

The Impact of the National Education Policy on Higher Education in India

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Abstract

The implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP) of 2020 is a pivotal point in the history of education in India, particularly with regard to the field of higher education. The purpose of this study is to investigate the implications of the National Education Policy (NEP) on higher education institutions across the country in a comprehensive manner. The research is to reveal the consequences of the policy on the quality, accessibility, and relevance of higher education by conducting a thorough investigation of the structural changes, curricular reforms, technology integration, and inclusive practices that have been implemented. By shedding light on its intended results, prospective problems, and the overarching effect on the higher education system in India, the research aims to give significant insights into the transformative trajectory established by the National Education Policy (NEP).

Keywords: National Education Policy, NEP 2020, Higher Education, Structural Changes, Curricular Reforms

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Introduction

With the introduction of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, a forward-thinking policy with the intention of redefining the parameters of the education system in India, the landscape of education in India is experiencing a significant upheaval. India is positioned to become a worldwide knowledge giant as a result of the National Education Policy (NEP), which was conceived of as a catalyst for national growth and outlines an ambitious plan to make affordable, high-quality education available to all citizens. A paradigm shift in the basic fabric of the educational environment is represented by the revolutionary overhaul that was launched by the National Education Policy (NEP). This overhaul goes beyond simple structural modifications. The National Education Policy (NEP) is responsible for a number of significant changes, one of which is the disintegration of the traditional 10+2 framework, which represents a divergence from the rules of conventional pedagogy. A change towards a framework consisting of 5+3+3+4 is advocated for by the new education policy, which argues for a more holistic approach.

This unconventional arrangement represents a nuanced progression, in which the first five years include the foundational stage, which extends from primary school to the second grade, then the intermediate years, which extend from the third to the fifth grade, and finally the middle school years, which extend from the sixth to the eighth grade. Last but not least, the final section covers the complete secondary school system, beginning with the ninth grade and continuing through the twelfth grade overall.

When it comes to the medium of teaching, the National Education Policy places a significant amount of focus, particularly throughout the formative years of a student's educational journey. The policy emphasises the significance of using the first language or the language spoken in the area as the medium of teaching up to the fifth grade, and it suggests that this practice be maintained until the eighth grade and beyond. The policy's attitude on language education encompasses the promotion of Sanskrit as well as other foreign languages, with an emphasis on a multilingual approach. In accordance with the National Education Policy (NEP), pupils are strongly encouraged to acquire knowledge of three languages while attending school, with the proviso that at least two of these languages must be indigenous to India. Importantly, the policy emphasises that the learning process should be flexible and inclusive, and that there should be no imposition of a certain language on the pupils.

A fundamentally transformational path is mapped out for the Indian education system by the National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020), which not only redefines the structural base of the system but also its pedagogical ethos. The purpose of this study is to investigate the myriad of consequences that the National Education Policy (NEP) has on higher education in India. More specifically, the study will investigate the manner in which the NEP may influence educational accessibility, linguistic variety, and the overall quality of learning. The purpose of this research is to contribute to a thorough knowledge of the far-reaching repercussions that the National Education Policy (NEP) has had on the educational landscape of the nation by conducting an in-depth examination with the goal of unravelling the subtle features of the NEP.

National Education Policy: History

Post-Independence Initiatives (1947–1960s):

The Indian government has made combating illiteracy a top goal since the country's independence in 1947. The first Minister of Education, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, had the idea of a unified educational system to foster consistency. To bring India's educational system up to date, a number of commissions were set up, such as the University Education Commission (1948–1949), the Secondary Education Commission (1952–1953), and the Kothari Commission (1964–66). As an additional policy advising body, the government established NCERT (National Council of Educational Research and Training) in 1961.

The First National Policy on Education (1968):

In 1968, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi unveiled the first National Policy on Education (NPE), which was based on the recommendations of the Kothari Commission. For the sake of national unification, cultural growth, and economic development, this programme promoted equitable educational opportunities as part of its "radical restructuring" efforts. It advocated for the "three language formula" in secondary school, made education mandatory for children up to the age of 14, and highlighted regional languages. Hindi and the old Sanskrit language were also emphasised in the policy. Six percent of GDP should be set aside for education, according to the plan.

The Second National Policy on Education (1986):

In 1986, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi unveiled a new National Policy on Education, which aimed to level the playing field in terms of educational possibilities and eliminate imbalances. There was a concentrated effort to eliminate inequalities affecting Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe members, as well as Indian women. To enhance primary schools across the country, the programme instituted "Operation Blackboard" and embraced a "child-centred approach" to teaching elementary students. With the launch of Indira Gandhi National Open University, the network of open universities was enlarged. Spending 6% of GDP on education was the policy's stated goal.

Modifications and Updates (1992 Onwards):

The administration of P. V. Narasimha Rao made changes to the NPE of 1986 in 1992 and made further updates to it thereafter. A new strategy modelled after the UPA government's "Common Minimum Programme" was implemented by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in 2005. All of India's professional and technical degree programmes were to be admitted via a single entrance test according to the 1992 Programme of Action (PoA).

The historical trajectory of education policy in India reveals how these policies have changed throughout the years, mirroring shifts in socio-economic goals and educational philosophies.

Draft New Education Policy 2019:

The Indian government has taken a giant leap forward in its efforts to revamp the country's educational system with the 2019 release of the Draft New Education Policy. A number of public consultations followed the release of this draft, encouraging discussion and the incorporation of different viewpoints. Curriculum simplification, with an emphasis on core competencies, critical thinking, and an all-encompassing, hands-on approach, was the policy's central goal. To promote an all-encompassing educational experience, discussion- and analysis-based learning were prioritised.

Substituting a more sophisticated 5+3+3+4 system for the more antiquated 10+2 system was one of the notable suggestions for changing the current educational framework and curricula. Aligning learning with children's cognitive growth phases was the goal of this redesign. In addition, Research Methodology was a major addition to the last year of the degree programme, strengthening the focus on research in higher education. Another innovative aspect was the option for students to drop out during the last year and still get a credential or degree depending on how much they studied.

Approval of the National Education Policy 2020:

A new national education policy, reflecting discussions, comments, and changes from the 2019 Draft New Education Policy, was adopted by the cabinet on July 29, 2020. The education system in India reached a major turning point with this acceptance. A number of game-changing reforms to the current educational system were proposed in the National Education Policy 2020. A goal timeframe stretching till 2026 was set for the progressive implementation of the planned modifications in India.

Fostering creativity, critical thinking, and a comprehensive grasp of many disciplines was the overall purpose of the National Education Policy 2020, which aimed to match education with the dynamic requirements of the 21st century. The programme emphasised adaptability, innovation, and a focus on the student as the central focus of several reforms that extended from elementary school to university level education. Over this time, there was a sea change in India's educational rhetoric, with leaders vowing to rethink traditional approaches to education in light of the opportunities and threats posed by the modern world.

National Education Policy-2020: Key Highlights

The National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) represents a comprehensive blueprint for the evolution of education in India. Below are the salient features and provisions encapsulated in NEP 2020:

- **Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE):** NEP 2020 aims to provide a fundamental education to children aged 3-6 through Anganwadis and pre-schools, highlighting the value of early childhood education (ECCE).
- **School Education:** The strategy aims for a multidisciplinary and comprehensive approach to education by reducing the emphasis on rote memorization and increasing the importance of critical thinking and experience learning. Until at least fifth grade, it supports teaching in students' native languages.
- **Curricular Reforms:** NEP 2020 suggests a new curricular framework, 5+3+3+4, to replace the current 10+2 system. This framework promotes a flexible curriculum and supports vocational education by dividing the 12-year educational period into foundational, preparatory, middle, and secondary stages.

- **Teacher Education:** A four-year integrated Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) programme and a single framework for National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST) are examples of efforts to improve the calibre of teachers. The importance of providing teachers with chances for ongoing professional development throughout their careers is highlighted.
- **Higher Education:** The policy's proposals for a single regulator, interdisciplinary study, adaptable course offerings, and more technological integration are all significant changes in this sector. Its goals include encouraging more research and new ideas while increasing the Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER).
- **Technology in Education:** NEP 2020 aims to incorporate technology into teaching and learning activities in a seamless manner, acknowledging its essential significance. To improve education for all, the policy supports using online materials, virtual laboratories, and e-learning platforms.
- **Gender Inclusion:** The goal of NEP 2020 is to guarantee that all students, regardless of gender identity or expression, have equitable access to educational opportunities. It promotes a gender-sensitive educational environment and fights against discrimination based on gender.
- **Assessment Reforms:** The policy calls for a change from summative to competency-based and formative assessment, which is part of the larger assessment reform effort. The goal is to encourage more comprehensive forms of assessment and reduce reliance on standardised tests.
- **Research and Development:** Education-related research and development must get increased funding by 2020, according to NEP 2020. In order to encourage research and innovation, it suggests establishing research institutes, collaborating with foreign institutions, and establishing a National Research Foundation (NRF).
- **Financial Support:** The strategy calls for 6% of India's GDP to go into education, bringing attention to the need for more public funding. Additionally, it plans to make more scholarships, loans, and other forms of financial help available to students so that they can pursue their education.

These key provisions embody the transformative vision of the National Education Policy 2020, and their effective implementation involves collaborative efforts between central and state governments, educational institutions, and various stakeholders.

Importance of NEP 2020

There are several positive aspects of the National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020), all of which help to improve and advance India's educational system as a whole. The following benefits of NEP 2020 highlight its significance and demonstrate its potential to revolutionise many areas of education:

- **Changes within the School Structure:** Students will no longer have to worry as much about preparing for board examinations thanks to the adoption of a more comprehensive and adaptable educational system that replaces the current 10+2 system with the 5+3+3+4 pattern.
- **Broader Options to Learn:** Students in grades 9 through 12 can now choose from a variety of interdisciplinary courses, opening up more permeable streams and enabling a wider range of possible topic combinations.
- **Making Education a Basic Right:** Expanding Compulsory Education from 6 to 14 years to encompass children from 3 to 18 years old and offering free education at government-run institutions: NEP 2020 aims to universalize education.
- **Option to Learn Coding in School:** The curriculum begins introducing computers and coding lessons as early as class 6, which helps to improve technical literacy from a young age. Students also have the option to learn coding in school.
- **Focus on Critical Thinking:** The strategy shifts the focus away from the conventional board test system and towards encouraging students to think critically, creatively, and rationally by having them apply what they've learned in real-world contexts.

- **More Inclusive Policy:** Aiming to help disadvantaged children in far-flung areas have access to education and opportunities for personal development, NEP 2020 allocates funding, establishes education zones, and sets up gender inclusion funds.
- **Improvement in Teaching Quality:** Raising the Bar for Teacher Education: NEP 2020 intends to do this by making a Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) degree a mandatory 4-year programme by 2030. Among these goals is the improvement of educational practices, the establishment of mentoring and support programmes for students, and the preparation of educators to meet the needs of a wide range of pupils, including those with special needs.
- **Upgraded Undergraduate Program:** The policy revamps the undergraduate programme, making it four years instead of three. Students will have the option to get a diploma after two years, an associate's degree after three, or a bachelor's degree after four years. Improving the educational experience as a whole, the fourth year is research-based.
- **Regulating the Fees:** To ensure affordability and eliminate extravagant cost structures, NEP 2020 caps the fees imposed by private institutions.
- **More Scope for Global Education:** India's strategy encourages international schools and colleges to set up shop in the country, which might help stem the brain drain by giving domestic students more options for high-quality education.

In essence, NEP 2020 is pivotal in ushering in transformative changes, making education more accessible, flexible, and aligned with the evolving needs of students and the nation.

Impact of NEP-2020 on Higher education

The National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) envisions a profound impact on higher education, introducing transformative changes to align the educational landscape with evolving needs. The following highlights delineate the impact of NEP 2020 on higher education:

1. **Flexible Certification:**
 - Colleges are mandated to issue certificates after the completion of one year in any discipline, including vocational and professional areas.
 - Diplomas will be granted after two years of study, and a bachelor's degree will be conferred after completing a three-year program.
2. **Expansion of Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER):**
 - NEP 2020 aims to enhance the GER in higher education, encompassing vocational training, from 26.3 percent in 2018 to 50 percent by 2035.
 - To achieve this, 35 million new seats will be added to higher education institutions, fostering increased accessibility.
3. **National Research Foundation (NRF):**
 - The establishment of NRF is geared towards catalyzing research and innovation across academic disciplines, particularly at the university and graduate levels.
 - The focus on research is expected to elevate the quality of education and contribute to advancements in various fields.
4. **Standardized College Entrance Exam:**
 - The National Testing Agency (NTA) will conduct a standardized college entrance exam twice a year, resembling the SAT model.
 - Over the next 15 years, colleges will be granted graded autonomy to issue degrees, and affiliation with universities will be discontinued.
5. **Global Collaboration:**
 - NEP 2020 encourages the facilitation of top-rated global universities to establish a presence in India, fostering international collaboration.

- Similarly, Indian institutions are urged to go global, enhancing their standing on the international stage.
6. **Fee Regulation and Discontinuation of M. Phil:**
 - The policy proposes a cap on fees charged by private institutions in higher education, ensuring affordability.
 - M. Phil programs will be discontinued, allowing students with master's degrees direct entry into Ph.D. programs.
 7. **Preservation of Languages:**
 - NEP 2020 emphasizes the preservation of all Indian languages by recommending the establishment of an Indian Institute of Translation and Interpretation.
 - National Institutes for Pali, Persian, and Prakrit will be established, while Sanskrit and all other language departments in higher education institutions will be strengthened.
 8. **Literacy Goals:**
 - The policy underscores the goal of achieving 100 percent literacy in the country, aligning with broader national objectives.

In conclusion, NEP 2020 introduces a comprehensive framework for higher education, fostering flexibility, research, global collaboration, and language preservation to create a more inclusive and dynamic educational landscape.

Conclusion

Highlighting the policy's dedication to international excellence, NEP 2020 promotes collaboration with top-rated universities throughout the world and encourages Indian schools to expand their reach internationally. Ensuring affordable and fair access to quality education is the goal of fee regulation in private schools. In addition, NEP 2020 supports the preservation of Indian languages through specialised institutions and enhanced language departments, highlighting the importance of linguistic variety. Along the way to achieving these goals, NEP 2020 tackles present issues and sets the framework for an inclusive, internationally competitive, and resilient Indian higher education system. Collaboration between the state, schools, and other interested parties is essential for these changes to take root and grow. Education will play a pivotal role in driving national development and individual progress in the future, according to NEP 2020.

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