A PARADIGM SHIFT IN EDUCATION: UNDERSTANDING THE NEP 2020

Dr. Panchali Sharma*

ABSTRACT

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is a new policy that aims to transform the Indian education system to make it more inclusive, multidisciplinary, and flexible. The policy emphasizes the importance of early childhood education, providing quality education to all, and ensuring equity and inclusion in the education system. It recognizes the need to impart skills and vocational training to students to make them job-ready and contribute to the nation's economy. The NEP 2020 introduces a new 5+3+3+4 school curriculum structure, replacing the existing 10+2 structure, which emphasizes the importance of early childhood education and provides flexibility in choosing subjects. The policy also stresses the importance of technology and digital learning to improve access, equity, and quality of education, encouraging the use of online platforms and digital tools to enhance the learning experience. The NEP 2020 also seeks to create a more decentralized and participatory education system. It establishes a National Education Commission, providing overall direction and guidance to the education system while ensuring greater autonomy and flexibility to schools and universities. Overall, the NEP 2020 represents a significant change in the Indian education system, seeking to address the challenges and gaps in the existing system and create a more relevant and meaningful education system for the 21st century.

_____

Keywords: *Multidisciplinary, Early Childhood Education, Vocational Training, Digital Learning.*

_____

Introduction

"Change is the end result of all true learning"- Leo Buscaglia. This statement is very apt for the national education policy (NEP) 2020. This policy was launched on 29th July 2020 and replaced the previous National Education Policy of 1986(also modified in1992 under PV Narasimha Rao Govt.). This is the third change that has been made in our education policy and certainly the first change in the 21st century. This policy was an update on the obsolete 34 years policy that was framed during the Rajiv Gandhi era. It took more than 5 years to form this policy, from January 2015 till the present date when this policy is formed. Not only a large number of years were involved in its formation but various institutions, people, and levels were involved in this process. One of the biggest committees was formed to curate this policy- different levels from gram panchayat to the highest-level bodies were included. ISRO former scientist- Kasturi Ranjan (Chairman of NEP's drafting committee) was one of the most eminent personalities to contribute to NEP. Not only a large number of suggestions were provided to form this policy- but it was also one of those policies where a large number of suggestions were accepted. This policy adopted a bottom-up approach, which means it involved people starting from the lower level to the top level. This was a big step in the formation of the education policy because it did not just limit itself to only- parents, teachers, and students; it actually tried to adopt a broader and more flexible approach. NEP, if implemented properly has the capacity to bring radical changes in our country.

*   Associate Professor, Department of English, S.C.R.S. Government College, Sawai Madhopur, Rajasthan, India.

Review of Literature

Gaurav Gupta and Shailendra Kumar Yadav (2021) conducted a systematic literature review of the NEP 2020, focusing on the policy's impact on teacher education. The authors analyzed 25 research articles published between 2020 and 2021 and concluded that the NEP 2020 has the potential to improve teacher education in India, but its success depends on effective implementation strategies.

Pankaj S. Joshi and Pankaj S. Chauhan (2021) conducted a literature review of the NEP 2020, focusing on its impact on higher education in India. The authors analyzed 32 research articles published between 2020 and 2021 and concluded that the policy has the potential to transform the higher education system in India, but its success depends on effective implementation strategies and adequate funding.

Ruchi Singh and Anupama Sharma (2021) conducted a comprehensive literature review of the NEP 2020, focusing on its implications for school education in India. The authors analyzed 35 research articles published between 2020 and 2021 and concluded that the policy has the potential to transform the school education system in India, but its success depends on effective implementation strategies, adequate funding, and stakeholder engagement.

Divya Singh and Sunita Singh (2021) conducted a literature review of the NEP 2020, focusing on its implications for inclusive education in India. The authors analyzed 28 research articles published between 2020 and 2021 and concluded that the policy has the potential to promote inclusive education in India, but its success depends on effective implementation strategies, adequate funding, and stakeholder engagement.

Shiwani Verma and Ravi Sharma (2021) conducted a literature review of the NEP 2020, focusing on its implications for digital education in India. The authors analyzed 20 research articles published between 2020 and 2021 and concluded that the policy has the potential to promote digital education in India, but its success depends on effective implementation strategies, adequate funding, and digital infrastructure.

Sonal Patil and Dileep More (2021) conducted a literature review of the NEP 2020, focusing on its implications for skill development and vocational education in India. The authors analyzed 30 research articles published between 2020 and 2021 and concluded that the policy has the potential to promote skill development and vocational education in India, but its success depends on effective implementation strategies, adequate funding, and stakeholder engagement.

Sanjivani Bhakare and Anupama Sharma (2021) conducted a literature review of the NEP 2020, focusing on its implications for teacher professional development in India. The authors analyzed 26 research articles published between 2020 and 2021 and concluded that the policy has the potential to promote teacher professional development in India, but its success depends on effective implementation strategies, adequate funding, and stakeholder engagement.

Ritesh Kumar and Manoj Kumar Yadav (2021) conducted a literature review of the NEP 2020, focusing on its implications for educational administration and governance in India. The authors analyzed 24 research articles published between 2020 and 2021 and concluded that the policy has the potential to promote effective educational administration and governance in India, but its success depends on effective implementation strategies, adequate funding, and stakeholder engagement.

Basic Features of NEP

- NEP 2020 is based on five pillars: Affordability, Accessibility, Quality, Equity, and Accountability.
- MHRD (Ministry of Human Resource Development) name was changed to MOE (Ministry of Education)
- There will be no UGC, AICTE& NCTE, and instead of them-HECI (Higher Education Commission of India) will be set up as a single predominant umbrella body for the entire higher education system. But it will not include legal and medical education. And all Private and Public Higher Education Institutes will also be governed by these set of norms.
- HECI will have 4 major functions to perform- regulation, accreditation, funding, and setting standards for learning outcomes.
- The policy is student-centric as it tries to focus more on students rather than on parents' or teachers' needs. It provides the freedom to students to choose subjects as per their choice and not just choose the subjects as per the old age ritual that is being followed.
- NEP tries to promote universalisation.

- The policy tries to inculcate the skills and habits of doing research. Our country very much needs students who would take novel topics and do qualitative research.
- NEP also tries to reduce the number of dropouts after middle school.
- NEP is formulated in a way that would provide students with the opportunity of learning vocational skills.
- The focus of NEP is on enhancing the critical thinking of the students than just root learning of the subjects. The student needs to understand the concept and its practical implication and not just run after marks and ranks.
- Education previously used to start at 3 years of age, but now it will start at 6 years of age.
- The basic aim of NEP is broad-based flexible learning among students.
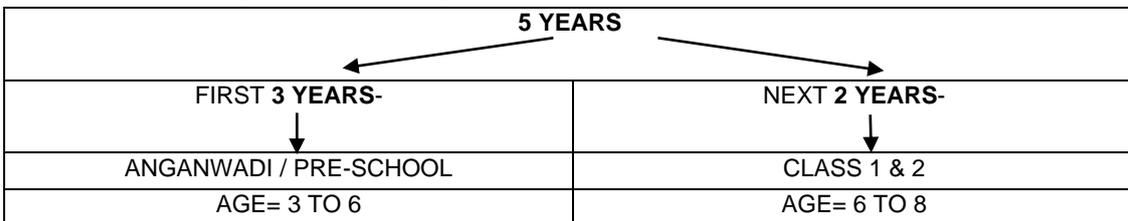
Major parts of NEP

- **School Education**

  The major change in school education is that from 12 years of formal education, now there will be 15 years of formal education. This means that the 10+2 system that previously worked will be replaced by a 5+3+3+4 structure. This will divide the school system into 4 stages-

- **Foundational stage**
  - This will be for a total period of 5 years.
  - There will be no exams conducted at this stage.
  - Only light textbooks will be used and the main focus will be on interactive classroom learning.
  - The major aim is to form a solid groundwork across various subjects.
  - This stage is divided into 2 parts-

5 YEARS	
FIRST **3 YEARS**-	NEXT **2 YEARS**-
ANGANWADI / PRE-SCHOOL	CLASS 1 & 2
AGE= 3 TO 6	AGE= 6 TO 8

  - This stage is the foundation of learning because around 85% of brain development happens at this point of age which emphasizes the crucial need for early brain development and growth.
  - It is argued that when a child enters school at an early stage, there are fewer chances of resistance or fear from the child.
  - The students here experience fun learning, with the help of flashcards, drawings, alphabets, numbers, puzzles, music, dance, and various other fun learning things.
  - This stage enhances the basic literacy and numeracy skills among the students.
  - Students here learn the basic skills that become a prerequisite for the other classes.

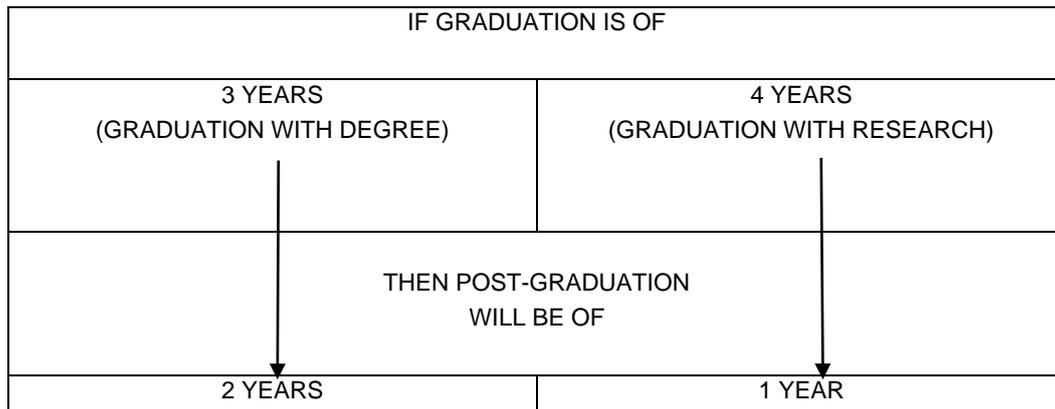- **Preparatory Stage**
  - This will be for a total period of 3 years.
  - It includes classes 3, 4, & 5.
  - This stage includes activity-based learning.
  - At this stage, the students start giving exams.
  - The language of instruction at this stage can be the mother language or local language- but this is not compulsory to follow. This is done because students learn or grasp more quickly in their home language. But NEP has only recommended it and not made it compulsory for schools to follow it.
  - Students at this age will start learning subjects like mathematics, science, etc. But this will be taught through experiential learning.

- **Middle stage**
  - This will be for a total period of 3 years.
  - It includes classes 6, 7 & 8.
  - The subject teachers are introduced at this stage.
  - This stage includes providing vocational courses to the students as per their interests along with internships.
  - It includes teaching maths, science, social studies, and any Indian language like- Sanskrit.
  - Experiential learning within each subject is encouraged to make learning easy and entertaining.
  - Focus will also be on teaching coding to the students so that students from their initial years are equipped with technology and understanding the basics of computers and coding will help the children to understand how things work at the back. They will also learn how to solve complex problems in a better way and to stick with a problem that arises and work on finding its solution with full determination.

- **Secondary stage**
  - This will be for a total period of 4 years.
  - It includes classes 9,10, 11, & 12.
  - One of the major changes done at this stage is- including multiple subjects. It means that there will be no rigid streams (commerce, science, humanities) that a student has to choose. He can choose subjects as per his/her wish. For example, a commerce student can choose – Business Studies, Economics, and Geography.
  - NEP also envisages to use of Artificial intelligence-based software to evaluate the progress of the students and help them to take appropriate decisions related to their future.
  - Now a student will not be bound to eat that particular thali that is being presented by the school. But now he can create his colorful thali- with what he likes and wants to explore.
  - At this stage, the students will be exposed to semester systems. So, they are in a habit of giving exams and their fear of exams will be reduced. This will also finish their habit of rote learning on the last day and then vomiting everything in the exams.
  - Students will also be allowed to learn foreign languages.
  - In the Boards of 10th and 12th the format will be changed to reduce the burden and pressure of examinations. The provision of semester or multiple-choice questions will be included and examinations will be conducted 2 times a year. The main emphasis in this process will be on the knowledge gained in this process and the critical and analytical skills developed so that the tendency of parroting or rote learning among students can be eliminated.

- **Graduation**
  - With the effect of NEP becoming active- the graduation will be of 4 years.
  - Different streams like B. Com, B.Sc., or B.A will not exist. The provision of streams will not prevail and anyone can choose any subject as per his/ her choice.

GRADUATION			
IF COMPLETES IN			
1 YEAR	2 YEARS	3 YEARS	4 YEARS
↓	↓	↓	↓
CERTIFICATE	DIPLOMA	DEGREE	RESEARCH

  - Now the system of credits will be started, in which if a student joins a course and wants to leave because of any reason like lack of interest or personal problems- then he can easily do it and whatever credits he has earned in the number of years will not collapse. If he rejoins the program at any point in time, then those credits will be transferable. So, there is an option of easy transfer of credits and he can try various courses without being in that dilemma that he has to complete the course or his money/ time will be lost.

- NEP focuses on multi-disciplinary education- for this standalone higher education & professional education institutes will be evolved into multi-disciplinary education. And institutions that only offer students single streams like technical education must be phased out and institutions will start focusing on becoming multi-disciplinary by 2030.
- The term multi-disciplinary education means that there will be no compulsory subjects, and the subjects like Arts and Humanities will also be taught in technical institutions. The division like Arts, Science, and Commerce will not exist. Students will have the option to choose any subject as per their choice. All the institutes of the country including IITs& IIMs will have to adopt this approach.
- The goal of NEP is to increase GER (Gross Enrolment Ratio) from 26.3 percent (in 2018) to 50 percent (till 2035). It also states that 3.5 crores of new seats will also be added in higher educational institutions to provide more opportunities for students.

- **Post-Graduation**
  - The process of doing post-graduation will be of either 1 or 2 years, depending upon the type of graduation done by the student.

IF GRADUATION IS OF	
3 YEARS (GRADUATION WITH DEGREE)	4 YEARS (GRADUATION WITH RESEARCH)
THEN POST-GRADUATION WILL BE OF	
2 YEARS	1 YEAR

  - Overall, the graduation and post-graduation for any student will be a sum of 5 years.

Major Highlights of NEP

- It tries to curtail the dropout rate in schools and especially when the child is in middle school.
- It also has a goal to achieve a 100% Gross Enrolment Ratio in school education by 2030.
- It also aims to provide effective infrastructure so that all students can have access to safe and proper education.
- NEP talks about enhancing a child's critical thinking ability.
- It provides greater flexibility to a student in choosing the subjects he would like to study.
- NEP tries to move away from the culture of rote learning which is very much prevalent in our country.
- NEP not only focuses on increasing the knowledge delta of an individual but building his character and an all-round personality who will be equipped with 21st-century skills.
- NEP also talks about reducing the curriculum to enhance essential skills and critical thinking abilities among the students.
- NEP states that the classroom will not just be limited to textbooks, teachers, and the blackboard. But classes will be conducted in a more interactive way where questions will be encouraged and students would not be scolded for asking their doubts and queries. Overall, the classroom environment will be conducted in a more fun & creative manner with a major focus on experiential learning.
- There will be no separation between curricular and co-curricular activities. They will be joined together as curricular activities. This is done so that co-curricular activities like music and dance or fine arts would not be irrelevant subjects in a student's life. Because if a student has an interest in these subjects, he can pursue them.

- Wherever possible, the medium of instruction will be the home language/mother tongue in both public and private schools. This is done because children learn concepts more quickly and easily in their home language/mother tongue. However, greater flexibility will be provided and no language will be imposed on any State.

- The policy makes it necessary to continue the three-language formula and its implementation to promote multilingualism in the country.

- The concept of multi-disciplinary institutions will prevail. They will be called MERUs (Multidisciplinary Education and Research Universities). This means that there will not be single-course industries like IIT& IIM. They now have to provide a wide range of courses. Legal and medical education will be an exception to this principle. Also, IITs have started working on it. IIT Delhi has a Humanities & Public Policy Department which was set up recently. IIT Kharagpur also has a school of Medical Science and Technology. The reason why NEP focuses so much on a multi-disciplinary approach is that if a civil engineer just knows how to build bridges or dams will not be sufficient, he needs to know more than that. He needs to be informed about the social and environmental impact that a dam or bridge is going to have on the people.

- The NEP 2020 has tried to bring key reforms in both school and higher education, which will not only prepare the next generation but also help them to compete in the new digital age.

- NEP 2020 also focuses on raising the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) from the current 26 percent to 50 percent by 2030 in the higher education

- NEP also allows colleges to conduct their exams and award their certificates.

- The National Research Foundation (NRF) will be set up to boost and promote research work in the country.

- The M.Phil. program will be discontinued and so now students after completing their post-graduation can directly apply for Ph.D. Experts believe that it will not affect the path of higher education. This practice which we are going to adopt shortly had already been adopted by various other foreign universities. It was also observed that students who entered M.Phil. did not complete their Ph.D., which can be because of the increased timeline of the education cycle.

- NEP also states to set up a National Recruitment Agency for all government recruitment exams, and a Common Eligibility Test (CET) for various recruitment exams.

- NEP encourages students to innovate and bring some kind of newness to this world. For this, it makes sure that high R&D investments from government and private sectors are provided for research ventures.

- NEP focuses to change its direction from content-based assessment to competency-based assessment which will make Board exams easier for the students. It also states the importance of developing the core competencies of the students rather than content memorization/ rote learning.

- Report cards will become 360-degree progress cards that will give exhaustive feedback on the skills, capabilities, and potential of the student. This means the age-old system of marks will be replaced and the students will not be only evaluated based on his/ her reading/ writing/ listening skills, but also their life skills, theirbehavior with others, discipline, question-asking habits, observation skills, etc.

- The policy also envisages allowingthe world's top 100 foreign universities to open their campus in India (this will be facilitated through the new law). This will also help to reduce brain drain and it will promote healthy competition among other universities present in India. But this will also create problems like- making education expensive, and poaching of teachers and for many students, this facility will remain out of reach only.

- NEP takes an effort to incentivize the meritorious students belonging to the reserved category (SC, ST, OBC &SEDG- Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups).

- The national scholarship portal is also going to be expanded, to support and track the progress of the students who are receiving the scholarship.

- NEP also makes sure that private higher education institutions be encouraged to provide a large number of scholarships to deserving students.

- Special funds will also be reserved for special types of education.
- NEP has a target to set up atleast 1 large multi-disciplinary higher education institution in or near every district.
- NEP states the formation of an academic credit bank, where the academic credits earned by students from various higher education institutions will be digitally stored. In this process, the degree will be awarded taking into account the credits earned by the student.
- NEP has also proposed to set up NETF (National Educational Technology Forum). It will act as a platform where a free exchange of ideas can be held on how to use technology, to enhance the process of learning, assessing, planning, etc. and this body will function for both school and higher education.
- NEP also proposed that the board exams for classes 10 & 12 will continue. But now instead of 1 board exam, there will be 2 board exams. But they will be easy and lenient, so the pressure and burden of students don't increase. It will also include both subjective and objective questions.
- As observed, there are a majority of students who are scared of mathematics and science. To tackle this issue, after class 4, two levels of maths will be introduced. That is basic maths and harder level maths (for those who want to make a career in maths).

Major Challenges with NEP

- **Language**
  - NEP focuses on keeping the mother/ local language as a medium of instruction, but we as a country are already facing the problem of a shortage of teachers and now recruiting teachers that are well-versed, qualified, and trained in the local language (like- Marathi) is a big challenge.
  - The second challenge is that delivering the knowledge of maths, science, etc in the local language will be a cumbersome task.
  - The policy also envisages that public school students will be taught in regional languages up to 5th grade, if not 8th. But it is not compulsory for private schools, and if they will teach students English from the very beginning of their lives and a public-school student will learn English 5 or 8 years later to him- this is going to create a big difference between them (not only in skills but also confidence).

- **Multiple entry and exit**
  - Though undoubtedly the provision of multiple entry and exit has so many benefits and will be successful in making students' life easy. But now when students will get the option of doing graduation in 1, 2, 3, or 4 years, students will be more tempted towards completing in 1 or 2 years and then start doing the job early. There are chances that more students will leave graduation in 1or 2 years because of family or money problems. Previously they used to complete it thinking that the invested time and money would get wasted.

- **Vocational education**
  - Some experts argue that when our education system will provide vocational education from such an early age, students will be prompted more towards it rather than education itself. They will be attracted to learning skills and getting jobs and this will impact the quality of education in our country. The rate of dropouts from school might increase and people will start joining more vocational courses and open schools.

- **SEDG**
  - In NEP there is a broad categorization of Socio Economically Disadvantaged Groups. Here 2 separate groups have been clubbed together. That is socially disadvantaged like Dalits or Muslims and economically disadvantaged section (who are not doing well in terms of money). The matter of fact is that these two sections are different and so are their issues. So, to acknowledge their issues, it becomes really important to deal with them separately.

Conclusion

John Dewey said, "If we teach today's students as we taught yesterday's, we rob them of tomorrow." This statement is very apt in the current scenario when our new National Education Policy 2020 is formulated. NEP 2020 tries to fix the deep hole that has been created in our education system

over the years. The sixty-six pages NEP document presents us with the grand vision for the next 20 years approximately. NEP is like a ray of hope for our education system which will change the way how education works today. Great personalities like Azim Premji who is one of the biggest philanthropists and an active member involved in the education of India, was very pleased with NEP 2020. He said that the policy responded almost completely to the wishlist. One major important change that NEP proposes to bring is the elimination of rote learning. NEP also realizes the importance of artificial intelligence and robotics in different sectors of the economy. But one needs to realize that this journey from NEP vision to its implementation is big. There are going to be many devils and demons lurking around which might delay the process of its implementation. The problems like the extra cost of infrastructure, teachers, fees, etc, and the Anganwadi centers which do not have toilets or clean drinking water facilities. Out of 60 lakh teaching posts in government schools, around 10 lakhs are vacant. It was also discovered that 1,30,000 teachers never existed and kept collecting salaries. The country which has such a large number of absent teachers only attracts more and more illiteracy. On the other hand, English is the linking language between different people and countries. In today's time, we can't think of side-lining English. Hence, there remain a lot of pros and cons of NEP. And there can be no policy that solves all the issues of the education system in one go. So, we must be patient and critical and keep analyzing and modifying the policy, till we are close to our goal. As Aristotle said "The roots of education are bitter, but the fruit is sweet"- so let's keep working for the sweeter fruits and a brighter future for the children of our country.

References

1. Baruah, T., & Natarajan, C. (2021). Analysis of the National Education Policy 2020: Opportunities, challenges and the way forward. Journal of Educational Planning and Administration, 35(1), 73-89.

2. Chatterjee, S. (2021). National Education Policy (NEP) 2020: A critical review. International Journal of Research in Social Sciences, 11(2), 414-425.

3. Dey, S. (2020). National Education Policy 2020: A glimpse of Indian education in the coming years. International Journal of Management, Technology, and Engineering, 10(9), 4715-4719.

4. Goyal, N., & Sharma, N. (2021). National Education Policy 2020: A futuristic perspective. International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts, 9(1), 319-326.

5. Jena, S. K., & Mishra, S. K. (2021). National Education Policy 2020: Prospects, challenges, and way forward. Journal of Education and Practice, 12(12), 89-97.

6. Kumar, S. (2021). National Education Policy (NEP) 2020: An overview of its implications for teacher education. International Journal of Progressive Research in Education, 7(1), 123-130.

7. Kumari, S., & Bhatia, S. (2020). National Education Policy 2020: A paradigm shift in the Indian education system. International Journal of Recent Technology and Engineering, 9(3), 2733-2739.

8. Nayak, A. K. (2021). National Education Policy 2020: Implications for higher education in India. International Journal of Social Science and Economic Research, 6(3), 2942-2951.

9. Raju, A., & Reddy, G. A. (2021). National Education Policy 2020: An analytical review. Journal of Contemporary Research in Education and English Language Teaching, 5(1), 8-18.

10. Sharma, R., & Pandey, K. (2021). National Education Policy 2020: An analysis of opportunities and challenges. Journal of Education and Learning, 10(2), 116-126.

11. Singh, A. (2020). National Education Policy 2020: A critical analysis of its implications. Journal of Education and Practice, 11(15), 87-97.

12. Singh, G., & Sharma, A. (2021). National Education Policy 2020: A comprehensive review. International Journal of Education and Management Studies, 11(1), 1-10.

13. Swami, M., & Gupta, P. (2020). National Education Policy 2020: A critical analysis of its impact on higher education. Journal of Interdisciplinary Cycle Research, 12(3), 211-223.

14. Vaidya, N. (2020). National Education Policy 2020: A critical analysis. International Journal of Advanced Research and Review, 5(10), 6-11.

□○□