



An Analytical Review of NEP 2020

DR. BIJAL MISTRY
Assistant Professor,
Anand Education College, Anand
Gujarat (India)

1. Introduction

Since India's independence in 1947, the Union government has formed various educational policies and commissions to improve the education system and illiteracy levels in India. The first National Education Policy was formed in 1968 which was later modified in the years 1986 and 1992. After almost three decades, a revolutionary change was brought to the Indian Education system by the formulation of National Education Policy 2020. It aims for an Indian education system that focuses directly on transforming our nation sustainably.

into an equitable and vibrant knowledge society, by providing high quality education to all. But much of its success depends upon its execution. If it is implemented in its true vision, the new structure can bring India at par with the leading countries of the world.

2. Key features of NEP 2020

- It emphasizes the criticality of early childhood education and the persistence of its advantages throughout an individual's life.
- It recognizes the learning difficulties in language and mathematics during the primary school years and its impact on children.
- It appreciates the progress in enrollment and it expresses concern at our inability to retain all children in school till Grade 12.
- It envisages a new curricular and pedagogical structure for school education that is responsive and relevant to the needs and interests of learners at different stages of their development.
- It aims to transform curriculum & pedagogy by 2022 to encourage holistic development with minimal rote learning.
- It aims to shape an education system that benefits all of India's children.
- This Policy reiterates the thought that quality education is dependent upon the quality of the teacher.
- It aims to ensure rigorous teacher preparation in vibrant multidisciplinary institutions.
- It plans to render the school governance more effective and efficient while facilitating the sharing of resources through school infrastructure.
- It believes that regulation must become an engine of educational improvement and energize India's school education system.
- It aims to appropriately integrate tech into all levels of Indian education system.
- It believes that vocational education must be an important part of education. Thus, it aims to provide access to vocational education to at least 50% of all learners by 2025.
- It aims to achieve 100 youth and adult literacy by 2030 and significantly expand adult and continuing education programmes.
- The Policy will make sure the preservation, growth, and vibrancy of all Indian languages.
- Higher education has a new vision and architecture under the Policy with large, well resourced, vibrant multidisciplinary institutions.

- The Policy envisages an imaginative and broad based liberal undergraduate education with rigorous specialization in chosen disciplines and fields.
- It envisions a joyful, rigorous and responsive curriculum, engaging and effective pedagogy, and caring support to optimize learning and the overall development of students.
- Quality and engagement by faculty is important for the success of higher education: this Policy puts faculty back into the heart of higher education.
- It sees independent, self governed higher education institutions with capable and ethical leadership as a driver of educational change.
- This Policy aims to set up effective and responsive rules and regulations to encourage academic excellence and public hope in higher education.
- It aims to build a holistic approach to the preparation of professionals, by ensuring broad based competencies, an understanding of the social human context, a strong ethical compass, in addition to the highest quality professional capacities.
- This Policy emphasizes strongly on catalyzing and energizing research and innovation across the country in all academic disciplines.
- Rashtriya Siksha Aayog- the Indian education system needs inspiring leadership which will also ensure excellence of execution.
- This Policy is committed to raising educational investment- there is no better investment towards society's future.

3. Challenges in implementation of NEP

The extension of free and compulsory education from only grades 1-8 to preschool and secondary levels is welcome and overdue; yet one wonders how the costs of doing this will be met. 1993, the Supreme Court mandated in the Unnikrishnan case that every child below the age of 14 years had a right to free education, yet when the RTE Act was finally passed it only included children between the ages of 6 to 14 years because the country could not afford the cost of preschool. Extending compulsory education both to preschool and secondary education will require a very large financial fund.

We have had enough experience in the last few decades of the short cuts that can be adopted by states in implementing such well-intentioned strategies, and it would be a pity to witness a recurrence.

The dilution of minimum infrastructure as presently required by the Act would be a heaven-sent boon for operators of low-cost budget schools, but will need to be accompanied by strong measures that ensure achievement of the envisaged outcomes. Failure to institute such measures would only result in a large proportion of students being denied a minimum learning environment and actual learning.

The policy's failure to address the role of the private sector in school education in a is somewhat disappointing. Available data indicates that nearly 45 percent of school students are enrolled in some form of private school and this proportion increases each year; at the secondary level, nearly two-thirds of all schools are under private management. This could have been an opportunity to break with the past and introduce a regulated investment framework for private provisioning in recognition of the reality that such schools are here to stay, but it seems to have been sidestepped.

A provision causing some controversy has been the policy's recommendation to teach in the mother tongue at the primary level, and if possible, up to class 8. A significant concern though, would be the availability of trained teachers to handle such multi-lingual teaching as well as several of the other measures proposed.

4. Policy Pitfalls

Various aspects of the policy will further class divides in Indian society. The mandatory vocational training is likely (in keeping with historical trends of caste differentiation) to be directed with greater

vigour towards systemically downtrodden sections; particularly towards the lower castes who have consistently been confined to professions of manual labour. Moreover, the aim of digitalisation is feasible only in urban developed areas owing to the dearth of resources. The encouragement of digital libraries in public and private schools, modern digital-enabled classrooms in every Higher Educational Institute (HEI), and the exposure to digital literacy and coding are all utopian aspirations in underdeveloped rural educational institutes which scarcely have adequate infrastructure to support the same. Thus, the policy may see the further advancement of the privileged, while increasing their in consonance with the underprivileged.

Under the garb of multilingualism benefitting cognitive abilities, the NEP attempts to strip India of one of its greatest strengths –effective communication in English. The proposed medium of instruction is regional languages preferably till Grade 5, which will have the higher classes learning English at private schools or at home, at the disadvantage of first-generation English speakers from the lower strata. The plight of people with transferrable jobs within our multilingual nation remains ignored.

The policy aspires to the internationalisation at the university level, wherein some among the top 100 universities in the world will be permitted to operate in India. This seems far-reaching and provides no incentive to foreign universities to collaborate. Moreover, while there is a clause requiring a legislative framework facilitating entry, there is no provision for funding, which is problematic as fees for private foreign institutions would be exorbitant for the majority; thereby being exclusionary. At the same time, the emphasis on internationalisation would seemingly lower the comparative worth of premiere national institutions.

The policy envisages a regulatory approach mandating full public disclosure of finances and procedures and aims at reducing the commercialisation of education which is a fundamental right. In doing so, it encourages public-private partnerships (PPP), and public-spirited private schools. While said commercialisation is to be curbed through a mechanism of checks and balances, the policy specifies neither what those checks are, nor what will incentivise private institutions to be philanthropic. This move is, therefore, quite a travesty, as it may lead to greater privatisation along with the harms that come with it, including higher fees.

The education framework at large has been revamped instead of making gradual progress towards the goals laid down by the RTE. The policy must not be misused as a tool to supersede the RTE, since it has not been created in consonance with the same; as this would pose a grave threat to the constitutionality of the policy.

The vision to grant all HEIs academic and administrative autonomy over a phased-out span of fifteen years, and to mandate colleges currently affiliated to a university to become autonomous degree-granting colleges is a misguided one. While it is maintained that the autonomy of public institutions will be backed by public financial support and stability, this claim is dubious. The removal of institutional affiliations is likely to result in mismanagement and uncertainty, at least until the phasing-out process is complete, especially as the extent of public financial support is not confirmed.

Education being in the concurrent list, this policy needs co-operation from the states for acceptable execution. The NEP ignores the balance of power between the Centre and States while making the decisions. Unsatisfactory answers to the states' concerns are bound to obstruct implementation.

The NEP, 2020 mentions the undergraduate degree as being a 3 or 4-year programme, failing to learn from history. A similar experiment with regard to the 4-year undergraduate programme undertaken by Delhi University, owing to improper implementation, was scrapped years ago. The policy does not provide any solutions to the problems earlier encountered, particularly considering the failures of a longer degree with less specialisation. Under the National Testing Agency (NTA), a non-compulsory,

application-based common entrance exam will be conducted to test conceptual understanding for admissions to all universities and colleges for undergraduate degrees.

However, standardised testing is inherently problematic especially with a wide range of diversities as exists in India. No provision mentions lower cut-offs within these standardised tests for backward classes that are victims of an unlevelled playing field. Moreover, common admission tests are more likely, owing to their rigid uniformity, to fail to gain a holistic grasp of a student's capabilities; while the teaching process too will be narrowed down to fit the limited scope of these tests in order to maximise scores at the cost of meritocracy.

The policy commits to significantly raising educational investment, without identifying the source of this additional financial burden. While pointing out the past failure to reach the stated goal of 6% public spending on education, the policy fails to spell out how it will overcome the pre-existing obstacles. The NEP mentions various utopian changes with introducing greater infrastructure, building new institutions and creating various bodies, but doesn't mention a plan of action, or the funding sources for the same.

5. Conclusion

NEP 2020 lays out an encouragingly hopeful vision for the future if successive governments can stay true to it. However, for it to be a truly national vision, it would be appropriate for it to be discussed and adopted by Parliament in the manner that the National Policy on Education 1986 was, which allowed it to stand the test of time. Without parliamentary approval, any such policy remains an executive decision which runs the risk of being arbitrarily overturned by a future government.

While numerous portentous promises are made by the NEP, 2020, they are scarcely time-bound or guaranteed. It establishes no mandatory mechanism for the enforcement and universalisation of the proposed changes. While briefly mentioning the creation of a Rashtriya Shiksha Aayog, but does not specify the scope or method of its functioning.

The highly ambitious and largely rhetorical policy, owing to its inherent classism, casteism and lack of clarity regarding implementation showcases the government's lackadaisical attitude towards education. The NEP, 2020 would benefit from an overhaul, incorporating changes in accordance to the interests of all major stakeholders, especially those who are most disadvantaged in *status quo*, after deliberation with experts in the field.

Reference

1. Chopra, Ritika (2 August 2020). "Explained: Reading the new National Education Policy 2020". The Indian Express. Retrieved 2 August 2020.
2. Dudharejiya, Krutika Critical Analysis of National Education Policy 2020
3. Kumari, Anisha, ed. (30 July 2020). "National Education Policy 2020: UGC, AICTE, NAAC To Be Merged in A New Body". NDTV.com. Retrieved 9 August 2020.
4. National Education Policy 2020, Ministry of Human Resource Development, https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/NEP_Final_English_0.pdf accessed on 4th June 2021.
5. NDTV educational news, <https://www.ndtv.com/education/nep-2020-board-exams-be-made-easier-says-education-ministry> accessed on 4th June 2021.
6. New Education Policy 2020 Highlights: School and higher education to see major changes, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/education/new-education-policy-2020-live-updates-important-takeaways/story-yYm1QaeNyFW4uTTU3g9bJO.html> accessed on 6th June 2021.
7. 3.5 Key things regarding National Education Policy 2020, <https://www.mindler.com/blog/national-education-policy/> accessed on 5th June 2021.