

# NEP 2020: A Distant Dream or Reality in Action

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**Abstract:** *Education has incomparable significance in human existence as it is the most powerful tool to improve the world. Every nation needs a clear, forward - looking education policy since education is the main engine of social and economic advancement. A national policy on education National Education Policy 2020 is a complete report and its principle design is to improve the education area by making it comprehensive, all - encompassing, multidisciplinary, and more productive. Present paper is an attempt to ponder on various challenges that will be needed to counter in the journey to implement National Education Policy 2020.*

**Keywords:** Education, NEP2020, National Education Policy, Innovation, Challenges

## 1. Introduction

National Education Policy 2020 is an ambitious policy that has been brought by the government of India. The National Education Policy (NEP) aims to establish an education system that directly supports the nation's transformation by providing all people with a top - notch education and making India a global knowledge powerhouse. Many states are preparing to implement this policy at different levels of education while some like Uttarakhand have already implemented this policy in their education system. Since, till now the country has been running on the basis of a 34 - year - old policy; there is a strong need to modify the educational institutions, its teachers, and infrastructure to accommodate the changes proposed by NEP 2020.

### Major Highlights of NEP 2020

- 1) The new policy targets to achieve a 100% gross enrollment ratio in school education by 2030 along with universalization of education from pre - primary School to grade 12. The 5+3+3+4 curricular structure concerning ages 3 - 8, 8 - 11, 11 - 14, and 14 - 18 years respectively will replace the 10+2 structure of the school curriculum. Gross Enrolment Ratio in higher education including vocational Education to be raised from 26.3 % in 2018 to 50 % by 2035.
- 2) For children up to the age of 8, the National Curricular and Pedagogical Framework for Early Childhood Care and Education (NCPFECCE) will be established by NCERT for attaining universal foundational literacy and numeracy in all primary schools by 2025, National Mission on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy will be set up by Education Ministry.
- 3) Extra - curricular, vocational, and academic streams in schools will be given equal importance without any rigid separation. Local language/mother - tongue be used as a medium of instruction for classes till 5 preferably till 8. This holistic 360 - degree multidimensional report card will track the progress of students within all areas.
- 4) PARAKH (Performance Assessment, Review, and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development), a new assessment center that will be set up for improving the system of evaluation in schools.
- 5) In consultation with NCERT, a new National Curriculum Framework for teacher education (NCFTE)

2021 will be established. By 2030, a 4 - year integrated B. Ed. degree will be the minimum degree qualification for teaching.

- 6) To facilitate digital storage and transfer of credits earned from different HEIs academic Bank of credit will be established.
- 7) The new policy provides multiple entry and exit points with certificates at every stage and envisages multidisciplinary education with a flexible curriculum and creative combination of subjects.
- 8) Multidisciplinary Education and Research Universities (MERUs), to be established to provide the best multidisciplinary education of international standards in the country, at par with IITs, and IIMs.
- 9) The National Research Foundation (NRF) an umbrella body will be established to foster quality research across the country and strengthen the overall research ecosystem.
- 10) The entire higher education excluding legal and medical education will come under the purview of the Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) which will be set up as a single Apex body.
- 11) The same set of norms for regulation, accreditation, and academic standards will be applicable to both public and private higher education institutions.
- 12) In the upcoming 15 years, the affiliation of colleges is to be phased out and the graded autonomy concept will be introduced to encourage healthy competition between universities.
- 13) The National Educational Technology Forum (NETF), will be set up to foster a free exchange of ideas on the use of technology.
- 14) Increase in public spending on education from around 4% to 6% of gross domestic product with the collective efforts of the center and the state government.

The timing of the policy is ideal, and the goal is admirably noble. But there is a huge difference between establishing a policy in writing and adhering to it in spirit. How quickly NEP 2020 is implemented and how well it depends in great part on how well the government, universities, and schools are able to overcome the obstacles in their way.

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## Major Challenges to be encountered in the Implementation of NEP 2020

### 1) Administrative Challenges:

As rightly pointed out by the NEP Drafting Committee led by K. Kasturirangan, *India's education system is underfunded, heavily bureaucratized, and lacks the capacity for innovation and scale - up*. There will be going to be several administrative challenges to implementing NEP 2020 in a country like ours, some of which are being discussed here -

- **Humungous task of opening new universities and colleges** India today has around 1, 000 universities across the country. Doubling the Gross Enrolment Ratio in higher education by 2035 which is one of the stated goals of the policy will mean that we must open one new university every week, for the next 15 years. This certainly requires a substantial amount of investment in classrooms and campuses. But it also means appointing at least 50 headmasters every single week, and at least 200 - 300 teachers every single week on an ongoing basis. Given that many teaching positions are going unfilled even in existing schools, this becomes a particularly interesting challenge.
- **Funding** with the limited resources in hand, implementing all the proposals of NEP 2020 will be a daunting task. Private institutions must offer more scholarships to allow students from low - income strata access to higher education, but NEP fails to discuss how this can be achieved. This indicates a need for greater public funding in higher education, which in reality does not sit well within the current scenario. The increase in education budget from 3 percent to 6 percent of GDP is simply not enough to meet the implementation needs.
- **Digital infrastructure** We require internet penetration in remote areas because e - learning is the way forward, as witnessed during the pandemic. Digital infrastructure for this purpose will include digital classrooms, expertise - driven online teaching models, AR/VR technologies to overcome gaps in physical teaching and lab infrastructure, uniform assessment schemes across schools, career counselling sessions and teacher training to become adept at new - age technologies. This will continue to be a major challenge in the next decade.

### 2) Academic challenges

- **Appropriate integration of the Indian Knowledge System** NEP 2020 recommends to re - establish Indian Knowledge System and promote Indian languages, art & culture at global level. We need to restructure our curriculum by giving Indian philosophies & Indian philosophers, ancient science & Scientists their due in our curriculum. In order to integrate Indian languages, art & culture Sridev Dev Suman University is promoting regional languages Garhwali & Kumauni. Undergraduate students from the arts stream are already studying a paper named "Janpadiya Bhasha Sahitya" in which they learn about the literature in regional languages.
- **Need to create a large pool of trained teachers** In school education, the policy calls for a major structural overhaul of the curriculum. But to deliver this curriculum effectively, we need teachers who are trained in and understand pedagogical needs. In order for curricular

changes to be successful, teachers and parents must shift their mindsets significantly. In addition, there are multiple boards with vastly different standards and content. The biggest challenge will be developing revised curriculums and pedagogies for each of the four (4) stages of education and implementing them. Considering that India has one of the most diverse education systems in the world with more than 1.5 million schools and around 250 million students of dissimilar backgrounds, this will be a major challenge.

- **Learning or certificate/degree** Though flexibility in the higher education model through the concept of multiple exits is an important step for reducing the number of dropouts, a question still arises on the value of such certifications and diplomas. The Indian psyche closely associates jobs with the degrees acquired. Hence, to implement the new system, we first have to dismantle the archaic thinking that only with a degree can one successfully secure a job. This is a dangerous paradigm that undermines and discourages other innate talents of an individual.
- **Orientation toward multi - disciplinary education** The existing education regime excludes formal training and orientation towards pedagogy for college and university educators. This urgently calls for an overhaul of the curriculum design to make it flexible and organic for enabling foundational and higher - order thinking and skill inculcation at different levels of education. The policy seeks to establish multi - disciplinary institutions for higher education replacing the single - disciplinary ones. The road to attain this goal has been paved with good intentions.
- **Funding and scaling the new model** Over 250 million students are expected to enroll in schools in India by 2030. With a teacher - student ratio of 1: 35, India needs an estimated 7 million plus teachers to address this huge student population. Those teachers need to have graduated with an esteemed B. Ed. program for a 12th pass, graduates, and post - graduates for one, two, and four - year respectively. Teaching also happens to be one of the lowest - paid professions in India with an average teacher earning around Rs.200, 000 per year. Due to these constraints, conceptual and experiential teaching will be tough as compared to the prevailing printed content - oriented teaching. More fund allocation is required from the government's end to overcome this major shortcoming. Also, the current pool of teachers has to be orientated toward new - age teaching techniques.
- **Inter - disciplinary higher education demands a cultural shift** In higher education, the National Education Policy 2020's focus on interdisciplinary learning is a very welcome step. Universities, especially in India, have for decades been very departmentalized. This culture of disciplinary mooring runs very deep among scholars and professors alike, with few exceptions. For the entire higher education system to be composed of "exception" professors who are curious about, respect, and lean into other disciplines while being experts in their own is no easy task. This requires a cultural shift in the entire higher education ecosystem, over the next 15 - 20 years. In an attempt to promote a multidisciplinary/interdisciplinary approach, our institutions should collaborate with neighboring

institutions in the form of cluster colleges so that we can share resources and infrastructure with each other. faculties should be encouraged to design their own curricular and pedagogical approaches by an independent selection of textbooks, reading material, designing assignments, and modes of internal assessments.

### 3) Research & Innovation

The National Education Policy (NEP) - 2020 contemplated for the first time after the independence has placed priority on research in higher educational institutions. NEP proposes the foundation of the National Research Foundation and MERU. the promotion of research in the higher education system is one of the ten envisions of the NEP, by institutionalizing research funding, which is a critical requirement. In fact, the NEP has laid a landmark commitment, especially in financing academic research.

### Major Challenges in the Implementation of New Education Policy 2020: -

#### 1) Opening universities every week is a strenuous task:

India today has around 1, 000 universities across the country. Doubling the Gross Enrolment Ratio in higher education by 2035 which is one of the stated goals of the policy will mean that we must open one new university every week, for the next 15 years. Opening one University every week on an ongoing basis is an undeniably massive challenge.

#### 2) The numbers are no less intimidating in reforms to our school system:

The National Education Policy 2020 intends to bring 2 crore children who are currently not in schools, back into the school system. Whichever way you view at it, accomplishing this over 15 years requires the setting up of around 50 schools every week. This certainly requires a substantial amount of investment in classrooms and campuses which will be extremely challenging.

#### 3) Funding is a big obstacle in the Covid era:

From a funding standpoint, this is not a challenge for the timorous. The NEP 2020 predicts an increase in education spending from 4.6% to 6% of GDP, which amounts to around INR 2.5 lakh crores per year. This money will be well - spent building schools and colleges across the country, appointing teachers and professors, and for operational expenses such as providing free breakfast to school children. What makes things scheming is that this policy comes into being at a time when the economy has been battered by Covid - 19 related lockdowns, government tax collections are dreadfully low, and the fiscal deficit was high even pre - Covid.

#### 4) Current emphasis on healthcare and economic recovery to lower the speed of implementation:

Economists have been calling for large stimulus packages amounting to double - digit percentages of GDP, despite the strain on the exchequer. While the National Education Policy is a 20 - year journey, one worries that we may be off to a stumbling start over the next 2 - 3 years, when government and budgetary priorities are claimed by the more urgent but equally

important needs of healthcare and economic recovery

#### 5) Need to create a large pool of trained teachers

In school education, the policy envisages a sweeping structural reformulation of the curriculum a very welcome step. Many of the curricular changes require considerable mindset shifts on the part of teachers, as well as parents.

#### 6) Inter - disciplinary higher education demands for a cultural shift:

In higher education, the NEP 2020's focus on inter - disciplinary learning is a very welcoming step. In India, education has for decades been very isolated and monotonous. For the entire higher education system to be composed of "exceptions" professors who are curious about, respect and lean in to other disciplines while being experts in their own is not an easy task. This requires a cultural shift in the entire higher education ecosystem, over the next 15 - 20 years.

### Conclusion

The new education policy has a laudable vision, but its influence will depend on whether it is able to effectively merge with the government's other policy initiatives — Digital India, Skill India and the New Industrial Policy to name a few — in order to effect a coherent reconstruction. For instance, policy linkages can ensure that education policy speaks to and learns from Skill India's experience in engaging more dynamically with the private sector to shape vocational education curricula in order to make it a success. There is also a need for more evidence - based decision - making, to adapt to rapidly evolving shifts and disruption.

NEP has encouragingly provisioned for real - time evaluation systems and a consultative monitoring framework. This shall enable the education system to constantly reform itself, instead of waiting for a new education policy every decade for a shift in curriculum. This, in itself, will be a remarkable achievement.

The National Education Policy, 2020 aims to shift towards more scientific approach to education. It will help to cater ability of the child in different stages of development. This includes cognitive development, social and physical development. When implemented, the policy will bring India at par with leading countries of the world.

The New Education Policy 2020, is a commendable step by the government to achieve the goal of providing quality education and having a skillful, talented, and professional youth population. Learning systems like online learning and digital courses are also being:

Encouraged. Lastly, it also lies emphasis on learning and preserving traditional languages like Sanskrit in India which are losing fast.

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It is an exemplary policy as it targets at making the education system flexible,

## 2. Conclusion

The government's new education strategy has a commendable vision, but its impact will depend on how well it can work with the other government policy efforts, such as Digital India, Skill India, and the New Industrial strategy, to achieve a coherent rebuilding. For instance, policy linkages can guarantee that educational policy takes into account and learns from Skill India's experience working more actively with the corporate sector to create successful vocational education curricula. There is also a need for more evidence-based decision-making, to adapt to rapidly evolving shifts and disruption. NEP has encouragingly provisioned for real-time evaluation systems and a consultative monitoring framework. This shall enable the education system to constantly reform itself, instead of waiting for a new education policy every decade for a shift in curriculum. This, in itself, will be a remarkable achievement. The National Education Policy, 2020 aims to shift towards more scientific approach to education. It will help to cater ability of the child in different stages of development. This includes cognitive development, social and physical development. When implemented, the policy will bring India at par with leading countries of the world.

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