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INTRODUCTION

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Keywords: NA

Classification: LCC Code: LA1174.4, LC94

Language: English



Great Britain
Journals Press

LJP Copyright ID: 573355
Print ISSN: 2515-5786
Online ISSN: 2515-5792

London Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Sciences

Volume 23 | Issue 20 | Compilation 1.0



India's New Education Policy: A Paradigm Shift in the Educational Landscape

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I. INTRODUCTION

In 2020, India unveiled its New Education Policy (NEP), signaling a monumental shift in the nation's approach to education. Coming after more than three decades since the last policy framework was laid out, the NEP aims to meet the changing dynamics of the socio-economic environment, technological advancements, and global best practices in the domain of education. Intending to rejuvenate the nation's educational structure, the policy reflects a blend of tradition with modernity, guiding the country's youth towards a future resonant with the ideals of a global citizen yet deeply rooted in Indian ethos.

At the heart of the NEP is the aspiration to cultivate an innovative, research-centric, and holistic educational system that fosters critical thinking, creativity, and a strong sense of identity. The framework is not merely a revision of the syllabi or the introduction of new subjects, but a comprehensive rethinking of how education should be delivered, evaluated, and experienced in India.

As India strides forward in the 21st century, grappling with a rapidly changing global scenario, the NEP stands as a testament to the country's commitment to nurturing an educated, informed, and empowered generation. This journal seeks to explore the nuances of this policy, delving into its objectives, potential impacts, and the challenges that lie ahead in its implementation.

Keywords: policy, education, challenges, multidisciplinary, higher, approach.

Historical Context:

The story of India's education policies is deeply interwoven with its rich history and the journey of its nation-building process. To fully grasp the significance of the New Education Policy (NEP) 2020, it's essential to trace back to the policies that laid the foundational stones of the country's educational landscape.

1. Pre-Independence Era

Prior to colonial rule, India boasted a vibrant tradition of education, with renowned centers of learning like Nalanda and Taxila attracting scholars from across the world. However, the advent of British colonial rule transformed the indigenous system, replacing it with a Western model primarily geared towards administrative and clerical roles, suited to the needs of the Empire.

2. Post-Independence Reforms

Post-1947, a newly independent India grappled with the challenges of nation-building. The need for a cohesive and inclusive education system was palpable. The University Education Commission (1948-49) and the Secondary Education Commission (1952-53) were some of the first steps taken towards reshaping education in the country.

3. The Education Policy of 1968

The first official policy on education in India came in 1968, inspired by the report of the Kothari Commission (1964-66). The policy emphasized the importance of 'science' and 'technology' and promoted research and development. The '10+2+3' structure, which became widely recognized, found its origins in this policy.

4. The 1986 Policy and Modifications in 1992

In response to the challenges of the 1980s and the need to address the aspirations of an evolving India, the National Policy on Education (NPE) was formulated in 1986, with a revision taking place in 1992. This policy put greater emphasis on "System Renewal", "Special Constitutional Obligation", and "Early Childhood Care and Education".

Key Highlights of NEP 2020:

Holistic and Multidisciplinary Education

The New Education Policy (NEP) 2020 seeks to revolutionize the way students learn, emphasizing a holistic and multidisciplinary approach. This pivot marks a departure from the traditional siloed methods of education that compartmentalized knowledge. Here's an in-depth look at this aspect of the NEP:

1. Conceptual Foundation

The idea behind holistic and multidisciplinary education is to ensure that students develop a well-rounded perspective on various subjects. It encourages the convergence of arts, humanities, sciences, and professional fields, promoting intellectual exploration, creativity, and critical thinking.

2. Breaking Down Silos

Traditionally, Indian education has been divided into distinct streams like "arts", "sciences", and "commerce". NEP seeks to dismantle these rigid boundaries, allowing students to choose subjects across disciplines. A student, for example, could opt to study physics alongside music, or computer science with ancient Indian history.

3. Flexibility in Course Selection

The policy proposes significant flexibility in selecting subjects, ensuring that students aren't confined to predetermined subject combinations. This aims to cater to individual interests and talents, leading to a more personalized educational experience.

4. Emphasis on Critical Thinking and Creativity

By merging different disciplines, students are more likely to think critically and approach

problems with a creative mindset. They'll learn to see connections between disparate fields, fostering innovative thinking and problem-solving skills.

5. Implementation Challenges

While the shift is commendable, it also brings forth challenges. Traditional teaching methodologies, infrastructure, and evaluation systems have to adapt to this new approach. Teachers will need training to handle multidisciplinary classes, and institutions must update their resources and infrastructure.

6. Implications for Higher Education

Higher educational institutions will also witness a transformation. Undergraduate programs will become more integrative, and the rigid distinction between "professional" and "academic" courses will blur. Institutions like IITs will move towards more holistic and multidisciplinary education with more arts and humanities embedded within.

7. Preparing for a Globalized World

A holistic and multidisciplinary education aligns with global educational trends, preparing students for international opportunities and collaborations. As the world becomes more interconnected, professionals who understand and appreciate multiple disciplines will be in high demand.

New Pedagogical Structure

One of the most significant shifts proposed by India's New Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is the introduction of a new pedagogical and curricular structure for school education. This new structure is more aligned with the developmental needs and cognitive stages of students as they progress through their school years.

1. The 5+3+3+4 Structure: The new framework transitions from the conventional 10+2 system to a 5+3+3+4 structure. This corresponds to the age groups of 3-8 years, 8-11 years, 11-14 years, and 14-18 years, respectively.

2. Foundational Stage (5 years)

- Ages 3-6 (3 years of pre-primary education): This is recognized as a crucial period for cognitive development. Hence, the NEP

emphasizes early childhood care and education (ECCE) during these years, typically encompassing playschool, nursery, and kindergarten.

- Ages 6-8 (Grades 1 and 2): This forms the latter part of the foundational stage, focusing on building basic skills in literacy, numeracy, and fostering curiosity.

2. *Preparatory Stage (3 years)*

- Ages 8-11 (Grades 3 to 5): This stage introduces more formal classroom learning, emphasizing foundational literacy and numeracy. It combines play-based learning with a more structured academic curriculum.

3. *Middle Stage (3 years):*

- Ages 11-14 (Grades 6 to 8): Subjects become more specialized at this stage. Students are introduced to the core concepts of subjects, and experiential learning becomes pivotal. Skills like critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration are given importance.

4. *Secondary Stage (4 years):*

- Ages 14-18 (Grades 9 to 12): This is a more multidisciplinary phase, where students can pick and choose subjects across streams, breaking the conventional separation between arts, commerce, and science. This stage prepares students for higher education and professional fields.

- 5. *Flexibility in Curriculum:* Throughout these stages, the NEP emphasizes flexibility, allowing students to choose subjects according to their interests and aspirations. Traditional barriers between academic, vocational, and extracurricular activities are reduced, ensuring a holistic learning environment.

- 6. *Assessment Reforms:* The policy also proposes a shift in assessment methods. Board exams for Grades 10 and 12 will be made more holistic, testing core concepts and skills rather than rote memorization. Additionally, the policy introduces regular school-based assessments to reduce the high-stakes nature of board exams.

- 7. *Significance:* This pedagogical restructuring is designed with the understanding that a child's cognitive and emotional development evolves in stages. By tailoring education to align with these stages, the NEP aims to ensure better comprehension, retention, and application of knowledge.

Mother Tongue as Medium of Instruction

The emphasis on mother tongue as the medium of instruction is one of the notable features of India's New Education Policy (NEP) 2020. Here's a comprehensive examination of this aspect:

1. *NEP's Directive:* The NEP 2020 proposes that, wherever possible, the medium of instruction up to at least Grade 5, and preferably up to Grade 8 and beyond, should be in the child's mother tongue, regional language, or local language. This principle seeks to uphold the importance of understanding and comprehension in the foundational years of a child's education.
2. *Scientific Rationale:* Research has shown that children grasp foundational concepts more effectively when taught in their native language, especially during their early years. Cognitive skills, including the ability to absorb and process information, are enhanced when instruction is in a familiar language.
3. *Preservation of Cultural Identity:* By promoting mother tongues, the NEP also aims to preserve India's linguistic diversity and rich tapestry of languages. It strengthens the bond between culture, language, and learning.

Potential Benefits

- *Better comprehension:* Complex concepts, especially in subjects like mathematics and science, become more accessible when explained in a child's native language.
- *Reduced dropout rates:* When children understand lessons more clearly, they're more likely to stay engaged and continue their education.
- *Inclusive education:* Children from various linguistic backgrounds, especially those from tribal and remote areas, will feel more integrated and included.

5. Challenges in Implementation

- Resource Constraints: One of the major challenges is the lack of quality educational resources, including textbooks and digital content, in many regional languages.
- Teacher Training: Teachers may need to be retrained to deliver lessons effectively in the mother tongue, especially if they've been teaching in a different language.
- Diverse Classrooms: Urban centers and cosmopolitan areas often have children from diverse linguistic backgrounds in one classroom, making it difficult to choose one mother tongue as the medium of instruction.
- Transition to English: Given the prominence of English in higher education and many professional fields in India, there's a concern about when and how students transition from mother tongue instruction to English proficiency.

6. Balancing Act: The policy does not dismiss the importance of English or other languages. Instead, it promotes multilingualism, ensuring that students achieve proficiency in at least three languages by the end of their schooling, one of which would be English.

National Mission on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy

The National Mission on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (NMFNL) is one of the flagship initiatives of the New Education Policy (NEP) 2020. Recognizing that a solid foundation in literacy and numeracy during a child's early years is paramount to subsequent academic and life success, this mission is crafted to ensure that every child in India achieves foundational literacy and numeracy by the end of Grade 3.

1. Objective of the Mission: The primary goal of the NMFNL is to ensure that every child attains the necessary skills in reading, writing, and arithmetic by the end of Grade 3. This would ideally set the stage for enhanced cognitive skills, comprehension, and learning ability in subsequent academic years.
2. Why the Focus on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy? Several studies have pointed out

that many students in the higher grades lack basic reading and arithmetic skills, which significantly impede their ability to grasp complex subjects. This foundational gap is a significant reason for high dropout rates and poor academic performances. Addressing this gap at the foundational level can have cascading positive effects on a child's entire educational journey.

3. Strategies and Actions Proposed:

- Teacher Training: One of the mission's cornerstones is to equip teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge to impart foundational literacy and numeracy effectively.
- Resource Allocation: Dedicated funds to procure essential resources, including books, learning aids, and digital tools tailored for foundational education.
- Curriculum Redesign: Revamping the curriculum for the foundational years to make it more interactive, engaging, and effective in imparting literacy and numeracy skills.
- Technology Integration: Use of apps, digital platforms, and AI to personalize learning experiences and to assist teachers in identifying and addressing learning gaps among students.
- Community Engagement: Mobilizing communities, including parents, to create an environment that supports and emphasizes the importance of foundational literacy and numeracy.
- Monitoring and Assessment: Implementing mechanisms to regularly monitor and assess the progress of students to ensure the effectiveness of teaching methods and to make necessary adjustments.
- 4. Implementation Timeline: The mission proposes a five-year timeline for its implementation, aiming to provide foundational literacy and numeracy skills to all children by 2025.

5. Challenges

- Diverse Linguistic Landscape: Given India's linguistic diversity, creating standardized resources that cater to every regional language can be a challenge.
- Infrastructure Constraints: Especially in rural and remote areas, where access to digital tools and quality resources might be limited.
- Scalability: While pilot programs might achieve success, scaling them to cover the vast expanse of India's student population will be a challenge.

Higher Education

The New Education Policy (NEP) 2020 proposes radical reforms in India's higher education sector. These reforms aim to transform India's higher educational institutions into world-class hubs of research, innovation, and multidisciplinary teaching. Here's an overview of the key reforms in higher education proposed by the policy:

1. Multidisciplinary Approach

The NEP 2020 advocates the creation of multidisciplinary higher education institutions. By 2040, the aim is for all higher education institutions to become multidisciplinary entities, allowing students greater flexibility and choice in their curriculum.

The rigid boundaries separating arts, sciences, humanities, and professional subjects will be dissolved to encourage comprehensive learning.

2. Increased Access and Inclusion

The policy targets increasing the Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) in higher education to 50% by 2035. Measures will be taken to support underrepresented groups in higher education, ensuring equity and inclusion.

3. Holistic and Flexible Curriculum

An academic bank of credits will be established, allowing students to transfer credits, thereby providing flexibility in choosing their academic path and pace. Multiple exit options will be introduced. For instance, a student could exit a Bachelor's program after one year with a

certificate, after two years with a diploma, or after completing the full course duration with a degree.

4. Research Emphasis

The establishment of a National Research Foundation (NRF) is proposed to promote a culture of research in the country. The NRF will fund outstanding research projects across all academic disciplines.

5. Quality Assurance and Accreditation

The National Higher Education Regulatory Authority (NHERA) will be established as a single, overarching higher education regulator for the entire sector, except for medical and legal education. Accreditation processes will be reformed, and higher education institutions will be empowered to have autonomy based on their accreditation status.

6. Globalization of Education

The policy encourages the top 100 global universities to establish campuses in India. Likewise, Indian higher education institutions will be motivated to collaborate with foreign institutions, paving the way for mutual knowledge exchange and research collaborations.

7. Teacher and Faculty Development

Steps will be taken to recruit the best talents as faculty and continuously support their professional development. Faculty not possessing a Ph.D. will be required to undertake a Ph.D. by training in pedagogy and other essential aspects.

8. Restructuring of Higher Education Institutions

The policy envisions consolidating universities and colleges to evolve into larger multidisciplinary universities or institutions. The aim is to have HEIs that are either autonomous degree-granting colleges or full-fledged multidisciplinary universities.

Vocational Education

The New Education Policy (NEP) 2020 accords substantial importance to vocational education, recognizing it as a critical aspect for enhancing employability, promoting entrepreneurship, and ensuring India's youth is equipped with the skills necessary for the 21st century. Here's a

comprehensive breakdown of the policy's approach to vocational education:

1. Integration with School and Higher Education

- Vocational education will be integrated with mainstream schooling, starting from the secondary level. By 2025, at least 50% of learners through the school and higher education system will have exposure to vocational education.
- This will help students understand and appreciate the value of vocational subjects and their practical applications.

2. Focus on Skill Development

- The curriculum will be aligned with the National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF) to ensure standardization and relevance to industry needs.
- There will be an emphasis on developing both hard (technical) and soft (communication, teamwork) skills.

3. Partnerships with Industries

- The NEP 2020 proposes collaborations with industries to offer internships and on-the-job training to students. This practical exposure will be invaluable in bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and its real-world application.
- Industries can provide insights, ensuring the curriculum remains relevant to current market demands.

4. Flexibility in Learning

- Students will be allowed to choose vocational subjects as part of their mainstream education. This flexibility ensures that students do not have to pigeonhole themselves strictly into academic or vocational streams.
- Credits acquired from vocational courses can be integrated into academic credits, making it seamless for students to transition between vocational and academic education.

5. Teacher and Instructor Training

- A robust mechanism will be put in place to train vocational education instructors,

ensuring they are equipped with the latest industry-relevant skills and pedagogical tools.

6. Promoting Local Art and Craft

- Special emphasis will be given to local arts and crafts in vocational education. This not only promotes indigenous industries but also ensures the survival and propagation of local crafts and skills.

7. Vocational Labs

- Setting up of vocational labs in schools will ensure that students have practical exposure and hands-on experience.

8. Career Guidance and Counselling

- Schools and colleges will incorporate career guidance and counselling sessions to guide students on the potential opportunities and career paths in the vocational sector.

Digital Education

The significance of digital education has never been more pronounced, especially in the backdrop of global challenges like the COVID-19 pandemic. Recognizing this, the New Education Policy (NEP) 2020 proposes a comprehensive framework to incorporate technology seamlessly into the education system, ensuring accessibility, equity, and quality. Here's an outline of the policy's stance on digital education:

1. Digital Infrastructure

- Efforts will be made to provide every classroom with digital boards and e-content, especially in disadvantaged regions.
- The creation of a dedicated unit for building digital infrastructure, e-content, and capacity building is suggested to ensure nationwide availability of technology.

2. National Educational Technology Forum (NETF)

- The policy proposes the establishment of the NETF as an autonomous body to provide a platform for the free exchange of ideas on technology usage, facilitating decision-making on the induction, deployment, and leveraging of technologies.

3. *Digital Literacy*

- Teachers and students will be trained in digital literacy, ensuring effective use of available technological resources for teaching and learning.
- The focus will not only be on functional digital skills but also on online etiquette, digital safety, and responsible use.

4. *Online and Digital Education*

- Steps will be taken to expand online education, ensuring it's accessible to the most disadvantaged sections of the population.
- Online courses will be developed, primarily in regional languages, to ensure reach and inclusivity.

5. *Virtual Labs*

- In subjects and skills that require practical experience, virtual labs will be developed, providing students with the chance to conduct experiments and activities in a simulated digital environment.

6. *E-Content Creation*

- Diverse e-content will be developed, especially in regional languages, ensuring comprehensive coverage of topics.
- Emphasis will be given to creating interactive content, which can adapt based on learner responses, using technologies like Artificial Intelligence.

7. *Assessment and Analytics*

- Digital technology will be used to streamline the assessment process, making it more transparent and efficient.
- Analytics will be employed to track students' progress, identify learning gaps, and offer tailored interventions.

8. *Differential Learning*

- With the aid of technology, differential learning strategies can be employed, providing custom-tailored educational pathways based on individual student needs and capabilities.

9. *Equity and Accessibility*

- Provisions will be made to support differently-abled students with assistive technologies.
- Steps will be taken to ensure that digital tools, resources, and technologies are available and accessible to all students irrespective of their socio-economic status.

10. *Open and Distance Learning*

- The policy recognizes the importance of online and distance education in increasing the Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) and proposes a regulatory framework to ensure the quality of education delivered through these modes.

Potential Impacts:

Greater Flexibility:

The NEP 2020 heralds a transformative shift in the Indian education landscape by championing the principle of "greater flexibility." This principle acknowledges that every learner's journey is unique, and the traditional rigid pathways of education may not cater to all. The policy's flexibility aspect is designed to empower students, allowing them to tailor their educational experiences based on interests, capabilities, and evolving aspirations.

For instance, gone are the days where students had to strictly choose between science, commerce, and arts streams. Under the new paradigm, a student could seamlessly integrate subjects like mathematics with music, or chemistry with creative writing. This multidisciplinary approach nurtures holistic development and fosters a broader understanding of the world, breaking down the artificial silos that limited educational creativity and exploration in the past.

In essence, the flexibility enshrined in the NEP 2020 aims to make education more learner-centric, promoting curiosity, creativity, and lifelong learning, while acknowledging and respecting individual aptitudes and aspirations.

Preservation of Cultural and Linguistic Heritage

The New Education Policy (NEP) 2020 underscores the profound importance of India's

rich tapestry of cultural and linguistic diversity. Recognizing that languages are not just communication mediums but repositories of culture, tradition, and indigenous knowledge, the policy emphasizes their preservation and promotion in the educational landscape.

A pivotal recommendation is the introduction of mother tongue or local language as the medium of instruction, at least until Grade 5, but preferably longer. This approach, rooted in numerous studies, suggests that children learn and grasp concepts most effectively in their native languages. More than just aiding comprehension, this initiative also fortifies the child's connection with their cultural and linguistic roots, promoting self-esteem and identity.

Furthermore, the policy encourages the teaching of classical languages and literature, folk arts, and local crafts, ensuring the younger generation is well-acquainted with and takes pride in their rich heritage.

In essence, the NEP 2020 positions education as a bridge — one that connects the wisdom of the past with the promise of the future, ensuring India's cultural and linguistic legacy continues to thrive in the hearts and minds of its future citizens.

Inclusion

Inclusion stands as a cornerstone in the New Education Policy (NEP) 2020, emphasizing that education must be accessible and equitable for all students, irrespective of their socio-economic, cultural, or physical backgrounds. Recognizing the diverse tapestry of the Indian student population, the policy strives to eliminate barriers that could hinder the learning process for any student.

A key tenet of the NEP's inclusive approach is to provide customized support for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, ensuring they receive the requisite resources and attention to level the educational playing field. This extends from offering scholarships and financial aids to creating specialized teaching methodologies for differently-abled students.

Furthermore, the policy underscores the significance of teacher training in inclusive education. Educators will be equipped with the skills and knowledge to cater to a diverse set of learners, ensuring no student is left behind due to unique learning needs.

In essence, the NEP 2020 champions an educational ethos where every student, irrespective of their starting point, is given an equal opportunity to thrive, learn, and achieve their fullest potential. This inclusive vision resonates with the broader ambition of crafting an equitable, just, and cohesive society.

Challenges

While the New Education Policy (NEP) 2020 presents a visionary roadmap for the transformation of India's educational landscape, its implementation comes with its own set of challenges.

A primary concern is the vastness and diversity of India's educational ecosystem, comprising various state boards, languages, and socio-economic disparities. Ensuring uniformity and standardization across this diverse milieu, without compromising regional and cultural nuances, is a monumental task.

Resource allocation is another significant challenge. The policy's ambitious endeavors, from digital infrastructure enhancement to teacher training programs, demand substantial financial investment. With competing national priorities and budgetary constraints, mobilizing the required funds can be a hurdle.

Moreover, while the policy emphasizes a shift towards a more holistic, student-centric approach, changing deep-rooted societal mindsets about education, especially regarding assessment systems and rote learning, is not an overnight task.

In essence, while the NEP 2020 sketches a promising picture of India's educational future, the road to its realization is dotted with challenges that require concerted effort, collaboration, and persistence from all stakeholders.

II. CONCLUSION

The New Education Policy (NEP) 2020 represents a landmark moment in India's educational journey, envisioning a system that combines traditional values with contemporary global practices. Rooted in inclusivity, flexibility, and the preservation of cultural heritage, it seeks to transform India into a global knowledge superpower. However, while its objectives are laudable, the success of the NEP lies in its effective implementation. Addressing the challenges, fostering collaboration among stakeholders, and ensuring that the policy's benefits permeate to the last student will be crucial. If executed well, the NEP 2020 has the potential not only to reshape India's educational landscape but also to nurture a generation that's equipped for the 21st century while being firmly anchored in its rich cultural ethos.

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