

# National Education Policy (2020) A Bird's Eye View

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## INTRODUCTION

In the Post-Independence period, social and political changes in India were expedited. The national government at the centre endeavoured massively to bring phenomenal changes in the system of education in order to make it completely national in character. A separate Ministry of Education was created and *Maulana Abul Kalam Azad* became the first cabinet minister of education in independent India. Just after attainment of independence, several committees and commissions were constituted for the purpose of speed and rapid expansion of education. Among these commissions, the University Education Commission (1948-49), Secondary Education Commission (1952-53), The Education Commission (1964-66), National Policy on Education (1986), Revised NPE, 1992 and the National Curriculum Framework for School Education, (NCFSE) (2005) were of special significance.

After the Education Commission (1964-66), the Government of India formulated the first National Policy on Education in the year 1968. It was an epoch-making history in the development of education in India. But after 1968, due to political crisis, Indo-Pak war and declaration of emergency, educational development in India got a heavy setback. However, a careful analysis, of educational development from 1968 to 1985 makes it clear that the detailed strategy for development of education could not be undertaken due to two specific reasons. Firstly, the needed resources were not adequately provided for implementation of the programme. Secondly, organisational pattern was not structured for timely review in every five years and follow-up programme had not been undertaken. As a result, the problem of access, equity, quality, quantity, utility and financing outlay accumulated the years must be tackled with utmost urgency. Therefore, a need for a new National Education Policy became essential.

Further, Education became a subject of the Concurrent list after the 42<sup>nd</sup> Amendment of the Indian Constitution in the year 1976. Thus, Education became the joint responsibility of the Central and State government. Realising the need of the hour, Rajiv Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India stressed upon the need for a New Education Policy in his broadcast to the nation on 5<sup>th</sup> January 1985. Hence, the National Education Policy (NEP) 1986 was passed by the Lok Sabha on 8<sup>th</sup> May and Rajya Sabha on 13<sup>th</sup> May 1986. The National Policy on Education (1986) was finally approved by the Indian Parliament in August 1986. It was a landmark in the history of education in the post-independence period. Besides, few months after the declaration of the National Policy on Education, 1986 the Government of India declared its Plan of Action. This was the first National Education Policy in which a complete plan for its implementation along with the policy was presented and at the same time sufficient resources were arranged first.

As we stepped into the threshold of the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century there was an urgent need to formulate a *new National Education Policy* for accommodating the changes that have taken place and for fulfilling the changing needs and challenges of the new generation. With the explosion in the field of ICT the country needed a change in its overall structure of education so as to provide access, equity, excellence and global competitiveness to its future generation. The global education development agenda reflected in the Goal 4 (SDG4) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by India in 2015 - seeks to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” by 2030. Such a lofty goal will require the entire education system to be reconfigured to support and foster learning, so that all of the critical targets and goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development can be achieved. Indeed, with the quickly changing employment landscape and global ecosystem, it is becoming increasingly critical that

children not only learn, but more importantly learn how to learn. Education thus, must move towards less content, and more towards learning about how to think critically and solve problems, how to be creative and multidisciplinary, and how to innovate, adapt, and absorb new material in novel and changing fields.

Accordingly, the Government of India appointed a panel of experts under the chairmanship of former Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) chief *Dr. K Kasturirangan* to draft the New National Education Policy. The committee submitted the draft NEP in 2019 and it was reviewed ON 1<sup>st</sup> May 2020 by the Prime minister of India. Finally, looking into the above stated issues and to have a visionary and inspirational educational landscape by 2040, the Union Government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his cabinet approved the New National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 on 29<sup>th</sup> July 2020 paving the way for transformational reforms in school and higher education sector in the country. (*Hindustan Times*, 30<sup>th</sup> July).

This National Education Policy 2020 is the first education policy of the 21st century and aims to address the many growing developmental imperatives of our country. This Policy proposes the revision and revamping of all aspects of the education structure, including its regulation and governance, to create a new system that is aligned with the aspirational goals of 21st century education, including SDG4, while building upon India's traditions and value systems. The National Education Policy lays particular emphasis on the development of the creative potential of each individual. It is based on the principle that education must develop not only cognitive capacities - both the 'foundational capacities' of literacy and numeracy and 'higher-order' cognitive capacities, such as critical thinking and problem-solving but also social, ethical, and emotional capacities and dispositions.

#### BASIC PRINCIPLES UNDERLYING THE NEP (2020)

The following are the fundamental principles underlying the new National Education Policy 2020:

##### 1. Principle of Holistic Development:

The teachers and parents are to be sensitised to promote each student's holistic development in both scholastic and co-scholastic area.

##### 2. Principle of achieving Foundational Literacy and Numeracy:

The NEP proposes that top priority should be given to the students to achieve foundational literacy and numeracy by Grade 3.

##### 3. Principle of Flexibility:

This principle states that the learners should be provided with the flexibility to choose their courses and programmes of learning according to their own ability and interest.

##### 4. Principle of Broad fields Approach:

This means there is no hard separations between arts and sciences, between curricular and extra-curricular activities, between vocational and academic streams, etc. in order to eliminate harmful hierarchies among and between different areas of learning.

##### 5. Principle of Critical thinking and Creativity:

The NEP puts emphasis on conceptual understanding rather than rote learning and creativity and critical thinking to encourage logical decision-making and innovation.

##### 6. Principle of Ethical human and Constitutional values:

The NEP promotes human & Constitutional values like empathy, respect for others, cleanliness, courtesy, democratic spirit, spirit of service, respect for public property, scientific temper, liberty, responsibility, pluralism, equality, and justice.

##### 7. Principle of Multilingualism:

The NEP puts emphasis on the power of language in teaching and learning. It promotes multilingualism with emphasis on mother tongue.

##### 8. Principle of life skills and formative assessment for learning:

The NEP focuses on inculcation of 21<sup>st</sup> century life skills such as communication, cooperation, teamwork, critical thinking, collaboration, resilience etc. Besides, it also focuses on regular formative assessment for learning rather than the summative assessment that encourages 'coaching culture'.

##### 9. Principle of Integration of Technology in Teaching and learning:

The NEP proposes for the extensive use of technology in teaching and learning, removing language barriers, increasing access for *Divyang* students, and educational planning and management.

##### 10. Principle of synergy in Curriculum across all levels of Education:

The NEP proposes to bring synergy in curriculum across all levels of education from early childhood care and education to school education to higher education. Further, it regards teachers as the heart of the teaching learning process.

11. Principle of Transparent and Tight Regulatory framework:

It proposes a ‘light but tight’ regulatory framework to ensure integrity, transparency, and resource efficiency of the educational system through audit and public disclosure while encouraging innovation and out-of-the-box ideas through autonomy, good governance, and empowerment.

12. Principle of Sustained Outstanding Research:

The NEP focuses on promoting outstanding research for outstanding education and development and a continuous review of progress based on sustained research and regular assessment by educational experts.

Major Recommendations of the NEP (2020) as a Paradigm Shift:

The following are the proposed changes as recommended by the NEP (2020):

1. New Pedagogical and Educational Structure:

The existing 10+2 structure in school education will be modified with a new pedagogical and curricular restructuring of 5+3+3+4 covering ages 3-18. Currently, children in the age group of 3-6 are not covered in the 10+2 structure as Class 1 begins at age 6. In the new 5+3+3+4 structure, a strong base of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) from age 3 is also included. The curricular and pedagogical structure of school education will be reconfigured to make it responsive and relevant to the developmental needs and interests of learners at different stages of their development, corresponding to the age ranges of 3-8, 8-11, 11-14, and 14-18 years, respectively. The curricular and pedagogical structure and the curricular framework for school education will therefore be guided by a 5+3+3+4 design, consisting of the Foundational Stage (in two parts, that is, 3 years of Anganwadi/pre-school + 2 years in primary school in Grades 1-2; both together covering ages 3-8), Preparatory Stage (Grades 3-5, covering ages 8-11), Middle Stage (Grades 6-8, covering ages 11-14), and Secondary Stage (Grades 9-12 in two phases, i.e., 9 and 10 in the first and 11 and 12 in the second, covering ages 14-18).

2. Early Childhood Care and Education: The Foundation of Learning:

Over 85% of a child’s cumulative brain development occurs prior to the age of 6, indicating the critical importance of appropriate care and stimulation of the brain in the early years in order to ensure healthy brain development and growth. Prioritizing in ECCE has the potential to give all young children such access, enabling them to participate and flourish in the educational system throughout their lives. Universal provisioning of quality early childhood development, care, and education must thus be achieved as soon as possible, and no later than 2030, to ensure that all students entering Grade 1 are school ready.

3. Early childhood care and education curriculum (ECCEC) to be carried out by MHRD, WCD, HFW, tribal affairs:

The planning and implementation of early childhood care and education curriculum (ECCEC) will be carried out jointly by the Ministries of HRD, Women and Child Development (WCD), Health and Family Welfare (HFW), and Tribal Affairs. A special joint task force will be constituted for continuous guidance of the smooth integration of early childhood care and education into school education. A National Curricular and Pedagogical Framework for Early Childhood Care and Education (NCPFECCE) for children up to the age of 8 will be developed by NCERT,

4. Preparatory class Balavatika for children below the age of 5:

It is envisaged that prior to the age of 5 every child will move to a “Preparatory Class” or “Balavatika” (that is, before Class 1), which has an ECCE-qualified teacher. The learning in the Preparatory Class shall be based primarily on play-based learning with a focus on developing cognitive, affective, and psychomotor abilities and early literacy and numeracy.

5. Pre- school section in Kendriya Vidyalayas:

Pre-school sections covering at least one year of early childhood care and education will be added to Kendriya Vidyalayas and other primary schools around the nation, particularly in disadvantaged areas.

6. Focus on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy:

The ability to read and write, and perform basic operations with numbers, is a necessary foundation and an indispensable prerequisite for all future schooling and lifelong learning. Hence, importance is laid on Promotion of foundational literacy and numeracy. The highest priority of the education

system will be to achieve universal foundational literacy and numeracy in primary school by 2025. A National Mission on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy will be set up by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) on priority.

7. Curtailing Dropout Rates and Ensuring Universal Access to Education at all Levels:

The NEP proposes that it will be a top priority to bring all drop out children back into the educational fold as early as possible, and to prevent further students from dropping out, with a goal to achieve 100% Gross Enrolment Ratio in preschool to secondary level by 2030. A concerted national effort will be made to ensure universal access and afford opportunity to all children of the country to obtain quality holistic education—including vocational education - from pre-school to Grade 12.

8. Education sector to get 6% of GDP, earlier it was 1.7%:

The NEP proposes to incur 6 percent of the country's GDP in the education sector as envisioned by the Kothari Commission (1964-66). This will bring colossal changes in the content, process, pedagogy and assessment in the education sector.

9. Medium of instruction will be the local/ regional language;

The medium of instruction will be local/ regional language. The NEP proposes that the medium of instruction until at least Grade 5, but preferably till Grade 8 and beyond, will be the home language/mother tongue/local language/regional.

10. Three language learned by children will be the choice of state, regions and students:

The three-language learned by children will be the choices of States, regions, and of the students, so long as at least two of the three languages are native to India.

11. Indian Sign Language to be standardised across the country:

Indian Sign Language (ISL) will be standardized across the country and National and State curriculum materials developed, for use by students with hearing impairment. NIOS will develop high-quality modules to teach Indian Sign Language, and to teach other basic subjects using Indian Sign Language.

12. No hard separation of streams for students:

Students will be given increased flexibility and choice of subjects to study, particularly in secondary school - including subjects in physical education, the arts and

crafts, and vocational skills. There will be no hard separation among 'curricular', 'extracurricular', or 'co-curricular', among 'arts', 'humanities', and 'sciences', or between 'vocational' or 'academic' streams. Subjects such as physical education, the arts and crafts, and vocational skills, in addition to science, humanities, and mathematics, will be incorporated throughout the school curriculum. Each of the four stages of school education, may consider moving towards a semester or any other system that allows the inclusion of shorter modules.

13. Curriculum content to be reduced:

Curriculum content will be reduced in each subject to its core essentials, and make space for critical thinking and more holistic, inquiry-based, discovery-based, discussion-based, and analysis-based learning. The mandated content will focus on key concepts, ideas, applications, and problem-solving. Teaching and learning will be conducted in a more interactive manner.

14. Experiential learning in all stages:

Experiential learning will include hands-on learning, arts-integrated and sports-integrated education and story-telling-based pedagogy, among others, as standard pedagogy. Classroom transactions will shift, towards competency-based learning and education.

15. More focus on vocational studies in school level:

Every child to learn at least one vocation and exposed to several more. Sampling of important vocational crafts, such as carpentry, electric work, metal work, gardening, pottery making, etc., as decided by States and local communities during Grades 6-8. By 2025, at least 50% of learners through the school and higher education system shall have exposure to vocational education. A 10-day bagless period sometime during Grades 6-8 to intern with local vocational experts such as carpenters, gardeners, potters, artists, etc. Similar internship opportunities to learn vocational subjects to students throughout Grades 6-12, including holiday periods. Vocational courses through online mode will also be made available.

16. Importance of board exam to be reduced, exam can be conducted twice a year:

In order to reduce the importance and stress of board exam, exam will be conducted in two parts: Objective and descriptive. Exam can be conducted twice a year. Board exam should promote knowledge application rather than rote learning.

17. Coding to be taught from class 6 onwards:

Students of class 6 and onwards will be taught coding in schools as a part of 21st century skills.

18. National Scholarship portal for SC, ST, OBC, SEDGs students to be expanded:

The NPE proposes that efforts will be made to incentivize the merit of students belonging to SC, ST, OBC, and other SEDGs. The National Scholarship Portal will be expanded to support, foster, and track the progress of students receiving scholarships. Private HEIs will be encouraged to offer larger numbers of free ships and scholarships to their students.

19. Dedicated unit for digital and online learning:

A dedicated unit for the purpose of orchestrating the building of digital infrastructure, digital content and capacity building will be created in the MHRD, now Ministry of Education to look after the e-education needs of both school and higher education. A comprehensive set of recommendations for promoting online education consequent to the recent rise in epidemics and pandemics in order to ensure preparedness with alternative modes of quality education whenever and wherever traditional and in-person modes of education are not possible, has been covered. NIOS and State Open Schools will also offer A, B and C levels that are equivalent to Grades 3, 5, and 8 of the formal school system; secondary education programs that are equivalent to Grades 10 and 12; vocational education courses/programs; and adult literacy and life-enrichment programs.

20. Innovative provisions for children with disabilities:

Children with disabilities will be enabled to fully participate in the regular schooling process from the foundational stage to higher education, with support of educators with cross disability training, resource centres, accommodations, assistive devices, appropriate technology-based tools and other support mechanisms tailored to suit their needs. Every state/district will be encouraged to establish “*Bal Bhavans*” as a special daytime boarding school, to participate in art-related, career-related, and play-related activities. Free school infrastructure can be used as *Samajik Chetna Kendras*.

21. Technology- based option for adult learning through apps, TV channels etc:

Quality technology-based options for adult learning such as apps, online courses/modules, satellite-based TV channels, online books, and ICT-equipped libraries and Adult Education Centres, etc. will be

developed. Use of schools/ school complexes beyond school hours and public library spaces for adult education courses which will be ICT-equipped when possible and for other community engagement and enrichment activities is also recommended.

22. Establishment of HECI- Common regulatory body for entire higher education:

Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) will be set up as a single overarching umbrella body for entire higher education, excluding medical and legal education. HECI to have four independent verticals - National Higher Education Regulatory Council (NHERC) for regulation, General Education Council (GEC) for standard setting, Higher Education Grants Council (HEGC) for funding, and National Accreditation Council (NAC) for accreditation.

23. Financial Autonomy to be given to 45000 affiliated colleges:

There are over 45,000 affiliated colleges in our country. Under Graded Autonomy, Academic, Administrative & Financial Autonomy will be given to colleges, on the basis of the status of their accreditation.

24. Multiple entry and exit programme in Undergraduate Courses:

The Policy aims at 50% gross enrolment ratio by 2035. There will be multiple entry and exit options for those who wish to leave the course in the middle. Their credits will be transferred through Academic Bank of Credits (ABC). The undergraduate degree courses will be of either 3 or 4- year duration, with multiple exit options. A certificate course after completing 1 year in a discipline or field, including vocational and professional areas, or a diploma after 2 years of study, or a bachelor’s degree after a 3-year programme. The 4-year multidisciplinary bachelor’s programme, however, shall be the preferred option.

25. National Research Foundation (NRF) to be established:

A National Research Foundation (NRF) will be established. The overarching goal of the NRF will be to enable a culture of research to permeate through universities. The NRF will be governed, independently of the government, by a rotating Board of Governors consisting of the very best researchers and innovators across all fields.

26. NTA to offer common entrance exam:

The National Testing Agency (NTA) will offer a high-quality common aptitude test, as well as specialized

common subject exams in the sciences, humanities, languages, arts, and vocational subjects, at least twice every year for university entrance exams.

27. Variable models for board exams - annual, semester, modular exams

Boards may over time also develop further viable models of Board Exams, such as - annual/semester/modular Board Exams; offering all subjects beginning with mathematics, at two levels; two parts exams or objective type and descriptive type.

28. IITs to become multidisciplinary institution, opening doors for humanities students:

Even engineering institutions, such as IITs, will move towards more holistic and multidisciplinary education with more arts and humanities. Students of arts and humanities will aim to learn more science. NEP aims at setting up at least one large multidisciplinary institution in or near every district by the year 2030. By 2040, all higher education institutions (HEIs) shall aim to become multidisciplinary institutions, each of which will aim to have 3,000 or more students.

29. Minimum qualification for teaching - 4 year integrated B.Ed Degree:

A new and comprehensive National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education, NCFTE 2021, will be formulated by the NCTE in consultation with NCERT. By 2030, the minimum degree qualification for teaching will be a 4-year integrated B.Ed. degree. Stringent action will be taken against substandard stand-alone Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs).

30. Best universities to set up campuses in other countries:

High performing Indian universities will be encouraged to set up campuses in other countries. Selected universities like those from among the top 100 universities in the world will be facilitated to operate in India.

#### CONCLUSION

A careful analysis of the principles and major recommendations proposed in the NEP 2020 makes it clear that after 35 years our country has got an epoch-making National Education Policy with a vision to transform India into a global knowledge superpower. The recommendations made in the NEP 2020 are very lofty and practical but it has also some challenges in terms of Linguistic issues, issue of multiple entry and exit, discontinuance of standalone institutions of teacher education and incurring of 6 percent of GDP

in education which has not been fulfilled yet though recommended by the Kothari Commission (1964-66). However, the policy has many valid and visionary recommendations which if carried out successfully can go a long way in revamping education system of our country for an aspirational and skillful young India by 2040. Apart from the above discussed points one of the recommendations of the policy was to rename MHRD as Ministry of Education. Now the NEP (2020) has to pass through both the houses of the Parliament and finally after getting Presidential assent it will be implemented very soon in all over the country.

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