National Education Policy: 2020 Stages and Features: A Review

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ABSTRACT

A well-crafted educational policy is a crucial element in providing quality school and college education to a country's citizens as it paves the way for progress and development in society. Each nation has its own unique education system, which encompasses various stages throughout a student's academic journey. Recently, the Indian government was presented with a proposed Education policy by a committee of experts, spearheaded by the esteemed Dr. K. Kasturirangan, former chairman of the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO). This committee has suggested both incremental and radical changes to the current Indian education policy, along with providing effective implementation guidelines to be achieved by the year 2030. In the Foundational Stage, children will undergo a holistic development process that emphasizes language development, early numeracy, and social-emotional learning. The Preparatory Stage aims to establish fundamental skills in reading, writing, and mathematics, while also acquainting them with other subjects like science, social studies, and the arts. During the Middle Stage, critical thinking skills, problem-solving skills, and creativity will be honed, and students will be given the chance to explore various career paths. Meanwhile, in the Secondary Stage, students will be prepared for higher education or the workforce, allowing them to specialize in specific subjects or areas of study

Keywords: NEP, Different stages of NEP, Features, Liberal education, Assessment, Secondary Education Stage, Education

Introduction

The National Education Policy 2020, also known as NEP 2020, represents a comprehensive and all-encompassing framework that encompasses education in India, ranging from elementary to higher education, as well as vocational training. This policy was sanctioned by the Union Cabinet of India on July 29, 2020, and effectively supersedes the National Policy on Education, 1986. NEP 2020 is characterized by several key

objectives, including the provision of high-quality education to all individuals, regardless of their background or location, the establishment of India as a global knowledge superpower, the promotion of innovation and entrepreneurship, the cultivation of a skilled workforce capable of fulfilling the demands of the 21st century economy, the encouragement of a national identity and pride, and the advancement of social justice and inclusion.

Stages of education

(1) Foundation stage

The Foundational Stage shall encompass a period of five years that will be characterized by a flexible, multilevel, play-based, activity-based, and discovery-based learning approach. This approach shall be continually enhanced based on research and shall incorporate various time-honored Indian traditions and cultures to provide cognitive and emotional stimulation to young learners.

(2) Preparatory stage

The Preparatory Stage encompasses a period of three years of education subsequent to the Foundational Stage. Its curriculum builds upon the play-, discovery-, and activity-based pedagogical approaches of the previous stage. Furthermore, this stage gradually incorporates the use of textbooks for more formal classroom learning. During this stage, students are also introduced to various subjects, which in turn prepares them to gain a more profound understanding of specialized subjects in future stages.

(3) Middle school education stage

The Middle school education stage, spanning three years, is designed to foster a formalized pedagogical and curricular approach that builds upon the preparatory stage. The curriculum places emphasis on abstract concepts in each of the subjects, such as sciences, mathematics, arts, social sciences, and humanities, which students will encounter across multiple disciplines. This stage prioritizes experiential learning within each subject and encourages exploration of inter-subject relations. Additionally, specialized subjects and teachers are introduced to augment the learning experience.

(4) Secondary education Stage

The phase of secondary education is a four-year program that offers a multidisciplinary approach to studies, accompanied by apt exit options that prepare individuals for the succeeding phase of undergraduate studies. Additionally, it provides an initial exposure to Liberal Arts education. This stage employs the pedagogical and curricular style of the Middle stage but with an added emphasis on depth, critical thinking, life aspirations, flexibility, and student choice. The semester system is incorporated, and students will study 5 to 6 subjects per semester, with both common and elective subjects from liberal arts courses. The board examinations are restructured to test principles, concepts, critical thinking, and higher skills in each subject. Eleventh and twelfth

grades are an essential part of the secondary school education stage, and there is no category such as higher secondary or junior college.

(5) Stage of undergraduate education

During the stage of undergraduate education, degrees based on liberal education, irrespective of subject, will have a duration of either three or four years. Liberal education may offer undergraduate degree programs without research components for three years, and with research projects for four years. Institutions that are willing to conduct such programs will offer a Bachelor of Liberal Arts (BLA) or Bachelor of Liberal Education (BLE) degree (or BLA/BLE with Research), which will consist of a broad-based liberal education along with rigorous specialization in a field or fields. Traditional three-year B.A., B.Sc., and B.Voc. degrees will continue to be offered by institutions that choose to do so, but all Bachelor's degrees will gradually adopt a more comprehensive liberal education approach.

(6) Stage of post-graduation education

At the stage of post-graduation education, the emphasis is placed on conducting top-notch research. The Masters and Doctoral levels have been fortified by offering no less than three pathways to obtain a Masters' degree - a one-year program, a two-year program, and an integrated five-year program. Moreover, the Masters' degree will be accompanied by a robust research element that will enhance the requisite professional aptitude in the field and equip students with the necessary skills for pursuing a research degree.

(7) Research stage s The research stage is a crucial component of the final year of undergraduate and postgraduate studies. Graduates have the opportunity to engage in high-quality research in core, multidisciplinary, or interdisciplinary areas. Full-time Ph.D. programs require a minimum of three years, while part-time programs require four. During their Ph.D. studies, students must complete eight credits of coursework in teaching, education, or pedagogy related to their chosen subject. The MPhil program is expected to lose its significance and will eventually be discontinued.

Salient features of National Education policy 2020

The National Education policy draft of 2019 encompasses 23 chapters, with the first eight chapters devoted to school education, followed by the next ten chapters that focus on higher education, encompassing under-graduation, postgraduation, research, teacher education, and professional education. The policy also takes into account the process of enabling governance and effective leadership in HEIs. Additionally, the subsequent four chapters highlight other key focus areas, including Technology education, vocational education, adult education, and promotion of Indian languages. The ultimate chapter concerns the method of revolutionizing education by means of executing the proposition through a centralized governing entity designated as Rashtriya Shiksha Ayog (National Education Commission). In brief, comprehending the suggested policy necessitates the identification of the prominent attributes and their comprehensive emphasis on fulfilling the proposition. The salient aspects of the proposition, namely school education, higher education, additional key focus areas, and transforming

education, are exhibited in Table 6. The salient features and their respective focuses in diverse sections of the proposition provide a comprehensive outlook of the entire system, which can be systematically analyzed .

The key aspects that stand out in this initiative revolve around prioritizing the domain of School Education along with the Early Childhood Care and Education. The Foundation of Learning is indeed crucial and hence, measures should be taken to ensure that every child in the age bracket of 3-6 years is endowed with the privilege of accessing free, secure, top-notch, and developmentally appropriate care and education by 2025. The RTE Act proposes to impart free and mandatory quality pre-primary education to all 3-6 year old children. Foundational Literacy and Numeracy Students, as well as their respective schools, instructors, guardians, and communities, necessitate immediate and unwavering support and encouragement in order to effectively execute this paramount objective and undertaking, which seeks to guarantee that every student in Grade 5 and beyond attains foundational literacy and numeracy by the year 2025. This can be achieved through the creation of workbooks, the provision of Teacher Training via the National Tutor Programme, and the preservation of a Student-teacher ratio of 30:1.

Through the implementation of computer-based adaptive assessment and the utilization of the resources offered by the local community and volunteers, the System shall deliver exceptional foundational literacy and numeracy services. Moreover, by intensifying the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and the RTE Act, the 3 Reintegration of Dropouts and Ensuring Universal Access to Education initiative shall work towards the goal of providing free and compulsory high-quality education to all children aged between 3 to 18 years by 2030, thereby reducing the rate of dropouts significantly.

Ensuring the return of students who have discontinued their education and curbing the tendency to do so is of utmost importance in attaining a Gross Enrolment Ratio of 100%. Such a feat can be accomplished through the provision of superior school infrastructure, competent instructors, adequate transportation, hostel amenities, healthcare and dietary provisions, as well as the guarantee of safety. The educational curriculum and pedagogical approaches employed in schools have been designed to cultivate holistic development and foster the acquisition of 21st-century competencies such as critical thinking, creativity, scientific acumen, effective communication, collaborative skills, multilingualism, problem-solving abilities, ethical sensitivity, social responsibility, as well as digital litera

Features

(1) Proposal of developing a new curricular and pedagogical structure for school

(2) Holistic development of learners by reforming curriculum and pedagogy across all stages

(3) Reduce curriculum content to enhance essential learning and critical thinking

(4) Empower students through flexibility in course choices, and no hard separation between 'arts' and 'science' streams

(5)) Providing education in the local language/mother tongue; multilingualism and the power of language.

(6) The integration of key subjects and competencies, including scientific inquiry, aesthetic perception and artistic expression, linguistic proficiency, effective communication, ethical deliberation, digital literacy,

familiarity with India, and awareness of critical challenges confronting regional communities, states, the nation, and the globe, constitutes an integral component of the curriculum.

(7) The National Curriculum Framework is slated to undergo a thorough reevaluation and modernization by the conclusion of 2020. This initiative will duly acknowledge the dynamic nature of contemporary education and will be extensively translated into all regional dialects.

(8) The production of national textbooks that possess a local essence and distinctive character has been achieved through a process of revising the NCERT textbooks, supplemented by the creation of subject-specific books at the state level, accompanied by proficient translations.

(9) The redesign of Board Examinations in college level represents a transformative approach to assessment that seeks to avoid the perpetuation of coaching culture. This involves the implementation of formative assessment and the adoption of computerised testing, which enable the continual improvement of teaching and learning processes. Additionally, the administration of college and university entrance examinations through the National Testing Agency represents a key strategy for advancing student development. Revamping

India's Higher Education System: A Vision for Quality Universities and Colleges.

(10) The goal of this vision is to create world-class multidisciplinary higher education institutions throughout India, increasing the Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) from the current 25% to at least 50% by 2035. The current regulatory system has proven ineffective, allowing fake colleges to flourish while limiting the potential of excellent and innovative institutions. Fortunately, the National Education Policy (NEP) supports faculty and institutional autonomy through light but stringent regulations. Additionally, institutional restructuring and consolidation are necessary to achieve this vision.

Liberal education

Liberal education is a powerful tool that can invigorate undergraduate programs by promoting the development of both creative and analytical faculties of the brain. In order to achieve this goal, it is important to adopt a STEAM model approach, as well as to establish and strengthen departments that promote multidisciplinarity and cross-disciplinarity. The approach of liberal education seeks to invigorate graduate programmes by offering intensive specialisation in selected disciplines or fields, with the purpose of cultivating profound expertise in one or multiple subjects. These programmes, designated as 'graduate' programmes, encompass Masters and Doctoral studies, and aspire to engage undergraduates through the liberal education approach. This approach involves participation in industrial internships, community service, and collaboration with research faculty, all with the aim of promoting the highest quality of education and research within graduate programmes. The synergistic relationship between liberal education and research is strengthened by the cultivation and fortification of exceptional, socially and locally significant research conducted by both faculty and graduate students. The interdisciplinary exploration of vital topics, including but not limited to the preservation of endangered languages, gender equality, environmental sustainability, clean water, and the preservation of local arts, further reinforces this relationship. Additionally, the availability of top-tier multidisciplinary libraries and digital publications facilitates the production of high-

grade research. Programs, degrees, and other certifications in higher education ought to be designed in a manner that the undergraduate degree shall progress towards a robust liberal education approach, irrespective of the discipline, and should span a duration of either three or four years. It may be feasible to provide three-year undergraduate degree programs without research elements and four-year undergraduate degree programs with research assignments in liberal education.

ASSESSMENT

The Choice Based Credit System (CBCS) has been updated to Competency Based Education System (CBES) with a renewed emphasis on continuous evaluation. Various assessment tools and processes such as peer and self-assessment, portfolios, assignments, projects, presentations, and dissertations should be utilized. Collaboratively determined criteria and rubrics for assessment must be shared with students by faculty members. Additionally, HEIs, their programmes and curriculum, as well as faculty members, should undergo assessment through self-assessment, student evaluations, peer reviews, and other relevant mechanisms. This is an integral part of the Accreditation process.

MERITS OF NEP 2020:

With a heightened emphasis on interdisciplinary and vocational education, the implementation of this policy is poised to revitalize the Indian education system by the year 2030. The effects of this policy, which commenced in June of 2020, are anticipated to manifest within the next two to three years. The benefits of the National Education Policy of 2020 are enumerated below.

1- With the evolution of pedagogical and curricular practices in education, it is anticipated that the implementation of the $5 + 3 + 3 + 4$ system will usher in a new era of intellectuals within the next decade. This cohort of young individuals is regarded as the foremost asset of India.

2- The utilization of a volunteer system, in which individuals offer their services to local schools in order to educate students, has proven to be a successful method of enhancing the overall quality of education.

3- • The adult education system's reforms serve as a magnet to lure adults into the academic sphere, thereby enabling them to initiate or conclude their unfinished education. The syllabus' multidisciplinary approach guarantees that pupils thrive in their chosen areas of study.

4- The policy, being centered around the student, is founded on a credit system based on competencies. Thus, students have the opportunity to assess their own aptitudes by undertaking courses at their own discretion through the use of SWAYAM, MOOCs (Massive Online Open Courses), or ODLs (Online Distance Learning).

5- The inclusion of research studies within the curriculum serves to encourage students to delve deeper into their chosen subjects, thereby fostering a greater understanding of the material. Similarly, the approval of foreign universities within the country provides invaluable opportunities for global exposure, broadening the horizons of students and affording them the chance to expand their knowledge on a global scale.

6- Multiple opportunities for entry and exit within the undergraduate system may be prone to misuse. Therefore, in order to ensure proper re-entry, it is crucial that students attend examinations based on the curriculum of their previous class.

CONCLUSION

This particular policy, as anticipated, boasts numerous advantages, yet there is still room for enhancement. Consistent updates within its policies may result in NEP 2020 becoming the preeminent policy in the realm of education and human resource. As the adage goes, "A tyrant misuses their authority and plunges their nation into depravity," mishandling this policy could be calamitous. In a nation plagued by issues such as partiality, corruption, and lobbying, the misapplication of policy is not uncommon. However, the potential benefits that this policy brings to those in need are significant. With a student-centered ideology, NEP 2020 has the potential to improve the education system and workforce by 2030. With a focus on adult education, it is expected that not only the younger generation, but also the overall literacy rate in India will improve. The curriculum adopts a multidisciplinary approach, enabling students to study subjects of their choice. As a result of attractive scholarship offers, study methodology, credit-based system, and curriculum, there is an anticipated increase in the percentage of enrollment. Furthermore, vocational classes and art and music classes enhance the heritage and culture, and the inclusion of aesthetics as part of the curriculum is expected to contribute towards a better quality of life for the youth. Ultimately, we can conclude that the prospect of a fully developed country is not far. A periodic enhancement of the education system is a prerequisite for human advancement and sustainable progress in society. To prosper, a country must reform its education system by taking into account various successful models in developed countries and customizing them to meet local needs. India, as a rapidly developing country with a human capital of 1.3 billion, can surpass other developing nations by devising and implementing an appropriate education model. The current National Education Policy proposal of 2019 is an all-encompassing model that incorporates several innovations to offer comprehensive and customized education at both the school and college levels, with an emphasis on research components. This paper examines the proposal's strengths and weaknesses, highlights its features, and offers suggestions for further improving it into an optimum model that considers the country's local conditions.

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