department of an organization will have to be founded for enhancing quality of research in modern education to cope with the global standards. This will encourage new ideas and ways to make education better and globally competitive.
Reimagining vocational education	The system targets that the vocational education will have to be integrated in school as well as in higher education institutions; at least 50% of learners shall have the exposure to vocational education in India.

Source: Collected from frequent search of e-contents regarding NEP, India.

Table 3: Opportunities and Challenges of NEP-2020 in India

Points of opportunities	Key notes
Global recognition	It aligns education with international standards to boost global competitiveness.
Comprehensive vision	It addresses education from pre-school to doctoral studies and encompasses professional degrees to vocational training in addition to normal studies.
Early childhood emphasis	It adopts (5+3+3+4) model, recognizing the critical role of ages 3 to 8 in shaping a child's future.
Emphasis on research	It encourages a research-oriented approach to stimulate innovation and critical thinking to turn India as potential research-hub in coming years.
Reduce regulations	The system boldly prescribes freeing of educational institutions from periodic inspections and complex regulations that encourage self-assessment and voluntary declaration.
Holistic approach	It aims to address pedagogical issues, structural inequities, access of disparities with the problems of privatization and commercialization in the economy.
Inclusive measures	It proposes to establish of 'inclusion funds' to support socially and educationally backward children in pursuing education.
Points of challenges	Key notes
Enforcement of languages	It emphasizes the introduction of first language within the primary classes which will not allow teaching the principal subjects, while English are going to be taught at a way later stage.
Delay in teaching of English	The policy suggests that the government schools will start teaching English after class 5, which goes to be a setback for the scholars who can only afford to travel to government-run institutes, while the private schools will stick with the practice of introducing English language right from the start.

Focus on digital learning	The main focus of this policy is on digitization of education and therefore the promotion of e-learning seems to overlook the very fact that nearly 30-40 % of Indians can afford smart-phones and fewer still have access to computer and other learning accessories.
The updated terms of education program	Since a student can exit from the graduate program and still get a certificate or diploma degree, this will cause the scholars to quit without completing their education, may resulting in their non-seriousness and a high drop-out ratio.

Source: Collected from frequent search of e-contents regarding NEP, India

NEP in the other states who don't follow the system properly

The West Bengal government has announced its own State Education Policy for 2023, declining some of the aspects of the NEP-2020. Many states such as Kerala, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, etc., have also declined to adopt this education policy in its entirety.

Key Highlights of the West Bengal Education Policy

Continuation of (5+4+2+2) Pattern

The state will maintain the existing (5+4+2+2) pattern for school education. This structure begins with one year of pre-primary education, followed by four years of primary education (up to class 4), four years of upper primary education (class V to VIII), two years of secondary education and finally, two years of higher secondary education. The NEP suggests transitioning to a (5+3+3+4) school system, where Class 9-12 is considered a continuum offering students subject choices, is declined by the state government.

Three-Language Formula

The policy recommends the introduction of a three-language formula for students in classes V to VIII. The first language, referred to as the "mother tongue," will be the medium of instruction. For example, in Nepali-medium schools, 'Nepali' will be the medium of instruction, 'Santhali' in Santhali-medium school, and similarly for other languages and mediums. The second language can be English or any language other than the first language, depending on the student's choice.

The third language can be any language chosen by the student, different from the first and second languages.

Introduction of 'Bangla' as a Subject

'Bangla' will be introduced as a subject from Class I to Class XII for students in schools with languages other than 'Bangla' as the medium of instruction. However, it is not recommended as a first language.

Semester System at Higher Secondary Level

In higher secondary education (Class XI and XII), it has introduced a semester system to facilitate a smoother transition from school to university. Semester examinations may include a combination of multiple-choice questions (MCQs) and descriptive questions.

Why has West Bengal state developed its own Education Policy instead of implementing NEP-2020?

Autonomy and Regional Needs

One of the primary reasons is the desire for autonomy in shaping the education system according to the unique needs and priorities of West Bengal. Education is a Concurrent Subject in India, which means both the central and state

governments can legislate on it. States often seek to customize educational policies to align with their cultural, linguistic and socio-economic contexts.

Rural Disadvantage

The proposal for a common entrance test for undergraduate courses, as suggested by NEP-2020, raised worries in the state. The state government fears this could put rural students at a disadvantage and prefers a decentralized admission approach to ensure fairness for all.

Historical and Cultural Factors

The state has a rich cultural and linguistic diversity, with 'Bengali' being the predominant language. The state has felt that it is important to preserve and promote the "Bengali" language and culture through its education policy. This could lead to variations from the NEP, which seeks to implement a uniform policy across the country. Another point of contention is the NEP's encouragement of private-sector participation in education. The state remains cautious about this, advocating for a stronger role of the public sector to ensure equal and accessible education opportunities.

Consideration of Alternatives

The state government has indicated its intention to analyze educational initiatives in states like Maharashtra and Kerala to propose an alternative approach. This signals a willingness to explore different models and adapt best practices from other states.

Concluding Remarks

Successful implementation of the current education policy requires addressing of significant resource constraints and contemporary evils of the economy, as India suffering from employment, poverty, uneven income and wealth distribution, lack of education in every sphere of the society, low per capita income, inadequate foreign direct investment (FDI), lower earnings of foreign currencies, etc. Innovative financing mechanisms beyond the traditional government allocations of funds are crucial in enhancing the quality of the students to appear and shine in the competitive examination globally. Public-private partnerships and exploring alternative financing models, viz., social impact bonds, loan from international agencies, etc., hold promise in proper implementation of the current education policy in such a vast developing country like India having the largest population in the world. Additionally, more versatile assessment systems that go beyond rote memorization and diverse learning are essential for appropriate holistic evaluation of students' progression to foster a culture of innovation and research to keep pace with the rapid advancements in science and technology in the third decades of 21st century in the world. The research collaborations among government universities and

educational institutions with the private educational institutions should be encouraged to ensure that India's education system remains relevant and competitive with the evolving and changing needs of the technologically advanced world. Implementation of NEP-2020 with the stated soul and intensity can be the foundation stone for the overall development and prosperity of the country and its citizens to help in acquiring the skills and mindset that in turn will help them to adapt different situations may arise to become competitive with the global counterparts. As the HEIs will come under the ambit of one regulator, there will be the opportunities for foreign educational institutions to start and continue their campuses in India, which may pave the path towards the privatization of educational institutions that may affect mainly to financially weaker meritorious students, having lower per capita income, mostly as sometimes they may not be able to take their education from private institutes having higher course fees. Those weaker students should have to be given educational loans to continue their education in private institutions also; government should ensure that the Constitutional Right "education to all" must be obeyed. It will give big thrust to skilling in India as it provides multiple entry and exit option to student' and to pursue their higher education even after taking break from employment. It won't be wrong to conclude that NEP-2020 will lay a concrete roadmap, if it implements properly and follows the valuable suggestions to make India a global hub in education in the forthcoming year 2030.

Recommendations

1. Equal access to technology and technology enabled devices should be provided to all the students irrespective of their cast, category, income and social status, etc., that may shrink the gap among students' with and without technological resources and opportunities.
2. Educational institutions can introduce quality and standard vocational training programs to all the students from school level to higher education.
3. For the successful implementation of the policy, government should ensure adequate infrastructure facilities in all educational institutions in India.
4. Economically and socially disabled students' have to be given adequate social and financial support to motivate them for higher education.
5. Comprehensive training programs for all the teachers of public and private levels (primary, upper-primary, high school and higher education) need to be implemented to align with the new educational approach. Specially, school teachers should have proper and recognize career advancement scheme (CAS) like the higher education teachers in the country.
6. Government should eradicate the disparities of distribution of resources between rural and urban educational institutions tactfully. The priority of education should be given on mother tongue.
7. No hard separations can be made among arts, commerce and sciences; curricular and extra-curricular activities and vocational and academic streams, etc., in order to eliminate harmful hierarchies among different areas of learning. Multidisciplinary and a holistic

education across the sciences, social sciences, arts, humanities and sports needs to be properly implemented in India to ensure the unity and integrity of knowledge and education in the country.

Limitations of the Study

1. This paper has certain limitations as the research is based on the secondary sources of information. If primary sources can be accessed the result may be more appropriate and competitive than this present study.
2. This study can act as a base for future research on empirical investigations to comment on the viability of this research in long run.
3. All the states have not properly been followed the policy framed by the expert committee and central government.

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