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**Abstract:**

The National Education Policy 2020 aims at making “India a global knowledge superpower”. It is the first education policy of the 21st century and aims to address the many growing developmental imperatives of our country.

This Policy proposes the revision and revamping of all aspects of the education structure, including its regulation and governance, to create a new system that is aligned with the aspirational goals of 21st-century education, while building upon India’s traditions and value systems. It has been introducing a holistic, inclusive, and participatory approach to our education system. It has focused on enhancing the existing education system and making higher education institutions more committed, learner-centric, and complied. It aims at tapping into the unique capabilities and skills of each student with its flexible and multidisciplinary model.

This policy bringing major changes at different levels and if executed in its true vision, it has the potential to bring India into the league of other developed countries in the world by transforming it into a global knowledge superpower.

**Keywords:** Participatory approach, learner-centric, global knowledge superpower.

**Introduction**

Education has continued to advance since the dawn of human history, and every country develops its own system of education to express and promote its unique socio-cultural identity and also to meet the challenges of the times. With this view, the government of India has announced education policies from time to time.

India has so far had three education policies after independence. The first national education policy in India came in 1968 and the second in 1986 under Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi respectively; the national education policy of 1986 was revised in 1992 when P V Narasimha Rao was Prime Minister. The third national education policy (NEP, 2020) came under the Prime Ministership of Narendra Modi to strengthen further the Indian education system. The New Education Policy, 2020 replaced the thirty-four years old education policy to bring transformation and holistic development in education.

The main objectives of the study are:

- To understand the changes in Indian higher education,
- To analyse the national education policies with special reference to the New Education Policy 2020

The study made use of secondary data from scientific publications in journals, websites, blogs, and books.

**The Indian education system**

The Indian education system has evolved to a great extent from the Vedic days to today’s digital e-learning age. Since ancient times, prominent educational institutions have existed in India like Nalanda University and Takshasila University, which were well-known across the world and were the chief learning centres where a multitude of disciplines were taught, including Philosophy, Mathematics, Astronomy, Psychology, Arts, etc..Vallabhi was also a famous study centre that specialised in subjects like law, medicine, and economics, and had students attending from all parts of the country. Vikramshila was another esteemed university, best known for its Tantric Buddhism.

**Pre-Independence:**

The Vedic tradition of education was followed by the Mughal and British Raj. While the Mughal period brought Islamic influence in education. During the British period, the introduction of western education has a significant impact on the emergence of an education policy in India. Several commissions, like the Sadler commission, build the foundation of the Indian education system during the colonial period. Several charters were passed by the British government to promote education in

India. A major reform in the Indian education system was brought by the Woods Education Dispatch, popularly known as the "Magna Carta of English Education in India" (Singh, 2005).

The important aspect of Woods Dispatch was that it paved the way for the establishment of universities in India. Calcutta University established in 1857, was the first Indian university in modern India. After that, the Bombay and Madras universities were established.

As is well known, modern education was launched during the British Raj and opened many Christian Missionary schools and colleges. It was introduced by Lord Macaulay with the professed objective of producing trained manpower for the lower ranks of bureaucracy and professions in India. Educational reforms during British rule were not destined for the development of India per se, but they have played a major role in shaping the leaders, and Indian leaders have utilised it to their advantage to fight for the common goal of Independence. And education gave the confidence to question the British and eventually helped to pave the path for Indian Independence.

**Post-Independence:**

The Indian system of higher education is one of the largest in the country. It has undergone rapid development in the post-Independence era. There were only 25 institutions in 1947, and at the time of the first five-year plan, which was launched in the years 1950–51, there were only 28 universities. Today we have more than 800 universities and 40,000 higher education institutions (HEIs), indicating a substantial increase in educational facilities all over the country at all levels.

On the eve of independence, the level of education and literacy was very low in India. In 1951, only 18.3% of people were literate, out of which 27.2% were male and the female literacy rate was 8.9%. Though the system of education given by the British was highly unproductive, India after independence has come a long way in terms of its literacy rate. And though there is a disparity in the literacy rates between different states, and also between both genders, India's literacy rate has risen from around 18% in the 1950s to 74% in the last Census, in 2011.

**Provisions in the Indian Constitution related to education:**

Under Article 45 in the Directive Principles of State Policy, it was mentioned that the government should provide free and compulsory education for all children up to the age of 14 years within 10 years from the commencement of the Constitution. As this was not achieved, Article 21A was introduced by the 86th Constitutional Amendment Act of 2002, making elementary education a fundamental right rather than a directive principle. And Article 45 was amended to provide for early childhood care and education to children below the age of six years. And to implement Article 21A, the government legislated the Right to Education Act (RTE).

The efforts of the government by formulating educational policies based on the various committees from time to time have brought about a sea change.

**The University Education Commission:**

In 1948-49, the University Education Commission was constituted under Radhakrishnan. It moulded the education system based on the needs of an independent India. The pre-Independent Indian education value system was catering to the colonial masters, so there was a need to replace Macaulayism with the Indian value system.

**Education Commission (1964-66):**

The government set up a 17-member Education Commission under UGC chairperson DS Kothari. If the Radhakrishnan committee charted out the value system of the Indian education system, it was the Kothari commission that provided the basic framework of the same.

The Kothari commission provided for:

1. Standardised the educational system on a 10+2+3 pattern.
2. Emphasised the need to make work experience and social service an integral part of education.
3. Linking of colleges to several schools in the neighbourhood.
4. Equalisation of opportunities for all and achieving social and national integration.
5. Neighborhood school systems without social or religious segregation and a school complex system integrating primary and secondary levels of education.
6. Establishment of Indian Education Service.
7. On-the-job job training of the teaching staff and for efforts to raise the status of the teachers to attract talents into the profession.
8. To raise expenditure on education from 2.9% of the GDP to 6% by 1985.

This committee report paved the way for the National Educational Policy 1968, which provided the basis and roadmap for further development of the education system in India.

### **The 1968 Education Policy:**

1. On the basis of the recommendations of the Kothari Commission, the first National Education Policy was released in 1968. This policy called for a National School System, which meant that all students, irrespective of caste, creed, and sex, would have access to an education of a comparable quality up to a given level.
2. Further, it envisaged a common educational structure [10+2+3] which was accepted across the country and most of us have studied under that system.
3. three-language formula: It also advocated the use of the mother tongue as a medium of teaching in the early school years. State governments should implement the study of a modern Indian language, preferably one of the southern languages, apart from Hindi and English. Hindi was encouraged uniformly to promote a common language for all Indians.
4. Recommended for strengthening research in universities.

This policy sought to have a 'radical restructuring' of India's educational system and equalise opportunities for education for all, to accomplish national integration and better economic and cultural development. However, except for the common educational structure of the 10+2+3 system, the 1968 policy was not very successful due to shortage of funds, Education was in state list and role of center was little.

### **National Education Policy, 1986**

1. The 1986 policy was issued during the tenure of Rajiv Gandhi as Prime Minister, and it was updated in 1992 when PV Narsimha Rao was prime minister.
2. This policy focused on modernization and the role of IT in education.
3. More attention was paid to restructuring teacher education, early childhood care, women's empowerment, and adult literacy.
4. It also accepted the autonomy of universities and colleges, something which was resisted in the past.

In comparison to the 1968 policy, the 1986 policy performed better. There were several reasons for this. Firstly, this policy came after the 42nd amendment in 1976. In this amendment, five subjects were transferred from the State to the Concurrent List, including Education, Forests, Weights & Measures, Protection of Wild Animals and Birds; and Administration of Justice. Secondly, the centre has introduced a number of programmes in line with this policy, such as Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Mid Day Meal Scheme, Navodaya Vidyalayas (NVS schools), Kendriya Vidyalayas (KV schools), "Operation Blackboard" to provide minimum essential facilities to all primary schools and use of IT in education etc.

### **Problems with the higher education system in India**

1. There is a dual problem of both quality and quantity. The gross enrollment ratio (GER) in higher education is only 24.5.
2. There is a lack of adequate funds allotted to higher education.
3. Poor levels of research.
4. Privatization of higher education has not been led by philanthropy but by commercial interests. Mushrooming of colleges at a higher rate with a profit motive.
5. Recommendations of the Narayana Murthy committee, on the role of the corporate sector in higher education, have not been implemented, and thus channelling of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funds to higher education remains inadequate.
6. Banks and financial institutions are not giving adequate attention to this area.
7. The Indian higher education system focuses very little on specialization.
8. The regulatory environment of higher education is in shambles. UGC and AICTE act more as controllers of education than facilitators. Poor governance is widespread in this sector.
9. For long, basic disciplines across the physical, social, and humanities were ignored.
10. There was an increasing trend of bright students choosing foreign institutes over Indian institutes for higher studies. This resulted in a 'brain drain'.
11. Higher education institutions are used as rewards for loyalists and channels of graft by political parties in power.

12. Yashpal Committee (2010) points out several problems in higher education in India:

- a. Compartmentalization and fragmentation of knowledge system.
- b. Disconnect with society.
- c. Overemphasis on entrance tests.
- d. Absence of innovation in learning methods.
- e. Corrosion of autonomy of universities.

### National Education Policy of India – Background

The Ministry of Human Resource Development formed a committee chaired by Dr K. Kasturirangan to prepare the National Education Policy. The Committee was constituted in June 2017. The Committee submitted its report on May 31, 2019. The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has approved the National Education Policy 2020 on July 29, 2020.

### New Education Policy: a Paradigm Shift in Indian Higher Education:

The Ministry of HRD's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is groundbreaking in every way. While the policy addresses issues such as early childhood services, inclusivity in education, and curriculum restructuring, the policy is interwoven based on the interaction between education and technology. The demand for ICT in education expanded quickly in the twenty-first century. Assisting teachers, crossing the language barrier, developing digital libraries, and enabling a technology-based environment for teacher training are all highlighted in the policy.

### Features of National Education Policy 2020

1. The National Education Policy has been built on the foundational pillars of Access, Equity, Quality, Affordability and Accountability
2. The policy provides for reforms at all levels of education, from school to higher education.
3. It aims to increase the focus on strengthening teacher training, reforming the existing exam system, early childhood care and restructuring the regulatory framework of education.
4. **Curriculum Framework:** Reforms in the framework of the current curriculum of school education are based on the development needs of the students. The NEP recommends the 5-3-3-4 pattern explained in the table below:

Years	Stage	Curriculum
5	Foundational	3 years of pre-primary followed by class 1 and 2
3	Preparatory	Classes 3 to 5
3	Middle	Classes 6 to 8
4	Secondary	Classes 9-12

5. **School Exam Reforms:** Reforms in the school exams recommended by the NEP include tracking the progress of the students throughout their school experience. It includes State Census Exams in classes 3, 5 and 8. And another important recommendation was the restructuring of the 10th board exam that would mainly focus on and test only the skills, core concepts, and higher-order thinking and capacities.
6. **Regulatory Structure:** The Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) will be set up as a single overarching umbrella body for all higher education, excluding medical and legal education. HECI to have four independent verticals -
  - a. National Higher Education Regulatory Council (NHERC) for regulation
  - b. General Education Council (GEC) for standard-setting
  - c. Higher Education Grants Council (HEGC) for funding and
  - d. National Accreditation Council (NAC) for accreditation
7. The NEP has also suggested changing the name of the Ministry of Human Resources and Development to the Ministry of Education.
8. **Vocational Courses :** Students in classes 9 to 12 must receive vocational education in at least one vocation and Schools should build expert curriculum delivery methods that are aligned with National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF) competency levels. Further Higher Education Institutes must also provide vocational courses that are integrated into undergraduate education programmes.
9. **Three Language Formula:** The policy recommends that the three-language formula be continued and flexibility in the implementation of the formula should be provided.

10. **Equitable and Inclusive Education:** NEP 2020 aims to ensure that no child loses any opportunity to learn and excel because of the circumstances of birth or background. Special emphasis will be given to socially and Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs) which include gender, socio-cultural, and geographical identities, and disabilities.
11. **Increase GER to 50 % by 2035:** NEP 2020 aims to increase the Gross Enrolment Ratio in higher education, including vocational education, from 26.3% (2018) to 50% by 2035. 3.5 Crore new seats will be added to Higher education institutions.
12. **Holistic Multidisciplinary Education:** The policy envisages broad based, multi-disciplinary, holistic undergraduate education with flexible curricula, creative combinations of subjects, integration of vocational education and multiple entry and exit points with appropriate certification. UG education can be of 3 or 4 years with multiple exit options and appropriate certification within this period. For example, Certificate after 1 year, Advanced Diploma after 2 years, a bachelor's Degree after 3 years and Bachelor's with Research after 4 years.
13. An Academic Bank of Credit is to be established for digitally storing academic credits earned from different HEIs so that these can be transferred and counted towards a final degree earned.
14. Multidisciplinary Education and Research Universities (MERUs), at par with IITs, IIMs, to be set up as models of best multidisciplinary education of global standards in the country.
15. **Motivated, Energized, and Capable Faculty:** NEP makes recommendations for motivating, energizing, and building the capacity of faculty through clearly defined, independent, transparent recruitment, freedom to design curricula/pedagogy; incentivising excellence; and movement into institutional leadership. Faculty not delivering on basic norms will be held accountable.
16. **Teacher Education:** A new and comprehensive National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education, NCFTE 2021, will be formulated by the NCTE in consultation with NCERT. By 2030, the minimum degree qualification for teaching will be a 4-year integrated B.Ed. degree.
17. **Mentoring Mission:** A National Mission for Mentoring will be established, with a large pool of outstanding senior/retired faculty – including those with the ability to teach in Indian languages – who would be willing to provide short and long-term mentoring/professional support to university/college teachers.
18. **Distance Learning and Digital Education:** A dedicated unit for the purpose of orchestrating the building of digital infrastructure, digital content and capacity building will be created in the MHRD to look after the e-education needs of both schools and higher education. Measures such as online courses and digital repositories, credit-based recognition of MOOCs, etc., will be taken.
19. **Technology in education:** An autonomous body, the National Educational Technology Forum (NETF), will be created to provide a platform for the free exchange of ideas on the use of technology to enhance learning, assessment, planning, and administration.
20. **Financing Education:** The Centre and the States will work together to increase the public investment in Education sector to reach 6% of GDP at the earliest.

#### Concerns about the NEP 2020:

1. The report fails to address and incorporate ideas based on contemporary global thinking like the emphasis on creativity and critical thinking
2. The propositions of volunteer teachers, peer tutoring, rationalisation of the system of schools and sharing of resources do not seem like long-term solutions.
3. Lack of clarity in government strategies regarding the Public Sector like municipal schools, state-run institutions, Kendra Vidyalaya, etc.
4. The creation of a National Testing Agency (NTA) to conduct entrance examinations for admissions and fellowships in higher educational institutions may lead to loss of autonomy among the universities over admissions.
5. NEP 2020 insisted on the expenditure of 6% of the GDP on education need to be fulfilled.

#### Merits of New Education Policy 2020

1. **Comprehensive:** NEP seeks to address the entire gamut of education from preschool to doctoral studies, and from professional degrees to vocational training.

2. **Early Childhood Education:** In adopting a 5+3+3+4 model for school education starting at age 3, the New Education Policy recognizes the primacy of the formative years from ages 3 to 8 in shaping the child's future
3. **Easy on Regulations:** NEP 2020 makes a bold prescription to free our schools, colleges and universities from periodic "inspections" and place them on the path of self-assessment and voluntary declaration
4. **Holistic:** The policy, inter alia, aims to eliminate problems of pedagogy, structural inequities, access asymmetries and rampant commercialization.
5. **Promote Inclusion:** The Policy proposes the creation of 'inclusion funds' to help socially and educationally disadvantaged children pursue education

### Conclusion

The road to the development of a nation is through the education system and if we compromise on education at any level, we will jeopardize the socio-economic development of the country. Hence, Education should be an instrumentality for developing not only an economically prosperous society, but one which can flourish in the context of pluralism and democracy.

Nevertheless, it is the various education policies, charted out since Independence, which led to the historical evolution of the education system in India. The results of these policies can be said to be mixed. As there is still a lot of room for improvement, the NEP 2020 captures the need of the hour for reforming education for a futuristic India. It envisions an India-centric education system and the provision of quality education and equitable access to all students in a sustainable manner by making both school and college education more holistic, flexible, multidisciplinary, suited to 21st century needs.

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[Cited: 20 July 2021]