

A Critical Understanding of Rewards and Shortcomings of NEP, 2020: an Overview

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Abstract:

NEP is acknowledged as the National Education Policy, is a superintendent document for both the state and Central governments of India. It helps the educators and policymakers to shape their views on Education policy in India. The first NEP was derived in 1966 under the chairmanship of Prof. D S Kothari which was a very well-thought document and continues to be a guiding force for various educational initiatives despite not being able to get fully implemented till this date. The second policy for education was emanated in 1986 after 20 years of the first NEP; the new NEP is approaching after 34 years, and it also shows the priorities of the government and its concern about education and educational issues in modern India of digital era. The present article is an attempt to understand the pros and cons of NEP, 2020.

Introduction:

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After the Kothari Commission in 1966 policy, for the first time, the new NEP recommends structural changes right from school education to higher education and the regulatory bodies in India from NCERT to UGC. In primary, secondary and higher secondary education, it has changed the school education pattern i.e. 5+3+3+4 model based on the cognitive development of a child. In higher education, it has suggested various changes like multiple exits and entry at degree level in the university system. In this system, now students can come out with certificate/diploma and degree after the 1/2/3 years. Abolition of MPhil, direct PhD after the four years bachelor degree are some of the radical footsteps. It has also distorted the operations of regulatory bodies- instead of manifold regulatory bodies, only four bodies will now be working to deal with different issues of education.

Current regulatory bodies like NCTE, ICAR etc. will turn to be the professional standard-setting bodies. One of the chief highpoints of the NEP is that it gives importance to education in the mother tongue, which is a very noteworthy change, because mother-tongue helps in the cognitive development of children - a very positive change in a multi-linguistic country like India. NEP has planned that the stand-alone institutions should alter themselves into a multidisciplinary mode or else they will have to be closed. As the education is contemporaneous, it has always been a bone of

Challenges for Rural India in NEP 2020 implementation

The first challenge that emerges in India is poverty. Out of the 80 million people, 10% lie below the poverty line, and much of this is in rural India. The reports from 'Niti Aayog' in 2021 outlined that Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) in India is .118; whereas the MPI score is .08 in the urban areas, the rural areas it is 0.155. According to the same report, there are states in India where there are areas with no poverty, whereas some states like Bihar where 51.91% of the population is classified as poor. It is followed by Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh. The rural poverty rate in India according to a study in 2011 states 25.7%. Even today, children are considered by their parents to be an additional pair of hands in earning their livelihood.

Healthcare is the next challenge that threatens the policy recommendations as to the health of the learners, and their physical and mental condition is innately related to their holistic development. Healthcare in Rural India is still very poor. Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) in rural India is 58 per 1000 births which is very high as compared to progressive nations like the USA which is at 6.5 and United Kingdom at 4.3. According to the latest report, 44% of children under the age 5yrs are underweight and 72% of infants suffer from anemia. The Global Hunger Index (2020) has ranked India the 94th among 107 countries. The situation is bleaker in the rural regions and much starker. Child Health indicators are very poor in India and issues like malnutrition and chronic diseases in the rural areas are gripping. The 'Poshan Abhiyaan' needs to work manifold so that the recommendations of the NEP 2020 are actualized and the aims of education attained.

Apart from these, uplifting the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) to 100% from pre-school to Secondary is a difficult task for Rural India where a lot of importance is associated with practical and vocational skills, passed on from one generation to the next. Absenteeism of both teachers and students is a recurrent problem. Additionally, the government recruited teachers are also given administrative responsibilities, and are subjected to transfer, and hence it forms a vicious circle. To add, the schools are located far away, usually in prominent talukas and students need to travel long distances to attend schools. Only 1.39 lakh Secondary Schools and 1.1 lakh Senior Secondary Schools exist in rural India which is very low keeping in mind that the rural population in 2021 was 450 million and speculated to be 506 million in 2022.

NCPFECCE is a new framework to be created by the NCERT. The same will be implemented in a phased manner. However, the transition and the shift will demand trained and skilled personnel to handle the change. It is challenging to generate such skilled teachers in such a short time span keeping in mind the dismal situation of vacant teacher positions in rural India. Referring to one such news article from the Indian Express, in the year 2018-19, in states like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Uttarakhand, schools are run by single teachers, in spite of the teacher-student ratio mentioned by the Right to Education Act (RTE) being 30:1. That financial year, 11.56 lakh teaching positions lay vacant in rural India. As per the same news article, the rural salaries of teachers are lower than the urban areas and 69% of the teachers are employed on a contractual basis. All of these aspects pose a challenge to the implementation of the Policy recommendations of NEP 2020.

Nevertheless, we have come a long way, and if we compare the older statistics to the recent ones, we will see the amount of development that has happened. We should consider the NEP 2020 as a blueprint, a plan of action that will be implemented in successive stages towards success, and keeping in mind the National Education Budget 2022, it does seem to the educators that positive changes are on their way.

disagreement between state and Centre over the jurisdiction. NEP has attempted to see the education system in India in a holistic way understanding education as a continuous process, putting more emphasis to connect education to the environment. The NEP has acknowledged the importance of life skills in the lives of human beings, and it has given more attention to developing life skills in the educational process.

Understanding of Rewards and Shortcomings of NEP:

National Education Policy has tried to address all unaddressed objections of the education system, pending for decades- a historic moment for all stakeholders of the education system, whether it is a teacher, student or parent. Since 2019, the Ministry of Human Resource Development released a Draft New Education Policy 2019, which was followed by a number of public consultations deliberating on reducing curriculum content to improve critical learning, critical thinking and more holistic experiential, discussion-based and analysis-based learning which also dialogues about a revision of the curriculum and pedagogical structure from a 10+2 system to a 5+3+3+4 system design in an effort to augment learning for students based on cognitive development of a student.

Rewards of NEP, 2020:

1. The Government aims at making education accessible to everyone; approximately two crore school students will be able to come back to educational institutes through this new approach.
2. The 5+3+3+4 structure will supplant the existing 10+2 structure focussing on student's formative years of learning. It matches to ages from 3 to 8, 8 to 11, 11 to 14 and 14 to 18. 12 years of schooling, 3 years of Anganwadi and pre-schooling are included in this structure- National Curricular and Pedagogical Framework for Early Childhood Care and Education will be designed and developed by NCERT.
3. The Education Ministry is to set up a National Mission on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy for successful implementation for achieving the foundation of numeracy and literacy for all students till class three falls upon the states of India. This implementation is scheduled to be done by the year 2025 and apposite authorities will conduct the school examinations for grades 3, 5 and 8 though the board exams for grades 10 and 12 will continue but the NEP 2020 aims to re-design the structure with holistic development.
4. Special daytime boarding schools- "Bal Bhavans" are to be established in every state/ district in the country which will be used for participation in activities related to play, career, art, etc. - an Academic Bank of Credit will also be recognized; the credits earned by the students can be stored and when the final degree gets completed, those can be counted.
5. For introducing multidisciplinary academic Multidisciplinary Education and Research Universities at par with the IITs and IIMs will be set up in the country; the same list of accreditation and regulation rules will be used for guiding both the public and private academic bodies and also the Phased out college affiliation and autonomy will be granted to colleges.
6. For making the students equipped for future pandemic situations, online academic will be promoted on a larger scale; it also emphasises on setting up a Gender Inclusion Fund. Special Education Zones for disadvantaged regions and groups is also in the focused list.

Understanding of Shortcomings of NEP, 2020:

1. There is a teacher to student ratio in India which is problematic, thus introducing education in mother tongue for each subject in academic institutes is a delinquent- finding a proficient teacher becomes a tricky.
2. The students willing to complete their graduation have to study for four years while one can easily complete his/ her diploma degree in two years. This might encourage the pupil to leave the course incomplete.
3. The students of the private schools will be introduced to English at a much earlier age than the students of the Government schools- the syllabus will be taught in the respective regional languages of the students which will increase the number of students uncomfortable in communicating in English thus widening the gap between sections of the societies.

Conclusion:

Even though there are many shortcomings in the new education policy, the merits are more in number and these drawbacks can be tackled with the right approach. It is understood that by implementing these changes, the Indian academic system will be taken a step higher in the modern digital era.

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