

NEP 2020: Policy Gaps

Pragati Yadav* and Parul Singh**

Abstract

The Indian education landscape currently faces a significant gap in terms of both, outlay and outcomes. To steer this sector's contribution toward the human capital formation, India's policymakers have proposed National Education Policy 2020, after the earlier policies of 1968 and 1986, which is based on the suggestions made by a group of experts led by Dr. Kasturirangan, an erstwhile chief of the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO). The policy bears sweeping reforms to transform the learning paradigm in both rural and urban schools and seeks to put India decisively on the path to securing its famed demographic dividend. This paper aims to contextualize the policy's need by detailing its merits. The paper shows appreciation for the wide participation policy formulation stage. The study concludes with an appraisal of the indispensability of such a policy, given the disruptive century ahead in both economy and society.

Keywords: New Education Policy, NEP 2020, Higher Education, Policy Gaps

*Research Scholar, Indian Institute of Foreign Trade, Delhi : pragati_phdmp21@iift.edu

** Assistant Professor, Indian Institute of Foreign Trade, Delhi : parul.singh1510@gmail.com ; parulsingh@iift.edu

1. INTRODUCTION

Human capital formation is key to labor market efficiency, which is central to economic development itself. It is also a significant bridge toward the social capital formation. Such potential of education has been long acknowledged in the Indian tradition. However, the need for a structured policy was felt in 1964, when the Kothari Commission was constituted. Based on its recommendations, the Indian government adopted its first education policy in 1968. After another policy in 1986, India witnessed a third National Education Policy (NEP) in the latter part of last year (2020). In both rural and urban India, it has been described as a comprehensive structure for basic through higher education as well as vocational training.

The aim of ushering in a new learning paradigm is sought to be achieved by a participatory process. Also, in keeping with the constitutional mandate of 'Education' being a concurrent list subject, the NEP 2020 has embedded cooperative federalism as a principle. As a result, the language policy NEP 2020 acts as a broad guideline and advisory, leaving implementation to the states, organisations, and schools. Reinstating this multi-lingual flexibility, according to the Executive, the policy focused more on "how to think" rather than "what to think.". In order to create specialised plans, the administration also intends to create subject-specific committees with representatives from rejected ministries at the state and federal levels. This planning shall be followed by a yearly evaluation in conjunction with predetermined goals.

In view of this situation, the policy aspires to raise public spending from 4% to 6% of GDP through a series of targeted milestones. A key tenet of its official vision statement is to promote universalizing education from kindergarten through secondary school. The NEP 2020 aims to create an education system that is focused on India and directly contributes to our country's long-term transition into a vibrant, equal knowledge society. A vision like this target mastering fundamental literacy and numeracy till grade 3, by the year 2025. This focus on combating the country's high and rising 'learning poverty' has come with many other proposed sweeping changes. Easier and reduced school curriculum proposes to preserve the "basic essentials" while thrusting on experience-based

education and analytical thinking. The 1986 policy's push for a '10+2' school structure has been newly structured to a '5+3+3+4' design, thus bringing pre-school education under the ambit of formal schooling. Even the mid-day meal program has been proposed to be extended to preschool, vindicating the stance of learning experts. The NEP 2020 intends to open up higher education to international universities, dismantle the UGC and AICTE, provide a four-year interdisciplinary undergraduate degree with several exit possibilities, and phase out the M-Phil program. This would be supplemented by the phasing out of all institutions offering single streams and converting them to multidisciplinary by 2040. Functions and functionaries will have to go hand in hand, especially due to the new normal hauled in by COVID 19. New proposed institutions like NEAT can be fully capitalized only after ensuring pre-requisite digital infrastructure and other social overhead capital.

Although the reformist agenda is well laid out, critics have expressed doubts on both policy structure and grassroots implementation. Inadequate funding, dispersed governance, inadequate stakeholder collaboration and vagaries of the political cycle have been cited to name a few. Similarly, the National Educational Alliance Technology (NEAT) which is proposed as a new regulatory body, will require a robust digital infrastructure in remote areas, as a pre-requisite.

However, with transparent, consultative and course-correcting implementation, the policy can determine the future of learning outcomes in the country's schools. That alone can lend cohesion to the Indian society and make the Indian GDP resilient to a disruptive century ahead.

2. MERITS OF NEW EDUCATION POLICY

The government-approved New Education Policy, set to be implemented in 2020, will surely be a watershed moment in Asian education history. The plan is methodical and thorough which will surely play a significant part in the country's future development and progress.

The policy emphasis on a comprehensive, learner-centred, scalable infrastructure that seeks to

reshape our nation into a spirited knowledge society. It not only perfectly balances the national pride and rootedness, but also receives praise from all over the world for being the most successful theories and methods in the field of education.

Undoubtedly a paradigm-shifting document, the recently adopted NEP has the power to affect not only our nation but also future student generations. As a result, it is critical to understand the benefits of the changes that will be made as per the new policy.

The development of strong literacy and numeracy skills during the foundational stage of classroom instruction is referred to as foundational literacy and numeracy. The child attends school for the first five years, from grade two through three years of play school, while they are between the ages of three and seven. Because this is when the bulk of brain growth occurs, it is critical to improving cognitive abilities in language and mathematics during this time.

The policy has expressed that the achievement of Universal Foundational Literacy and Numeracy is, and requires the state's highest priority.

- Make learners qualified by the time they reach grade 3 to do practice reading and writing.
- Development among young learners until grade 2 of the basic understanding and competencies related to numeracy and its related concepts.
- Developing skills among students to properly incorporate their outside school experiences with their classroom learning to achieve basic literacy and numeracy.

By giving students 21st-century core competencies, reducing course content to encourage fundamental learning and critical thinking, and emphasising experiential learning more, school curricula and pedagogy would aim to support students' holistic growth. . Students would have more options and topics to choose from. There will be no hard and fast distinctions between the arts and sciences, curricular and extracurricular activities, or academic and vocational programmes.

The science stream lacks an explanation of the social reality we live in (such as Sociology), the politics of

the place we dwell in (such as Political Science), the faults and privileges of our history (such as History), and the entire economic system morass that we analyse in Economics.

Students will be able to study and progress at their own pace if subject choices are made more accessible and boundaries between the arts and sciences, curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular activities, sports, and vocational crafts are removed.

There are students who have diversified interests in various subjects but due to rigidness in the respective field of subjects, they barely have a choice to select the subject of their interest. But with no such difference between arts and sciences students can opt for multiple subjects of their choice.

The 4-year interdisciplinary bachelor's degree is the favoured option since it allows students to study the full spectrum of holistic and multidisciplinary education while still focusing on the major and minor of their choosing.

Depending on the number of years spent, the new legislation specifies the right to select various subjects and to leave after receiving a certificate, diploma or full degree. In the Indian sense, this is innovative and the learner would be free to pursue education on a convenient basis.

According to the new policy, the affiliation plan will be phased down over 15 years, and a phase-by-phase mechanism for granting graded autonomy to institutions through a systematic system of graded accreditation would be devised.

The NEP aims to raise the gross enrolment ratio from 26.3% (2018) to 50 per cent by 2035 for higher education, including vocational education. It provides for wide-ranging, multi-disciplinary and comprehensive under graduation with a versatile curriculum, an innovative mix of subjects and vocational training integration

The strategy of New Education strongly emphasizes the criticality of teacher education, hailing Acharya Devo Bhava's legacy. Teacher preparation is crucial in developing a pool of

school instructors who will educate the future generation. With the attributes of reforming, transforming and working at the same time, the teachers would be facilitated.

Keeping up with the requirements of the twenty-first century requires not just diverse ideas and expertise, but also the development of attitudes and principles, as well as the formation of practice under the guidance of the finest mentors.

The NCTE will develop a new and comprehensive National Teacher Education Curriculum System, NCFTE 2021, in collaboration with NCERT. By 2030, the minimum degree required for teaching will be a 4-year comprehensive B.Ed. a degree that teaches a range of information material and pedagogy and offers strong practical preparation in the form of student-teaching at local schools.

The policy emphasises mother tongue/local language/regional language as a medium of education at least up to Grade 5, but preferably until Grade 8 and beyond. Sanskrit must be made available to students at all stages of schooling and higher education, as well as in the three-language formula.

For admission into India's upper class and access to the economic opportunities present in their networks and circles, proficiency in English has evolved into a cultural need. It is likewise imperative to get rid of this prejudiced obstacle. It is expected that teaching children their native tongues in addition to English will foster a more awareness of cultural diversity.

Instead of displacing existing languages, multilingualism is being promoted by placing more of a focus on regional languages as a teaching tool. Studying India's different languages would help to strengthen the country's unity. Additionally, being multilingual will better expose children to the wide cultural diversity and tradition of the nation, enhancing their minds.

Moreover, international authorities and organisations such as UNESCO said children learn more rapidly and completely when instructed in their mother tongue or native language. If the teaching language is one, they are not familiar with, they may lag behind at a crucially early stage of development.

Therefore, the three-language formula will not only expose students to our cultural diversity but also ensure that language is not a barrier in their learning process.

The Kothari Commission proposed an allocation of 6 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 1964, but sadly, since Independence, India has never spent 6 percent of GDP on education.

In India, there has always been insufficient investment in education. In 2017-18, public spending on education in India stood at 2.7 of GDP. This was about 10% of overall government (that is, state and central governments) spending

According to 2019, the World Talent ranking study by IMD showed that India's public education investment has not been adequate to either draw international talent to the country or cultivate indigenous top brains. According to the IMD Report, India spends less per student on education, and the level of education continues to drop in a country with a high pupil-teacher ratio in elementary and secondary school. This has contributed to a massive drop in the world talent ranking of India and the nation is just ahead of four other countries in attracting and maintaining top talents.

3. POLICY PITFALLS

The new education policy came as a breather but it has pollutants. It is flexible in approach yet falls short. Although it is a revolutionary text, it lacks a long-term vision. Its core is more along the lines of continuity than transformation.

The decision to pursue multilingualism as a means of improving cognitive capacities is based on European culture, where a typical European student must learn many languages in school before reaching the age of adolescence. Regional languages are recommended as a medium of education, ideally until Grade 5 loses its charm due to students in classrooms having several mother tongues, sticking to one medium will be impractical. Although the draft emphasises on the multilingualism and the three-language formula is practically unsound and has several consequences.

The Supreme Court has ruled that forcing mother tongues as a teaching medium is unlawful and in violation of the law implying that this is a breach of a parent's fundamental right to decide what their child will learn in school.

According to another study, households with a fluent English-speaking head of home earn up to 34% more than those with a non-fluent English-speaking head of household. However, these figures may be influenced by the outsourcing boom in the past decade. Non-Hindi states are apprehensive that Hindi might be forced on non-Hindi speaking students. The study from Chhattisgarh depicts the assertion made in the above statement.

All facets of schooling, including planning, teaching, learning, evaluation, digital libraries, AR/VR technologies, now places a greater focus on technology. The policy is aspirational and overlooks that digital literacy and coding in rural education institutes are poor in supporting the same. The expense of constructing digital infrastructure may be prohibitively expensive for some institutions. Furthermore, the situation is bleak in rural regions, where internet access is almost non-existent. Owing to market monopolies the cost of internet access has been a surge in price. The digital divide will penetrate through gender disparity, caste, class, and regional differences.

According to Unified District Information System for Education Plus (UDISE+), "Only 32.8% of government schools, there were working computers in 2017-18. The data shows that the overall proportion of schools with functional computers has declined from 43.1% in 2012-13 to 32.8% in 2017-18. . It can be fostered that although new schools have been founded, they lack digital equipment. Moreover, only 24% of Indian families have access to the internet, 11% have a functioning computer, and only 15% of rural families have internet access". Heavy dependence on technology and online programs might leave students crippled.

The NEP also places a strong emphasis on digital and distance learning to raise the gross enrolment ratio from 26% to above 50%. However, the strategy fails to address the major causes of school dropout, such as child marriage and child work. It also lacks clarity on the benefits of open learning courses in terms of employment.

The policy draft accused current regulatory bodies of corruption and Mediocrity. Historically, private higher education institutions (HEIs) have not been regarded equally to state universities. Public-spirited philanthropic HEIs have been discouraged by this strategy . It is irony in itself because research universities and teaching universities have been planned as mega higher education institutes (HEIs) with 5000-25000 students. There will be at least one HEI in each district across the country, but there is no indication of finite or operationality. There will undoubtedly be a spike in demand for large expenditures in land and infrastructure. Does it question the capability of which players to enter and make the investment? Only big private investors, multinational corporations have the bandwidth of funding. The move is directly in liaison with the privatization in the education sector.

The policy is resolute to raise educational investment with no knowledge of the source of this additional financial charge of utopian changes in terms of robust infrastructure, building new institutions, staffing more teachers to maintain an apt teacher-pupil ratio. By 2030, India is expected to have more than 250 million kids enrolled in K12 institutions. With a teacher-to-student ratio of 1:35, India will require an estimated 7 million or more teachers to address the burgeoning student population. These teachers will be required to have completed the defined B.Ed. programme for 12th pass, graduates, and post-graduates for four, two, and one year, respectively.

The proposed proposal pledged to increase government spending on education from 10% to 20% of overall government spending. The promise to allocate 6% of GDP is reaffirmed in the 2020 policy . Education spending, on the other hand, has decreased during the BJP government, from 4.14 per cent per cent-15 to 3.2 per cent in 2020-21. Due to the coronavirus epidemic this year, even this sum might be slashed by 40%, lowering education spending to just 2% of the overall budget. As a result, it's unclear whether the NEP envisions funding 6% of GDP from public or private sources.

The redesigning of curriculum and effective

delivery requires training of teachers and understanding of pedagogical needs for a smooth transition into the new system. In addition to Teacher Eligibility Tests (TETs), the NEP envisaged a comprehensive National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education to develop a skilled and curated pool of educators who can provide children with quality education. However, the current pool of educators needs to be accustomed to such delivery. India, teaching is a low-paying profession, with the average teacher earning approximately 200,000 per year. It would be cumbersome to implement unless remuneration is revised.

Part IV: In the policy document, Making It Happen takes up two "full" pages. These sites, on the other hand, are lacking in terms of policy execution. For instance, the report seeks to provide financial support for "a number of vital aspects and parts of education, such as ensuring universal access, learning resources, nutritional support, issues relating to student safety and well-being, adequate numbers of teachers and staff, teacher development, and support for all major initiatives towards equitable high-quality education for underprivileged and socioeconomically disadvantaged groups.' It is unclear how it will be executed, whose universities will be engaged, how access will be made possible, and what sources of information will be included. It is stated under 'Implementation' that it would that occur in collaboration with the pertinent departments and ministries. The policy lacks a clear route to success and puts the reader in a state of distress.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Right to Education Act, which makes universalization of education a gargantuan endeavour with a legal basis, is mostly ignored in the NEP 2020. There is no established framework that links RTE to primary and secondary education. As a result, neither the centre nor the state is legally bound. The final policy, according to RTI Forum, emphasises the universalization of school education for kids ages 3 to 18, but it does not make that a constitutional right. Therefore, there is no legal obligation for the central and state governments to make it true. Universalization will be difficult without the RTE Act. According to NEP 2020, "RTE must be connected to the objective of achieving universal access to education at the elementary,

middle, and secondary levels. It is difficult to accomplish the NEP goal without legal support." The noble goal of teacher education is on the right track, but instructors must have a thorough comprehension of the incredibly inventive curriculum that has been provided. The standard of education will always be a source of yearning at the community level. In fact, many in-service teachers lack professional credentials and are overworked with administrative and social responsibilities, which limits their ability to provide hands-on instruction or training. The educational framework has previously been opposed for a similar reason: the continuous comprehensive evaluation (CCE) effort was discontinued owing to its failure. If we want the NEP to be a success, we need to disrupt existing conventions with caution and release them in stages. The NEP must be owned by all stakeholders at all levels: state, district, sub-district, and block. Principals must be prepared ahead of time. Even metropolitan places, let alone rural areas, lack the ability to absorb these changes. Before implementing the policy, one must first map out the resources. Workshops on their own will not be sufficient. Unwavering inter- and intra-school training is required. The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), as the country's most advanced board, should be asked to execute experimental initiatives to ensure the policy's success. Numerous ideas from the NEP have already been applied in its schools, and it has been involved in the creation of guides and programmes on novel pedagogies like competency-based education, fun and engaging experiential learning, art education, and school quality evaluations. A model that is both sustainable and scalable is necessary. Master instructors can be trained by the board, who can then train administrators and teachers. Transformation is a collaborative endeavour that can only be accomplished if real-time feedback and promptness are provided to teacher training groups.

The task force on higher education changes must be scrutinised by an advisory council. It should include specialists from both public and private higher education institutions to assist PM in identifying potential problems and ensuring timely implementation with clear responsibility.

To design and supervise NEP implementation in a time-bound way, a national independent NEP implementation standing committee must be created. It gives theme sub-committees and regional committees unique authorities and functions.

The policy does not specify the balance of power between the state and the federal government, state engagement in partnership for educational change is essential. 'The National Education Ministers Council, led by the Union Minister for Education, must be formed, including Education Ministers from all states and UTs. The Council will serve as a crucial institutional tool for monitoring NEP implementation in states and UTs, as well as a platform for discussing and addressing implementation challenges and navigating through state governments' different viewpoints.

Institutions of Eminence (IoE) was founded to elevate India's best sector and develop world-class institutions (Business Line, 2018). In his 2016 budget address, then-Finance Minister Arun Jaitley pledged to create "an enabling regulatory architecture" that would allow "ten public and ten private schools" to emerge as "world-class teaching and research institutions." As a result, IoEs were created. Today, the IoE vision must be integrated into the NEP implementation plan, and greater freedom, flexibility, autonomy, and resources must be provided. This will, in time, assist institutions in establishing a strong presence in worldwide university rankings.

5. CONCLUSION

It is not uncommon to see government initiatives aimed at transforming the educational system. The administration showed some bravery in overhauling the educational system in the face of pandemics by making significant changes to the higher education system. However, the writers of the report seem to be unconcerned with the looming issue of how the government would carry out these sweeping reforms. To begin with, policy execution is not a strong suit of the current administration, as seen by the goods and services tax (GST) changes. There are no protections in place to guarantee that single-body governance won't compromise the independence of the higher education system. Without the flexibility of the state and colleges, a perception of centralization might grow. Furthermore, the strategy

aims to replace bureaucracy by including educators in decision-making. However, it is a far-fetched ambition, as government officials have filled the position in several federal and state-level institutions after retirement. For policy execution, the government relies on bureaucracy.

The policy emphasises adapting education to the demands of the twenty-first century by making it comprehensive, adaptable, and delayed gratification. However, due to its underlying nature of classism, casteism, and uncertainty in the application, it bears an ambitious and rhetorical tone throughout, demonstrating the government's lackadaisical attitude toward education.

To recover India's proper place in the cloak of international education, the policy must be implemented methodically and progressively. Having said that, actual concerns such as poor infrastructure, insufficient research facilities, a teacher shortage, filthy government schools with low sanitation, and a high percentage of student dropouts should be addressed. Instead of deflecting attention from the core problems in education, the education plan should act as a stepping stone to restore India's lost reputation as a nation rich in philosophers, thinkers, mathematicians, and scientists. The political economy of India has put off making decent education a primary priority. In the previous several decades, there has been a shift in the emergence of expectations and, as a result, the need for education, but this desire has yet to be channelled into institutional improvements. There will be no retreat from the need for a highway and device access for all, as well as the necessity to tie up loose ends to enable the future of learning.

6. REFERENCES

- Agnihotri, R. K. (2020). Examining the Linguistic Dimension of Draft National Education Policy, 2019. *Economic & Political Weekly*, 55(19), 43.
- Bhadauriya, V. S. (2020). How NEP 2020 can transform higher education in India. *Academics4Nation*.
- Dr. K. Kasturirangan, D. V. (2020). Higher Education curriculum to have Flexibility of Subjects. *Cabinet Approves National*

- Education Policy 2020, paving way for transformational reforms in school and higher education systems in the country.* Delhi: PIB Delhi.
- Flexible degree courses, multiple exit options among others reforms in NEP. (2020, July 30). *Business Standard*. Retrieved from https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/flexible-degree-courses-multiple-exit-options-among-others-reforms-in-nep-120072902136_1.html
- IMD. (2019, November). *IMD WORLD TALENT RANKING 2019*. Retrieved from IMD.org: https://www.imd.org/contentassets/4858dca6cb3742119ee063f0d052fffa/imd_world_talent_ranking.pdf
- Indian National Science Academy, N. A. (2020). *Observations on the Draft of New Education Policy*. Delhi: Dialogue. Retrieved from <http://www.dialogue.ias.ac.in/article/20944/observations-on-the-draft-national-education-policy>
- Krishna, A. (2020, July 30). *NDTV Education*. Retrieved from <https://www.ndtv.com/education/nep-educational-activists-ask-why-policy-silent-on-rte-act>
- Kundu, P. (2020, May 5). Indian education can't go online – only 8% of homes with young members have computer with net link. *Scroll.in*.
- Mehtabul, A., Chin, A., & Prakash, N. (2013). The Returns to English-Language Skills in India. *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, 61(2), 335-367
- Menon, S., & Vasudevan, M. U. (2020). The Paradigm Shift in the Indian Education System during COVID19: Impact, Opportunities and Trends. *International Journal of Engineering and Management Research (preprint)*.
- Ministry of Finance, G. o. (2018, Jan 12). *Ministry of Finance App*. Retrieved from Ministry of Finance: <https://www.im4change.org/docs/751economic%20survey%202017-18%20-%20vol.%20II.pdf>
- Ministry of Human Resource Development, G. o. (2020). *New Education Policy 2020*. Delhi. retrieved from https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/NEP_Final_English_0.pdf
- Mishra, & Anand. (2013). *Study on Impact of Teaching in Local Dialect on the Tribal Children Living in Remote Tribal Areas Chhattisgarh: State Council of Educational Research and Training Chhattisgarh*.
- News, D. (2020, July 29). *Cabinet approves National Education Policy 2020*. Retrieved from india.gov.in: <http://ddnews.gov.in/national/cabinet-approves-national-education-policy-2020>
- Nischal, D. A. (2020). Improving Foundational Literacy and Numeracy in Your Schools. *International Council for School Leadership*. Retrieved from <https://www.icsl.org.in/post/improving-foundational-literacy-and-numeracy-in-your-schools>
- Pudussery, D. P. (2020). *New Education Policy 2020. Indian Currents*. <https://www.indiancurrents.org/archive/national-education-policy-2020-3173.php>
- Ramanand. (2020, July 30). *The Print*. Retrieved from NEP 2020 is a good document but its real job will be to weed civil servants out of academia: <https://theprint.in/opinion/nep-2020-is-a-good-document-but-its-real-job-will-be-to-weed-civil-servants-out-of-academia/471393/>
- Shivnani, M., & Mansata, A. (2020). A Critical Review of The National Education Policy, 2020: Gilded Tombs Do Worms Enfold? *Indian Journal of Law and Public Policy*. <https://ijlpp.com/a-critical-review-of-the-national-education-policy-2020-gilded-tombs-do-worms-enfold/>
- Singh, R., & Yadav, M. (2020). SWOT analysis of National Education Policy 2020. *The Arm Chair Journal*. <https://armchairjournal.com/swot-analysis-of-national-education-policy-2020/>
- Singhal, M. (2020, August 11). *Money Control*. Retrieved from <https://www.moneycontrol.com/news/opinion/five-challenges-that-will-determine-success-of-nep-2020-5683601.html>

The Progressive Teacher. (2020, March). *Teachers Are The Key To The Implementation of NEP 2020*. <http://www.progressiveteacher.in/teachers-are-the-key-to-the-implementation-of-nep-2020/>

Tilak, J. B. (2020, August 3). A policy with many a right intention. <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/a-policy-with-many-a-right-intention/article32254650.ece>

UDISE+. (2018). *Unified District Information System for Education*. Retrieved from

<http://udise.schooleduinfo.in/dashboard/Secondary#/>

Vallabh, G. (2020, August 12). Does the National Education Policy miss out on real issues? *The New Indian Express*. Delhi. <https://www.newindianexpress.com/opinions/2020/aug/12/does-the-national-education-policy-miss-out-on-real-issues-2182273.html>