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New Education Policy: Problem And Prospects

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Abstract: NEP is a comprehensive framework to guide the development of education in the country. The need for a policy was first felt in 1964 when Congress MP Siddheshwar Prasad criticised the then government for lacking a vision and philosophy for education. The same year, a 17-member Education Commission, headed by then UGC Chairperson D S Kothari, was constituted to draft a national and coordinated policy on education. Based on the suggestions of this Commission, Parliament passed the first education policy in 1968. A new NEP usually comes along every few decades. India has had three to date. The first came in 1968 and the second in 1986, under Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi respectively; the NEP of 1986 was revised in 1992 when P V Narasimha Rao was Prime Minister. The third is the NEP released Wednesday under the Prime Ministership of Narendra Modi.

Keywords- National Education Policy (NEP), D. S. Kothari Commission, Education Reform, Parliament Policy 1968, Government of India

Introduction

Since the country's independence in 1947, the Indian government has sponsored a variety of programmes to address the problems of illiteracy in both rural and urban India. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, India's first Minister of Education, envisaged strong central government control over education throughout the country, with a uniform educational system (Basu). The Union government established the University Education Commission (1948–1949), the Secondary Education Commission (1952–1953), the University Grants Commission, and the Kothari Commission (1964–1966) to develop proposals to modernise India's education system (Chatterjee 42). The Resolution on Scientific Policy was adopted by the government of Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first Prime Minister. The Nehru government sponsored the development of high-quality scientific education institutions such as the Indian Institutes of Technology (Singh 120).

In 1961, the Union government formed the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) as an autonomous organisation to advise both the Union and state governments on formulating and implementing education policies ("History of Education in India"). During 1968, based on the report and recommendations of the Kothari Commission (1964–1966), the government of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi announced the first National Policy on Education (NPE) in 1968. It called for a "radical restructuring" and proposed equal educational opportunities in order to achieve national integration and greater cultural and economic development (Kumar 86). The policy emphasised fulfilling compulsory education for all children up to the age of 14, as stipulated by the Constitution of India, and encouraged specialized training and qualification for teachers.

The NPE 1968 stressed the importance of learning regional languages, outlining the "three language formula" for secondary education: instruction in English, the official language of the state, and Hindi (NCERT). Language education was seen as a means to bridge the divide between the intelligentsia and the masses. Although adopting Hindi as the national language was controversial, the policy supported the uniform promotion of Hindi to serve as a common national language. It also advocated for the teaching of Sanskrit, considering it essential to India's cultural heritage. Furthermore, the policy recommended increasing education expenditure to six percent of the national income. However, as of 2013, the text of the NPE 1968 has moved location on the national website.

In 1986, the government led by Rajiv Gandhi introduced a new National Policy on Education. The new policy called for "special emphasis on the removal of disparities and to equalise educational opportunity," especially for Indian women, Scheduled Tribes(ST) and the Scheduled Caste(SC) communities. To achieve such a social integration, the policy called for expanding scholarships, adult education, recruiting more teachers from the SCs, incentives for poor families to send their children to school regularly, development of new institutions and providing housing and services. The NPE called for a "child-centred approach" in primary education, and launched "Operation Blackboard" to improve primary schools nationwide. The policy expanded the Open University system with the Indira Gandhi National Open University, which had been created in 1985. The policy also called for the creation of the "rural university" model, based on the philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi, to promote economic and social development at the grassroots level in rural India. 1986 education policy expected to spent 6% of GDP on education.

In 1992, the 1986 National Policy on Education was modified in 1992 by the P. V. Narasimha Rao government. In 2005, Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh adopted a new policy based on the "Common Minimum Programme" of his United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government. Programme of Action (PoA) 1992, under the National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986 envisaged to conduct of a common entrance examination on all India basis for admission to professional and technical programmes in the

country. For admission to Engineering and Architecture/Planning programmes, Government of India vide Resolution dated 18 October 2001 has laid down a Three – Exam Scheme (JEE and AIEEE at the National Level and the State Level Engineering Entrance Examinations (SLEEE) for State Level Institutions – with an option to join AIEEE). This takes care of varying admission standards in these programmes and helps in maintenance of professional standards. This also solves problems of overlaps and reduces physical, mental and financial burden on students and their parents due to multiplicity of entrance examinations.

In 2019, the Ministry of Human Resource Development released a Draft New Education Policy 2019, which was followed by a number of public consultations. The Draft NEP discusses reducing curriculum content to enhance essential learning, critical thinking and more holistic experiential, discussion-based and analysis-based learning. It also talks about a revision of the curriculum and pedagogical structure from a 10+2 system to a 5+3+3+4 system design in an effort to optimise learning for students based on cognitive development of children.

On 29th July 2020, the cabinet approved a new National Education Policy with an aim to introduce several changes to the existing Indian education system.

According to the government of India, the National Education Policy has all the promising key points that are expected to prove beneficial to enable an individual to study one or more specialized areas of interest at a deep level, along with developing a student's character, scientific temper, creativity, the spirit of service, and 21st-century capabilities across a range of disciplines including sciences, social sciences, arts, humanities, among others. The new NEP replaces the one that was formulated in 1986, which is around 34 years ago.

Research Objectives

1. To critically examine the implementation challenges and implications of using regional languages as the medium of instruction till Grade 5 in a multilingual country like India.
2. To evaluate the policy's approach towards English language education and its potential long-term effects on socio-economic mobility, global competitiveness, and digital literacy among Indian students.
3. To analyze the NEP 2020's vision for technological integration through the National Educational Technology Forum (NETF) and its effectiveness in reducing educational disparities across regions and social groups.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 aims to revamp all aspects of India's education system that was in place over three decades and bring it closer to the best global standards of education. The cabinet under the guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi has now given a nod to this new education policy for the 21st century. The new education policy has been applauded by many authorities and is regarded as a promising model of education reforms that have been brought in India.

NEP continues with the three-language formula and adds "The Languages of India" with an aim to preserve all local languages. According to the official reports, NEP has included a special point stating 'flexibility in the three-language formula' stating that 'students who wish to change one or more of the three languages they are studying may do so in Grade 6 or Grade 7, as long as they are able to still demonstrate proficiency in three languages'.

Global education access - An International Students Office at each institution hosting foreign students will be set up. 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.

No hard separation of arts and sciences - The new education policy aims to give students increased flexibility and choice of subjects to study across the arts, humanities, sciences, sports, and vocational subjects.

National Research Foundation - A National Research Foundation will be established to grant competitive funding for outstanding research proposals across all disciplines.

Rashtriya Shiksha Aayog - The Rashtriya Shiksha Aayog or National Education Commission will be headed by the Prime Minister of India. States may set up apex State-level bodies called the Rajya Shiksha Aayog or the State Education Commission.

One of the stated aims of the policy is to instill a "deep-rooted pride" in being Indian, not only in thought, but also in spirit, intellect, and deeds, as well as to develop knowledge, skills, values, and dispositions that support responsible commitment to human rights, sustainable development and living, and global well-being.

The policy also aims at "light but tight" regulation by a single regulator for higher education as well as o increased access, equity, and inclusion.

The NEP lays down that 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. There shall, by 2030, be at least one large multidisciplinary institution in or near every district.

The aim will be to increase the Gross Enrolment Ratio in higher education including vocational education from 26.3% to 50% by 2035.

Single-stream higher education institutions will be phased out over time, and all will move towards becoming multidisciplinary. The system of 'affiliated colleges' will be gradually phased out in 15 years.

The present complex nomenclature of HEIs in the country such as 'deemed to be university', 'affiliating university', 'affiliating technical university', 'unitary university' shall be replaced simply by 'university'.

A university will mean a multidisciplinary institution that offers undergraduate and graduate programmes, with high quality teaching, research, and community engagement. The definition will allow a spectrum of institutions ranging from those that place equal emphasis on teaching and research i.e., Research-intensive Universities to teaching-intensive Universities.

The present nomenclature such as 'deemed to be university', 'affiliating university', 'affiliating technical university', 'unitary university' will be done away with.

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.

Departments in Languages, Literature, Music, Philosophy, Indology, Art, Dance, Theatre, Education, Mathematics, Statistics, Pure and Applied Sciences, Sociology, Economics, Sports, Translation and Interpretation, etc. will be established and strengthened at all HEIs.

The undergraduate degree will be of either 3 or 4-year duration, with multiple exit options. For instance a certificate 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.

An Academic Bank of Credit (ABC) shall be established which would digitally store the academic credits earned.

The 4-year programme may also lead to a degree 'with Research' if the student completes a rigorous research project.

Model public universities for holistic and multidisciplinary education, at par with IITs, IIMs, etc., called MERUs (Multidisciplinary Education and Research Universities) will be set up

Higher education institutions shall move away from high-stakes examinations towards continuous and comprehensive evaluation.

India will be promoted as a global study destination providing premium education at affordable costs. An International Students Office at each institution hosting foreign students will be set up.

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.

A legislative framework facilitating such entry will be put in place, and such universities will be given special dispensation regarding regulatory, governance, and content norms on par with other autonomous institutions of India.

In every education institution, there shall be counselling systems for handling stress and emotional adjustments.

Efforts will be made to incentivize the merit of students belonging to SC, ST, OBC, and other SEDGs.

Vocational education will be integrated into all school and higher education institutions in a phased manner **over** the next decade. By 2025, at least 50% of learners through the school and higher education system shall have exposure to vocational education.

The B.Voc. Degrees introduced in 2013 will continue to exist, but vocational courses will also be available to students enrolled in all other Bachelor's degree programmes, including the 4-year multidisciplinary Bachelor's programmes.

Lok Vidya', i.e., important vocational knowledge developed in India, will be made accessible to students. The HRD ministry, which could be renamed education ministry, would constitute a National Committee for the Integration of Vocational Education (NCIVE)

The policy also speaks for creating a National Research Foundation (NRF).

The policy also mentions the creation of a Higher Education Commission of India (HECI).

The New National Education Policy 2020 is a step backwards and not forward

Knowledge and experience in both, education and linguistics, the loopholes in the main points of the NEP 2020 are highlight below -

1. Usage of home language, mother tongue or regional language till Class 5

Have we ever wondered about the existing status of vernaculars? In the Maithili Department of my college in Patna, there was only one teacher and two students back in 2003-2006. One of the texts in BA

(Hons) was probably written by a retired professor of the same college. There is not enough literature in the vernaculars. Creating all that in two months, publishing, and not to forget, training the teachers in that language is almost an impossible task, considering the pre-existing knowledge of the relevance of education in India (which is in the tertiary sector). I am presently teaching in a school in Uttarakhand and have zero knowledge of the Pahadi language. Will then, someone be appointed to teach me that? And what about students coming from afar? I have students in my classes who are Punjabi, Bihari, Tamilian and from so many other linguistic backgrounds. Who will tend to their mother tongues? Is this not widening the diversities? Diglossia is a condition where two languages can be easily used — one at home and one in the official settings. India is under that situation since the British Raj. Under no circumstances are we running the risk of making English the national language. It will only remain the link language and perhaps the official language, unlike America.

Using the mother tongue also means a lot of translation. And it also directly means wastage of the books available in Hindi and English.

If till Class 5, students are communicating in their mother tongues, do we start with the basics of English, in Class 6? Language development incorporates listening, speaking, reading and writing — in short, surrounding yourself with the language completely. The base of the link languages will be very weak, considering Hindi will be used for connecting for even those from the North-Eastern states, from the South and others who will not know Hindi anyway, and probably fall back on English again for almost every white-collar job, legalities and official communication. English, which is being transformed into an optional language from Class 6. That would indeed lead to greater impediments in communication.

The eminent schools will anyway not give up on English, and the gap would be wider between the influential and weaker sections. A lot of households depend on school education for learning the international language, English. Imagine the kind of impairment that will we witness.

2. Sanskrit to be mainstreamed

We proudly state that Sanskrit is called the mother of all languages. However, all literature that we have in it is ancient. Can you imagine the time that will go in updating it to the present needs? Do you know the Hindi equivalent used for the word “hospital”? It is “*haspataal*”. This is called a ‘borrowing’, to use the linguistics terminology. When a certain concept is not available in a particular language, that term or word is directly borrowed in the native language. Countless borrowings will happen in Sanskrit, which will eventually take out the essence of the language.

Again, new literature development will be required. What about teacher-training and availability of as many teachers to teach it as a mainstream language?

Sanskrit is the ancient language of the Hindu religion. Most of the literature available in Sanskrit is religious. Do we mean to teach Hindu religious texts across religions? Education is the right of every Indian. It is an umbrella under which every individual should feel safe and identify with the prevalent system. India is a secular state.

Unlike English and Hindi, Sanskrit is a scientific language with tables and declensions. I doubt if everyone can learn that. It is a classical language. Even the Buddha preached in Pali to be able to reach out to the masses.

English is an international language not just owing to colonisation, but also its capacity to incorporate changes which it has been doing since 450 AD. It grows from different soils over the world and we no longer ape BRP (British Received Pronunciations). Rather, we proudly use our GIE (General Indian English) as we have several Englishes on the global scenario.

3. English as optional till Class 8

In the global scenario, one does not need to stress more about the need for the English language. True, it all came due to colonisation, but even the Chinese are spending a lot of funds, resources and labour on learning the language. We have at least one advantage against them and we are sacrificing even that.

Language acquisition happens at an early age and if even formal teaching is done in the mother tongue, how can one ever have a confident hold on an optional language?

If English is to be bid goodbye, I hope the government realises that it means that all official work also needs to be done in mother tongue in the coming years. What about the Constitution? Till date, for passing a Bill in the Parliament, quite contradictorily, the ministers have to utter the 'ayes' and 'nays' which very clearly is copy-pasted from the British Constitution. For self-reliance at this level, we first need to train the teachers who are the torchbearers of education. A lot of funds will be required for teacher training, translations, publishing and so on.

4. Examinations only in Classes 3, 5 and 8

Examinations are not just for checking a student's potential, but a touchstone — a check and a preparation for education and life. If the foundation is laid thus, the future is definitely under question. Eliminating annual examinations from junior classes is not the solution. A more sensitive approach needs to bring about in parents and teachers to instill this life skill in children.

5. Board Examinations will become holistic and easier

In addition to the already-suffering syllabus of CBSE and State Boards and lack of competent teachers, this will ensure the standard of education falling further in the country. After Thomas Babington

Macaulay and Kapil Sibal's policies, NEP 2020 will have an equally catastrophic effect on Indian education.

For the nation to progress, there are numerous other important issues to be dealt with logically and practically. Population explosion is one such factor. Infrastructural loopholes and logistical issues need to be dealt with. Language should not impede the progress of a nation. Needless to mention, we have to reach the masses first. Patriotism is loyalty towards the welfare and progress of our nation and not blind support of recreating the past. Culture and language are ever-growing phenomena. We learn new lessons every day and change our mind-sets based on new experiences and knowledge. Let us live in the present, prepare for the future and have good memories of the past. John Dewey, an eminent educationist once said, "If we teach today as we taught yesterday, we rob our children of tomorrow."

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the recently launched NEP (New Education Policy) 2020 highlighted the usage of technology in education. A National Educational Technology Forum (NETF) has been created where the e-courses will be developed in regional languages and virtual labs will be developed. E-content will be developed in many regional languages other than English and Hindi in the new education policy in 2020. The ministry will use the technology in education planning, teaching-learning, and most importantly in the assessment.

Prospects of NETF:

NETF will be created to help enhance learning, assessment, planning, and administration.

- To support the professional development of teachers, improve classroom processes, enhance educational access for disadvantaged groups and streamline educational planning, administration, and management as an appropriate integration of technology into all levels of education.

The technology-oriented approach in school level:

With various new technical policies and changes in the existing education policies, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 reform announced that Indian school children from standard 6 onwards will be taught coding as a part of the Indian school syllabus/ curriculum that will help school students develop an early aptitude for programming and app development. If they like it, then that could encourage them to diversify in the field of developing innovative products and services for India and the world in the future.

The key role of technology in educating students:

NEP 2020 highlights stipulate appropriate integration of technology into all levels of Indian school education with the idea to better classroom processes and help the professional development of the educator. This will also include better means of education for disadvantaged groups, including specially-abled kids. Technology will also be used to streamline educational planning, administration, and management in Indian

schools and colleges going forward. Along with the inclusion of technology, the new policy has scrapped the 10+2 structure of the school curriculum, replacing it with a 5+3+3+4 pattern.

The NEP 2020 reform also seeks to boost research across a higher perspective of education by setting up a National Research Foundation. Again it is a very appealing step to address the skill gap between what students are taught in academic institutions and what they are expected to do in a professional environment. The policy has focused on industry-based skill empowerment that lays importance on creativity and innovation, which are the key factors for someone to excel in the 21st century. It proposes a new National Educational Technology Forum and induction of new-aged technologies such as online learning platforms AI-driven customized learning solutions, video-based learning, peer-to-peer learning, etc.

It also encourages the establishment of dedicated institutions that specialize in offering a curriculum that helps the students to grow their understanding of future technologies, and develop a spirit of innovation and problem-solving at a global scale.

Implementation of E-learning:

According to the HRD sources, the NEP 2020 is set to include more online and e-learning options at both school and college levels to make it more technology-oriented. Especially, in the wake of the lockdown, this is in line with the MHRD's current policy of teaching students through different e-resources.

In the education sector, special emphasis was given on the use of technology through enhanced learning and adapting by the use of technology such as online classes, education portal and class-wise broadcast on dedicated education channels. As education institutions are shut for quite a long time, platforms like DIKSHA, SWAYAM, and E-Pathshala have been recommended by the ministry for college and school students.

So, yes definitely this New Education Policy 2020 reform will be technologically driven as the new policy is planning to digitally equip schools, students, and teachers.

Conclusion

The New Education Policy (NEP) 2020 presents a transformative vision for the Indian education system, emphasizing holistic, multidisciplinary learning, increased access and equity, technological integration, and the revitalization of Indian knowledge systems. Its ambitious goals—such as increasing the Gross Enrolment Ratio to 50% by 2035, creating multidisciplinary institutions in every district, and mainstreaming vocational education—signal a progressive move toward global competitiveness and inclusivity. However, the policy has been critiqued for its linguistic approach, particularly the prioritization of mother tongues and Sanskrit over English, which could widen socio-economic disparities and alienate non-native speakers in diverse classrooms. While promoting vernaculars fosters cultural identity, the practical challenges of training teachers, creating resources, and ensuring consistent quality across

languages remain unresolved. The optional status of English until Class 8 may disadvantage students in global and professional arenas. Additionally, the elimination of annual examinations in lower grades and the promise of “easier” board exams may compromise academic rigour. Though the introduction of technological forums like NETF and coding from Class 6 are forward-looking steps, the digital divide and infrastructural gaps pose significant hurdles for equitable implementation. The NEP’s vision to decolonize education and instill national pride is admirable, yet its execution risks romanticizing tradition at the cost of present-day pragmatism. Moreover, the policy's secular framework is questioned by the promotion of Sanskrit, potentially marginalizing non-Hindu communities. While institutions like MERUs and initiatives like the Academic Bank of Credit aim to modernize higher education, the overall success of NEP 2020 hinges on nuanced implementation, adequate funding, teacher training, and adaptability to India’s socio-cultural realities. In essence, NEP 2020 is a well-intentioned blueprint that aspires to reform education for the future but requires critical introspection, inclusive policy-making, and practical groundwork to ensure it does not become a step backward cloaked in visionary rhetoric.

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