

# **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 on Transforming Education A Critical Analysis of Recommendations on School, Teacher and Higher Education**

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## **Abstract**

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*The National Education Policy 2020 had been notified on 29th July 2020 after 34 years of the implementation of National Policy on Education (1986). Detail structural and pedagogical changes have been recommended in Early Childhood Care and Education, School Education as well as Teacher and Higher Education. Beginning from the fundamental principles of the constitution of NEP 2020, a sign of transformation in education and its implementation practices have been focused in every part of NEP 2020. This article focuses on the history of educational development of India and analyses some of the major recommendations of NEP 2020 on different aspects. The article discusses the vision of transforming education by implementing NEP 2020 in the major three areas of its recommendations such as School, Teacher and Higher Education. A critical analysis has also been made against the specific recommendations in each section of the policy and a consolidated summary and discussion has also been made.*

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## THE HISTORY

University Education Commission (1948–49), popularly known as Radhakrishnan Commission was the first education commission established in independent India. Though the commission has focused on the University system of education, but, it has equally dealt with the other stages of education also. The second Education Commission was set up in India in the name of Secondary Education Commission (1952–53). The commission focused on the issues of secondary education of the country. Further, the country evidences the National Education Commission (1964–66). The commission had submitted its recommendations from primary level to the higher education system. On the basis of the report of Kothari Commission (1964–66), the then Prime Minister announced the first National Policy on Education in 1968 which talks about ‘radical restructuring’ of education for achieving equal educational opportunities in order to achieve national integration and greater cultural and economic development. Further in 1986, the then Prime Minister introduced a new National Policy on Education catering to the needs of shaping the structure and functioning of school education to higher education system. 10+2+3 system of education (10 years of school education, 2 years of higher/senior secondary education and 3 years of degree/college education) was very much popular during that

time and it was implemented across the country.

On the basis of NPE 1986, many schemes on education started in the name of ‘Operation Blackboard’, establishment of Open Universities, concept of Rural University. Further, the NPE 1986 was modified in 1992 in the name of Programme of Action (PoA) of NPE 1986.

After more than three decades of NPE 1986, presently India has witnessed the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.

## NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY 2020—THE VISION

National Education Policy envisions an education system rooted in Indian ethos that contributes directly to transforming India, that is Bharat, sustainably into an equitable and vibrant knowledge society, by providing high-quality education to all, and thereby making India a global knowledge superpower’ (NEP 2020, p. 6).

It emphasises to reflect Indian knowledge system, values, and ethos in education system where the young minds realise the traditional knowledge structure of Bharat and to shape a modern system of education by developing a sustainable vibrant knowledge society by providing quality education to all and maintaining equity and equality. The NEP 2020 has been developed particularly to achieve the global education development agenda reflected in Goal 4 (SDG4) of the 2030

Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by India in 2015 that seeks to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” by 2030.

This article specifically focuses on the development of an objective and strategic plan to the realisation and its implementation of the vision of NEP 2020. Let us now focus on different parts of NEP 2020 and management of its strategic intent towards its effective implementation.

## **NEP 2020 ON SCHOOL**

### **EDUCATION—RECOMMENDATIONS AND CRITICAL ANALYSIS**

India is one of the largest systems of school education in the world so far its number of schools and its different types, quantum of students and teachers and its management is concerned. There is a paradigm shift in the school education pedagogical and curricular structure in the NEP 2020 in comparison to earlier system of education. The pedagogical structure of existing 10+2 system of school education (10 years of school education up to Class X and 2 years of higher secondary education, i.e., Classes XI and XII or +2, i.e., Junior College) as per the NPE 1986 has been transformed to a new pedagogical school education structure in the present NEP 2020, i.e., 5+3+3+4 system of education (5 years of foundational education including three years of pre-school and two years of Classes I and II;

3 years of preparatory education, i.e., Classes III, IV and V; 3 years of middle school education, i.e., Classes VI, VII and VIII; and 4 years of secondary education, i.e., Classes IX, X, XI and XII).

In this new pedagogical structure of school education, this is for the first time that care has been taken to formalise Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) as it is a part of broad formal structure of school education. Now this has become a part of the foundational stage of education. Further, the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act which is popularly known as Right to Education Act (RTE Act, 2009) says that the State should provide free and compulsory elementary education starting from Classes I to VIII. These eight years of fundamental right of school education is a part till the completion of middle stage of education as per the pedagogical structure of School Education. Again, two years of secondary education, i.e., Classes IX and X is included in the scheme of Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) since March 2009 (MHRD, 2009), and now it is a part of Samagra Shiksha (MHRD, 2018–19) which subsumes the three earlier schemes such as Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) (MHRD, 2018–19) and Teacher Education (TE).

The above developments narrate a wider concept of school education in India so far its implementation

is concerned. In NEP 2020, specific aspects on implementation of school education have been highlighted as follows:

- Making Early Childhood Care and Education an integrated part of school education and for that, there is a need of developing a National Curricular and Pedagogical Framework for Early Childhood Care and Education (NCPFECCE) for the children up to the age of 8 (till the completion of foundational stage). This will be developed by NCERT in line with the National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCFSE).
- This is a welcoming step that for the first time, this has been documented with an intent to formalise Early Childhood Care and Education as this stage which prepares the mind of the children for formal education.
- National Mission on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy has been recommended to be set up by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) to attain foundational literacy and numeracy in primary schools by 2025.
- Attaining foundational literacy and numeracy at the early years of school education is very important as it has been observed that students are not able to attain the minimum level of learning in terms of foundational literacy and numeracy that is required at a particular stage (NCERT, 2017).
- Realising the Pupil-Teacher Ratio (PTR) of 30:1 in all the schools with special care to achieve the PTR of 25:1 in the areas having large numbers of socio-economically disadvantaged students. It improves the earlier practice of PTR as recommended in RTE Act 2009, i.e., PTR of 30:1 at the lower primary level (Classes I to V) and 35:1 at the upper primary level (Classes VI to VIII) (RTE Act, 2009).
- This is a way forward for achieving quality education at the foundational, preparatory and middle stages as it puts a strong construction for further education of the child. This is possible when classrooms should not be overcrowded and adequate number of students are given the teachers to deal with.
- Curtailing dropout rates and ensuring universal access to education at all levels in terms of specifically bringing back about 3.22 crore dropout school children in the age-group of 6–17 years to the mainstream of school education system. The challenge is just not educating them but also to develop skills and competencies among them through vocational education so that they can engage themselves meaningfully in the world of work.
- This recommendation encourages the idea of achieving 100 per cent

literacy not only in number, but also with providing quality skill-based education. This can be possible though lifelong learning integrated with varieties of skills and competencies. A dedicated section of Lifelong Learning in NEP 2020 shows the importance to curtail dropout rates and ensure universal access.

- Addressing specific pedagogical concerns in school education curriculum in terms of realising conceptual understanding of the curriculum components, holistic and experiential learning, critical thinking, peer and collaborative learning, problem solving, research and innovation, eliminating hard separation in Arts and Sciences, achieving 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, providing wider choices of subjects at the secondary stage, etc., are evidence of shifting from an inter disciplinary teaching-learning environment towards practicing a multi en and trans-disciplinary approach of teaching-learning practices in the schools.
- The above pedagogical concerns are articulated in NEP 2020 in line with the existing National Curriculum Framework (NCF 2005) and further, it is going to be reshaped through the new National Curriculum Framework for School Education. Constructivist approach of teaching-learning process, connecting life experiences of the children and developing a learner-centered school education system at par with global standards is very much evident from the recommendations. It shows a clear transformation of school education.
- Development of National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCFSE) as per the new pedagogical and curricular structure and National Curricular and Pedagogical Framework for Early Childhood Care and Education (NCFECCE) by NCERT in line with the vision, fundamental principles and specific recommendations of NEP 2020 on school education curriculum.
- Addressing local knowledge and practices in a national level curriculum is always a challenge. But a clear reflection is evident in the policy that the curriculum will provide enough scope for addressing local practices and knowledge, diversities in form of languages, cultures, social settings, occupations, etc.
- Ten-day bagless period in grades 6 to 8 at the middle stage of school education emphasises learning outcomes based on ensuring skills and competencies and to acquaint the learners with the required proficiency in education.
- National debate on reducing curriculum load at the school education stage may be well accommodated with the practicing

of ten-day bagless curriculum. After all, acquisition of contextual skills and competencies from the school curriculum are the prime requirements for the learners.

- Practicing mother tongue as a medium of instruction, both at the private and public schools at least till the completion of Class V preferably till Class VIII is one of the important recommendations of NEP 2020.
- The above language practices, specifically for implementing mother tongue as medium of instruction in both types of schools needs to be planned and executed properly as India is a multi-lingual country and it has many diversities so far as languages, cultures, traditions, and local lifestyle is concerned.
- Development of learning resources (textbooks) for the students at the school level is recommended to develop national textbooks with local content and flavour and also to be published in multiple languages. It develops spirit among the young students that the content which has been included in the textbooks are not the matter of another world, but, that is truly related with the life of the students.
- Recommendations of a learner-centered constructivist assessment strategy for moving from rote learning to authentic system of continuous assessment culture in the school is one of the important concerns of the NEP 2020. A holistic practice of 360-degree multi-dimensional assessment strategy which includes learning progress as well as uniqueness of each learner in their cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains is also recommended.
- Implementation of varieties of assessment techniques may it be self or peer assessment, practice of project and enquiry based learning and assessment strategy, quizzes, role-play, group work, portfolios, etc., emphasises for developing a culture of assessment for enhancing learning by continuous comprehensive assessment.
- Implications for improving school performance in terms of authentic and quality learning by the students, ensuring access and equity for all, achieving learning outcomes, acquisition of values and life skills, addressing the need of Children With Special Needs (CWSN) in the inclusive schools, governance of the schools in terms of allocation of funds by the central and state Governments, etc. are the major focuses for realizing quality schooling of the children.
- The proposal of setting up a National Assessment Centre, PARAKH (Performance Assessment, Review, and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development) as a standard-setting body under MHRD that

fulfils the basic objectives of setting norms, standards, and guidelines for student assessment and evaluation for all types of schools.

- The above recommendation will deal with issues relating to achieving a definite education standard and maintaining outcome-based learning in different subjects, especially in foundational literacy and numeracy.
- Retaining of two board examinations at the secondary stage at the completion of Classes X and XII with an exit option at Class X for joining various vocational courses is also a way forward for engaging the learners in various skill oriented vocational courses.
- Skills and competencies cannot be separated from any academic programme. It is therefore, with vertical mobility that there should be horizontal mobility so far as liberal education and vocational skill based education is concerned. Exit after Class X and joining vocational education branch is definitely a welcoming step.
- Engaging the National Testing Agency (NTA) in a big way for conducting high quality common aptitude test as well as specialised common subject, exam of different subjects, at least twice every year with the purpose to enable most universities to use these common entrance exams rather than having hundreds of universities each devising their own entrance exams.
- Conducting common aptitude test by NTA can solve many questions about maintaining transparency in admission system, making examinations economical in terms of time, money and effort, and maintaining parity in examination with the syllabi across the universities.
- Extension of Teacher Eligibility Test for teacher recruitment at all stages of school examination, i.e., at the Foundational, Preparatory, Middle and Secondary stages is again a welcoming step for ensuring quality in education.
- Implantation of 50 hours of Continuous Professional Development through online and other modes for every teacher on various contextual themes emphasises the establishment of a culture to acquaint the teachers with various recent developments that happen across the globe.
- Continuous professional development of teachers is one of the needs of the hour as knowledge, pedagogy and technology are continuously changing. It is therefore, making it compulsory for attaining 50 hours of CPD (online or blended) as another step for providing quality education at the school level.

### **NEP 2020 on Teacher Education—Recommendations and Critical Analysis**

This has been observed in the recent past that teacher education is undergoing a crisis, not in terms of quantity but quality. Mushroom growth of teacher education somehow neglects its quality parameters. In NEP 2020, this has been realised that a transformation strategy of teacher education has been planned to take care of preparing quality and dedicated teachers. Let us focus upon some of the highlights in the NEP 2020 on teacher education.

- Moving teacher education gradually into multidisciplinary colleges and universities by 2030 so that the trainees will undergo subject and pedagogical studies simultaneously and prepare themselves effectively with the required knowledge base, skills and competencies.
- Establishing huge multidisciplinary institutions requires much funding for development of resources, both human and material. Again, ensuring quality education in the multi-disciplinary institute is also another concern as it is difficult to find quality teachers in different subject areas.
- By 2030, a four-year integrated B.Ed. degree programme will be the minimum qualification of the teachers. Only the multidisciplinary institutions (colleges and the universities)

are recommended to offer this integrated B.Ed. programme.

- The recommendation seems unrealistic as a single four-year teacher education programme may not solve the requirement of teachers in the country and it also brings limitation for the choices of pursuing a teacher education programme at any stage of one's life.
- Apart from the above, NEP 2020 has also given its recommendations that the multidisciplinary higher education institutions offering the four-year in-class integrated B.Ed. programme and having accreditation for ODL may also offer high-quality B.Ed. programmes in blended or ODL mode to students in remote or difficult-to-access locations and also to in-service teachers who are aiming to enhance their qualification.
- This is one of the welcoming steps by the NEP that the strength of blended and ODL system of education, particularly in teacher education has been realised.

### **NEP 2020 on Higher Education—Recommendations and Critical Analysis**

Keeping in consideration of the achievement of the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, quality higher education must aim to develop good, thoughtful, well-rounded, and creative individuals. Maintaining quality in the higher education system depends upon a



culture of quality school education system in the country. The specific recommendations that we have discussed in the school education section provides a clue to shape a progressive and forward look of taking up higher education issues in the country. Higher education substantially contributes towards sustainable livelihoods and economic developments in the country. It further works for achievement of the constitutional obligations through our higher education system in view of establishing a democratic, just, socially conscious, cultured, and humane nation upholding liberty, equality, equity, fraternity, and justice for all. Focusing on the fundamental principles of NEP 2020, the specific recommendations that have been given in NEP 2020 are as follows:

- Making higher education multidisciplinary and providing students with a wide range of choices of subjects and disciplines in their degree and further education.
- Establishing a National Research Foundation for prioritising research in higher education system as it is one of the integral parts of higher education system with regular teaching.
- Governance of higher education system is always full of events over the years and the issues need to be addressed through a single regulatory body in higher education.
- Implementation of an alternative system of education like online, blended and ODL education is the need of the hour for increasing Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) and to maintain access, equity, and inclusion through a range of measures, including greater opportunities for outstanding public education; scholarships by private/philanthropic universities for disadvantaged and underprivileged students.
- Moving to convert all higher education institutions as multidisciplinary institutions by 2030 and to increase substantial students' strengths in thousands and accordingly, development of infrastructure and other quality requirements by 2040.
- The target of achieving Gross Enrollment Ratio in higher education including vocational education from 26.3 per cent (in 2018) to 50 per cent by 2035 is another vision before NEP 2020 to materialise through planning and transformation in higher education system. In this regard, the role of Open Universities, Online and ODL systems of education have been appreciated and recommended to work for increasing GER.
- Replacing the multiple concept of higher education institutions such as 'deemed to be university', 'affiliating university', 'affiliating technical university', 'unitary university' simply by a name of

‘university’ on fulfilling the criteria as per norms. It should focus on undergraduate, graduate, and post graduate, Ph.D. programmes, and engage in high-quality teaching and research.

- Provision of establishing model public universities for holistic and multidisciplinary education, at par with IITs, IIMs, etc., called MERUs (Multidisciplinary Education and Research Universities) to be set up that will aim to attain the highest global standards in quality education. They will also help set the highest standards for multidisciplinary education across India (NEP 2020).
- The above recommendation will help not only to move from an interdisciplinary teaching-learning environment but also towards a multi-trans-disciplinary teaching-learning environment. Further, the recommendation also emphasises to establish institutions of higher learning at par with the global standards thus aiming to come in global institutional ranking.
- The existing Choice Based Credit System (CBCS) of education at the UG and PG levels will be retained with its revised form for providing wider multidisciplinary subject choices to the students and credit transfer from one institute to an other at the same level and programme.
- The existing CBCS system of UG and PG curriculum provides wider opportunity and scope to the learners for selecting subjects of their own choice and to study the skill-based courses that will further help the learners to engage themselves in world of work. It is the need of the hour to make the CBCS based curriculum more skill and competency based. The implementation of the above recommendation will work in this direction.
- A substantial visionary statement has been made to bring back the concept of Vishwa Guru and to restore its glory by internationalising education and to facilitate international students in India. Specific recommendations in this regard focus on establishment of an International Students Office in every higher education institution, permitting top 100 universities in the world to operate in India and to operate high performing Indian universities/institutions in other countries.
- The above recommendation emphasises to break the isolation in the higher education system and to make the system flexible, movable and work in collaboration with international organisations and bodies. Knowledge sharing and movement of students are possible when we have a quality institution that performs as per the global requirements. The recommendation will work in this regard.

- NEP 2020 has emphasised for the high take up in engaging 50 per cent of learners through the school and higher education system shall have exposure to vocational education by 2025. In this regard, the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) has already been engaged for providing vocational and skill-based education to the candidates and further it needs to be integrated with various higher education programmes. The NSDC achievement with 538 training partners, 10,373 training centres, 20.45 lakh trained in different skills, and 1.86 lakh placements by 2019–20 is really significant and further it needs to be incorporated with higher education system (NSDC, 2019–20).
- The above recommendations on incorporation of skill components in higher education, liberal and professional programmes and integrating skills as part of every course in academic programmes is a visionary step as the value of any academic programme is to prepare individuals for engaging themselves in world of work and to live their life. In CBCS based UG and PG curriculum, it is already present but there is a need to revisit it and further skill components need to be included where there is a scope to include.
- The NEP 2020 envisions the establishment of a National Research Foundation (NRF) with the overarching goal to enable a culture of research in our universities, its funding, bringing quality in research and funding both in academic and systemic researches.
- Research one of the pillars of any higher education system. Prioritising research is to bring higher education institutions at par with the global standards. The proposed National Research Foundation should focus upon the systematic and innovative areas to promote research, providing requisite funds for it and to prepare a dedicated team of researchers to conduct research.
- Establishment of a common and single point regulator for higher education in the name of the National Higher Education Regulatory Council (NHERC) will function for four institutional structures such as regulation, accreditation, funding, and academic standard setting.
- The above recommendation is the need of the hour as it has been observed that there is lack of coordination between the regulatory bodies, institutions, accreditation, etc. Establishment of NHERC may solve many difficulties relating to regulatory functions at the same time to bring transparency in the higher education system.
- Use of online education system and digitalising resources for easy

dissemination of knowledge is now an unavoidable requirement. The benefits of knowledge and its dissemination should not only be limited for few sections of the society or in the urban areas. It should reach the remote areas and its students should access the best teaching and quality learning resources. This is possible by using and promoting technology in education. SWAYAM based online courses and other digital learning initiatives of the Government are working in this line, but there is a need to look into the difficulties coming in it and accordingly implement into the mainstream education.

### **SUMMARY AND DISCUSSIONS**

The vision and fundamental principles of NEP 2020 is no doubt based upon an objective progressive thought. This has been articulated keeping in consideration the developments taking place around the globe at the recent time and with a prospective implementation. As mentioned above in the school, teacher and higher education system, there is a need to maintain equitable development among the institutions in terms of its vertical and horizontal growth both in quantity and quality. Creating a just society and achieving equality, equity and quality in education system, which is a pre-requisite of our Constitution, is possible by timely implementing the recommendations highlighted in NEP 2020.

The huge system of education may be school or higher education that caters to more than 260.597 million students (Classes I–XII) in school education with more than 1.522 million schools (MHRD, 2018) and 51,649 higher education institutions including 993 Universities; 10,725 stand alone institutions and 39,931 colleges (Statistics, 2020) catering to 37.4 million students (MHRD, 2018–19) is the second largest system in the world. While catering to such a large quantity, maintaining equitable quality is definitely a challenge before all the concerns. Another important aspect is the huge diversity in India in terms of languages, culture, traditions, lifestyle, habits and belief. We consider all our diversities as our strengths and it makes us live united, irrespective of all our diversities. Maintaining an equitable quality in education in a wide diverse society needs a complete strategic plan of action and its fruitful implementation.

Making education system multilingual, promoting local knowledge and tradition, developing learning resources in multiple languages, maintaining parity between uniform and localised curriculum, reducing curriculum load by incorporating hands-on-activities and skill-based curriculum practices, developing vocational education parallel, making assessment system authentic and observation based and transparent, etc., are the major concerns for implementing the policy.

NEP 2020, in this regard provides a way forward and clear cut path to follow for achieving the goals. Vision of NEP 2020 cannot be achieved in a fragmented way; rather it can be achieved inclusively and holistically. It is therefore, from the beginning onwards of the foundational stage of education towards the higher and professional education, this has been evident that with the recommendations a suitable strategic implementation plan has also been discussed in the vision document. It may be in terms of establishment of National Curricular and Pedagogical Framework for Early Childhood Care and Education (NCPFECCE) by 2021, National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCFSE) by 2021, National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (NCFTE) by 2021, National Higher Education Regulatory Council (NHERC), and other such national councils and bodies within a specific time bound period.

Spherically, when we talk about working of the policies and schemes on the field, it needs a lot of brainstorming, ground work, commitment to translate the policy into practice, involving all the stakeholders in the execution of the policies and schemes with defining their duties and roles, judicious investment in the institutions and a strong willpower of the Union and the State Governments. One of the beautiful things that can be mentioned here is that the Union Government has already been very proactive to translate the policy into

practice and to implement it in its totality. This is evident that some of the recommendations have also been implemented or in the process of implementation. In this regard, nationwide discussions and debates have been started for formalising the implementation plan of NEP 2020. The national and state level councils, national institutions, regulatory bodies, universities, colleges, research institutions, government functionaries, non-government organizations, private bodies both at the central and state levels have already started in-depth discussions for framing the implementation plan to execute the policy.

Apart from the constructive efforts made as mentioned in the above paragraph, there is a need to be realistic that in the strategic plan which aspects of the policy should be implemented immediately and which later. An institutional time frame needs to be finalised to transform their courses and curriculum in line with the principles of the policy. All the stakeholders should feel responsible for things they are supposed to do. It includes appropriate Governments, institutions, regulatory bodies, national institutions, experts, teachers, parents, community members, non-government organizations, etc.

The country is very hopeful that the third national policy on education in the form of National Education Policy (NEP 2020) which is realised after 34 years of the implementation of the second National Policy on Education

(NPE, 1986) will be implemented into truly a Vishwa Guru and to lead minutely with its sections and sub- the country ahead in all aspects of its sections for transforming this country development.

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