Research Paper

Mapping the Role of New Education Policy for Higher Education towards the Vision of Viksit Bharat 2047

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Abstract
The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 provides a detailed framework for the advancement of India's educational system. As the third policy of its kind, replacing the NEP of 1986, it outlines a significant shift in how education will be delivered in the country. Recognizing that educational reforms often take decades to implement fully, NEP 2020 sets a clear and strategic direction for the future. The policy focuses on reshaping the curriculum to move away from rote learning and towards fostering critical thinking, creativity, and a deeper understanding of concepts. Board exams will be restructured to reduce emphasis on memorization and to encourage a more holistic assessment of students, including their problem-solving and application skills. A significant focus is placed on experiential learning, ensuring that students engage in practical, hands-on activities that enhance their understanding and retention of knowledge. NEP 2020 emphasizes the importance of teaching students in their native languages, particularly in the early years, to strengthen foundational literacy and cognitive development. The policy highlights the need to develop professionals in diverse fields, from traditional sectors like agriculture to cutting-edge areas such as artificial intelligence, ensuring that the workforce is equipped to meet the demands of a rapidly changing world.
Keywords: *Education Policy, Grade system, Innovation, Research*

I.   Introduction

The first NEP was introduced by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1968. It was the first comprehensive national policy on education in India, focusing on promoting and standardizing education across the country. The second NEP was introduced by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1986. This policy aimed at modernizing the education system, expanding access to education, and reducing disparities among various social groups. It was slightly modified in 1992 under Prime Minister P. V. Narasimha Rao. The third NEP was introduced by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi in 2020. The NEP 2020 was officially approved by the Union Cabinet on 29 July 2020. The policy aims to overhaul the educational framework in India, covering all levels from elementary education to higher education, including vocational training. The NEP 2020 outlines a vision to transform India's education system to meet the needs of the 21st century, with a focus on making education more holistic, flexible, multidisciplinary, and aligned to the needs of the present and future. The policy covers the entire spectrum of education, from elementary to higher education, including vocational training in both rural and urban areas. The NEP encourages the use of mother tongue or regional languages as the medium of instruction, particularly in the early years of schooling. However, it leaves the final decision on implementation to the states, institutions, and schools.

While the specific motto "Educate, Encourage, and Enlighten" isn't officially tied to the NEP 2020, the policy indeed focuses on educating students with 21st-century skills, encouraging critical thinking, creativity, and innovation, and enlightening them through a more holistic and flexible education system.

STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATION POLICIES IN INDIA
First National Policy on Education, 1968

The first National Policy on Education (NPE) of 1968, introduced under Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, was a landmark policy aimed at transforming India's educational landscape. The policy was based on the recommendations of the Kothari Commission (1964–1966), which had emphasized the need for a unified and

inclusive education system to foster national integration and cultural development. This policy aimed to reduce disparities in access to education and ensure that all children, regardless of their socio-economic background, could benefit from educational opportunities. It also aimed to use education as a tool to bring together the diverse cultural and linguistic communities of India. The policy also encouraged the teaching of Sanskrit, recognizing its significance as an ancient language and a key component of India's cultural heritage. The policy highlighted the importance of physical education and advocated for the promotion of sports and games as part of the school curriculum. One of the significant recommendations of the NPE 1968 was to increase government expenditure on education to 6% of the national income.

Second National Policy on Education, 1986

The National Policy on Education (NPE) of 1986, introduced by then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, was a significant step forward in India's educational reform, aimed at addressing inequalities and promoting inclusive education across all economic levels. The policy emphasized "Special Emphasis on the Elimination of Inequalities and to Equalise the Educational Opportunity" across caste (especially for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes), gender (with a focus on female education), and economic status. To promote social integration, the policy called for the expansion of scholarships, subsidies, allowances, and adult education programs. A key feature of the NPE 1986 was its child-centered approach, particularly in primary education. The policy recognized the importance of focusing on the needs and well-being of children in the educational process. One of the most notable initiatives under the NPE 1986 was "Operation Blackboard," which aimed to improve the quality of primary education by providing essential facilities and infrastructure in primary schools across the country. The policy supported the expansion of the open and distance learning system, with a particular emphasis on institutions like the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), which was founded in 1985. The NPE 1986 was influenced by Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy, focusing on the development of rural India and the promotion of economic and social growth at the grassroots level.

Revisions in Second National Policy on Education in1992 and 2005

In 1992, under the leadership of then Prime Minister P. V. Narasimha Rao, the National Policy on Education (NPE) of 1986 was revised to address emerging challenges and to reinforce the objectives set out in the original policy. This revision led to the development of the **Program of Action (PoA) 1992**, which aimed to implement the recommendations of the 1986 policy more effectively. The PoA 1992 sought to address issues such as expanding access to education, improving the quality of education, and ensuring equity in educational opportunities across the country. One of the notable initiatives under the PoA 1992 was the proposal for a **Common Entrance Examination (CEE)**. The idea was to standardize the admission process for vocational and technical training programs across India. The 1992 revision emphasized the importance of vocational and technical education as a means to equip students with the skills necessary for employment and economic development. The "Common Minimum Program" (CMP) is more commonly associated with the coalition governments of the 1990s and early 2000s, where it was used as a policy framework for governance, the term is sometimes mentioned in the context of the 1992 PoA as a guiding principle for ensuring that the basic educational goals set by the NPE were met across different states and regions.

Third National Policy on Education, 2020

In 2019, the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) released a draft of the National Education Policy (NEP), which laid the foundation for the comprehensive reforms that would later be finalized and approved in 2020. The Draft NEP 2019 was a result of extensive consultations with various stakeholders, including educationists, policymakers, students, and the general public. The draft served as a blueprint for the sweeping changes proposed to overhaul India's education system. The draft proposed a reduction in the curriculum content across all subjects to focus more on essential learning outcomes, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. This approach aimed to foster creativity, innovation, and critical thinking among students, preparing them for real-world challenges. One of the most significant changes proposed in the draft was the restructuring of the school education system from the existing **10 + 2** structure to a new **5 + 3 + 3 + 4** design. This new structure was designed to align with the cognitive and developmental stages of children, ensuring that the curriculum and teaching methods were age-appropriate and effective. **NEP 2020** incorporated many of the recommendations from the 2019 draft and introduced a series of reforms aimed at making the Indian education system more inclusive, flexible, and aligned with global standards.

BENEFITS OF NEW EDUCATION POLICY

- Replacing the former education policy with the New National Education Policy (NEP), implemented by the Ministry of Education, signifies a comprehensive reform in the education system.

- Renaming the Ministry of Human Resource Development (HRD) to the Ministry of Education marks a significant shift in focus and intent.
- The aim of making education universal, while excluding specific fields such as medical and law studies, represents a significant shift towards broader educational accessibility and inclusivity.
- The transition from the 10+2 education system to the 5+3+3+4 model under the New National Education Policy (NEP) represents a significant restructuring of the educational framework.
- The shift away from traditional educational streams such as Science, Commerce, and Arts represents a significant change in the approach to secondary and higher secondary education.
- Allowing students to study subjects like accounting alongside physics or arts reflects a shift towards a more flexible and personalized education system.
- Introducing computer languages in the sixth standard is a forward-thinking approach that reflects the increasing importance of digital literacy and technology skills.
- Outfitting every school with digital technology is a transformative initiative that aligns with the goals of modernizing education and enhancing learning experiences.
- Translating all forms of content into regional languages and building virtual labs are significant steps towards making education more accessible and inclusive.
- The implementation of the New National Education Policy (NEP) at a cost of 6% of GDP represents a significant investment in the future of education.
- Allowing students to study Sanskrit and other ancient Indian languages as part of the education system reflects a commitment to preserving and promoting cultural heritage while providing students with the option to explore historical and classical languages.
- Holding board exams twice a year is a significant change aimed at reducing student stress and providing more flexibility in the examination process.
- Integrating artificial intelligence (AI) software into the educational system can significantly enhance various aspects of teaching, learning, and administration.
- The M. Phil degree from higher education is being phased out.
- Teaching students three languages determined by the state reflects a commitment to multilingual education and can offer numerous benefits.
- The National Council of Educational Research and Training will develop the national curricular framework.

MAJOR REFORMS INTRODUCED BY THE NEP

- No substantial difference between arts, science, academic, vocational, curricular, and subjects of extracurricular streams. All they are equal.
- Emphasizing mainly on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy.
- Substitution of traditional 10+2 structure with a new 5+3+3+4 model.
- No imposition of State Language on Students studying in any State.
- Allowing students to take Board Exams twice in a year.
- Government decided to increase its budget on education from 1.7% to 6% of the country's GDP.
- Establishing a fully functional Gender Inclusion Fund signifies a strong commitment to promoting gender equality in education.
- Extra efforts by the government to provide proper education to gifted children would focus on identifying, nurturing, and supporting the unique needs of these students.
- The transition to a 4-year duration for undergraduate (UG) courses represents a significant change in the structure of higher education
- Making a 4-year integrated B.Ed (Bachelor of Education) course the minimum qualification to apply for the post of a teacher represents a significant shift in the standards for teacher education.
- Introducing a Common Entrance Test (CET) for admission to Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) is a significant policy change with several implications.
- Eliminating the Master of Philosophy (M.Phil) course from the education system.
- Allowing students to opt for a diverse range of subjects such as arts, crafts, vocational skills, and physical education in secondary school represents a significant shift towards a more holistic and personalized education system.
- The establishment of PARAKH (Performance Assessment, Review, and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development) as the body responsible for setting standards for board exams represents a strategic approach to ensuring consistency and quality in student assessments.

- Incorporating Indian literature and classical languages into school syllabuses represents a significant shift towards enriching the educational experience with cultural and historical depth..
- Changing the examination schedule to only include classes 2nd, 5th, and 8th, rather than every academic year, marks a significant shift in assessment practices.

HIGHER EDUCATION AND NEP

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2023 introduces significant changes to the structure and approach of undergraduate (UG) education in India. One of the most notable changes is the extension of the duration of a UG degree to four years. This new structure emphasizes a multi-disciplinary, holistic, and flexible approach to education. Students who complete one year of study in a vocational or professional field will receive a certificate. Upon completing two years, students will be awarded a diploma. Those who finish three years of study will obtain a Bachelor's degree. A full four-year UG program will lead to an advanced Bachelor's degree, potentially with honours or research components. The NEP 2023 aims to create a more inclusive and adaptable higher education system that aligns with global standards and prepares students for the complexities of the modern world.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2023 also brings significant changes to postgraduate (PG) education and the broader higher education system in India. The duration of postgraduate courses will be limited to one or two years, depending on the program and the prior qualifications of the student. This is a shift from the traditional two-year Master's programs, aiming to make postgraduate education more efficient and focused.

The Master of Philosophy (M.Phil) programs will be discontinued under the new policy. Under NEP 2023, these colleges will gradually become autonomous degree-granting institutions, allowing for more innovation and tailored educational programs.

A new overarching body will be established to oversee all higher education institutions, excluding those offering legal and medical courses. This body will ensure uniform standards and quality across institutions, streamlining regulation, and reducing the burden of multiple regulatory authorities. This unified regulator is part of the policy's vision to create a more coherent and effective higher education system. These changes are designed to modernize and democratize the higher education system in India, providing more flexibility to students, enhancing the quality of education, and aligning with global best practices.

NEP 2023 Implementation by Different States

- Karnataka's move to become the first state to issue an order related to the implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2022 in 2021 highlights its role as a pioneer in educational reform within India.
- Madhya Pradesh's decision to implement the New National Education Policy (NEP) on 26 August 2021 reflects the growing momentum and adoption of NEP 2022 across different states.
- Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's assurance that the implementation of NEP 2022 will be phased in the state highlights a strategic approach to adopting the new policy.
- Goa's plan to implement NEP 2022 in 2023 marks another significant step in the adoption of the National Education Policy across India.
- States like Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Assam working towards implementing NEP 2022 signifies a growing commitment to educational reform across India.
- Meghalaya's Chief Minister's statement about the state aiming to be the first to fully implement NEP 2022 highlights a significant commitment to educational reform..

Mother tongue as medium of instruction

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2023 places a strong emphasis on the use of students' native languages as the medium of instruction, particularly in the early years of education. This approach is rooted in the understanding that children learn complex concepts more effectively in a language they are familiar with. The policy suggests, but does not mandate, that the mother tongue, home language, local language, or regional language be used as the medium of instruction at least until Grade 5, and preferably until Grade 8 and beyond. This approach aims to enhance comprehension and learning outcomes by leveraging the language most familiar to the students.

While promoting the mother tongue as the primary medium of instruction, the policy allows for flexibility based on the school's context and the linguistic needs of students. The goal is to ensure inclusivity, accommodating linguistic diversity without enforcing rigid language mandates. The guidelines regarding the use of the mother tongue as the medium of instruction and the three-language formula will be applicable to both public and private schools. This aims to create a consistent approach to language in education across different types of institutions.

FYUP Programme Returns & No More Dropouts

Under the National Education Policy (NEP) 2023, undergraduate (UG) degrees will have a flexible structure, allowing students to choose between three or four-year programs, with multiple exit options along the way. This flexibility is designed to accommodate different student needs and career paths. The government will establish an Academic Bank of Credit, a digital repository where academic credits earned by students at various Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) can be stored. These reforms are designed to create a more inclusive, flexible, and student-centered higher education system in India, aligning with global educational standards and the diverse needs of students.

Intrinsic changes in grade structures- deviating from the traditional '10+2+3' to a new '5+3+3+4'

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2023 introduces significant changes that challenge the existing educational infrastructure in India, particularly in how schools are structured and the qualifications they provide. These changes are intended to modernize the education system and better align it with contemporary educational goals. NEP proposes the removal of internal exams until the Second Grade, the introduction of semesters in Grade 12 and the clearance of 8th board exams at the end of Grade 10. This implies that schools which till now, have provided education ending at the 8th or 10th grade, must re-evaluate their infrastructure to meet new guidelines.

CHALLENGES OF IMPLEMENTATION IN NEP 2020

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is indeed a landmark reform in India's education system, aiming to address long-standing issues and propel the country towards a more equitable and modern educational framework. However, despite its comprehensive vision, there are several challenges that may impact the successful implementation of these reforms:-

Infrastructure and Resource Constraints:

- **Insufficient Infrastructure**: Many schools, especially in rural areas, lack the necessary infrastructure to support the changes proposed by NEP, such as digital learning, improved classroom environments, and access to quality resources.
- **Funding and Resource Allocation**: Implementing the wide-ranging reforms outlined in the NEP will require significant financial investment. Ensuring adequate funding and proper allocation of resources across diverse regions of the country is a critical challenge.

Teacher Training and Capacity Building:

- **Need for Extensive Teacher Training**: The shift towards experiential, activity-based, and multidisciplinary learning necessitates a complete overhaul in the way teachers are trained. However, the current teacher training programs may not be sufficiently equipped to meet these demands.
- **Teacher Shortages**: There is a shortage of qualified teachers in many parts of India, particularly in rural and underserved areas. This shortage could hinder the implementation of the NEP's ambitious goals.

Digital Divide:

- **Access to Technology**: The NEP emphasizes the use of digital tools and online learning. However, there is a significant digital divide in India, with many students lacking access to the internet or digital devices, particularly in rural and economically disadvantaged regions.
- **Inequity in Education Access**: The digital divide could exacerbate existing inequalities, making it difficult for students from marginalized communities to benefit fully from the NEP's provisions.

Curriculum Overhaul and Implementation:

• **Complexity of Curriculum Changes**: The NEP proposes a major overhaul of the curriculum to make it more holistic, flexible, and aligned with 21st-century skills. Implementing these changes uniformly across diverse educational contexts in India will be a significant challenge.

• **Resistance to Change**: Schools, educators, and institutions that are accustomed to the traditional ways of teaching may resist the changes proposed by the NEP. This resistance could slow down the adoption of new practices.

Administrative and Governance Challenges:

• **Coordination across States**: Education in India is a concurrent subject, meaning both the central and state governments have a role in education policy. Coordinating the implementation of NEP across different states, each with its own set of challenges and priorities, could be complex.

• **Monitoring and Evaluation**: Effective implementation requires robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to track progress and address issues as they arise. Developing and maintaining such mechanisms at scale will be challenging.

Language Policy and Diversity:

• **Language Barriers**: The NEP's emphasis on mother tongue instruction, while beneficial, could pose challenges in implementation, especially in linguistically diverse areas where multiple languages are spoken.

• **Ensuring Equity**: Balancing the promotion of regional languages with the need for students to acquire proficiency in global languages like English is a delicate task that requires careful planning and execution.

Public Awareness and Acceptance:

• **Awareness among Stakeholders**: For successful implementation, it is crucial that all stakeholders, including parents, students, teachers, and administrators, are aware of and understand the changes proposed by the NEP.

• **Building Consensus**: Gaining widespread acceptance of the NEP's reforms will require consensus-building efforts, particularly among those who are skeptical of the new changes.

II.   CONCLUSION

If the proposed changes under the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 are implemented with dedication and consistency, the impact on India's education system could be transformative. The shift towards a system that emphasizes individual skills and strengths would not only revolutionize how students experience education but also reshape the way they plan their future careers.

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