
“NAVIGATING CHANGE: NEP'S ROLE IN TRANSFORMING SCHOOL EDUCATION IN INDIA”

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the transformative role of the National Education Policy (NEP) in reshaping schooleducation within India. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 represents a landmark reform in the Indian education system, aiming to transform school education through a holistic, multidisciplinary, flexible, and learner-centered approach. The policy seeks to address long-standing challenges such as rote learning, unequal access to quality education, inadequate teacher preparation, and limited integration of technology. By restructuring the school curriculum, emphasizing foundational literacy and numeracy, promoting multilingualism, and strengthening teacher education, NEP 2020 aspires to prepare students for the demands of the twenty-first century. This paper examines the transformative role of NEP 2020 in reshaping school education in India. It analyzes the key provisions of the policy, explores its potential impact on teaching-learning processes, and discusses implementation challenges. The study concludes that while NEP 2020 provides a comprehensive framework for educational transformation, its success depends on effective implementation, adequate resource allocation, teacher capacity building, and continuous monitoring.

KEYWORDS: National Education Policy-2020, School Education, Opportunities, Challenges, Foundational Literacy and Numeracy

INTRODUCTION

Education serves as the foundation for national development and social progress. In a rapidly changing global environment characterized by technological advancements, globalization, and knowledge-driven economies, educational systems must evolve to meet emerging

societal needs. India, with one of the world's largest school-age populations, faces significant challenges in providing equitable, inclusive, and quality education to all learners. The previous education framework was guided by the National Policy on Education (1986), modified in 1992. Although it contributed significantly to educational expansion, changing socio-economic conditions necessitated a comprehensive revision. Recognizing these challenges, the Government of India introduced the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which aims to transform education at all levels. NEP 2020 envisions an education system rooted in Indian values while preparing learners for global citizenship. It seeks to develop critical thinking, creativity, communication skills, and problem-solving abilities among students. The policy proposes extensive reforms in curriculum design, pedagogy, assessment, teacher education, and educational governance.

This research paper aims to critically examine the NEP's transformative agenda within the context of school education in India. Through a comprehensive analysis of policy objectives, implementation strategies, and potential impacts, this study seeks to elucidate how the NEP is poised to reshape educational landscapes, enhance institutional capacities, and redefine the future trajectory of school education in the country. By synthesizing empirical evidence and stakeholder perspectives, this paper endeavours to contribute insights into the ongoing evolution of India's educational framework and its implications for stakeholders within and beyond academia.

Review of Literature

B.L. Gupta (2013) explains the meaning, dimensions and characteristics of effectiveness in the context of schools. The authors also discuss changes in the environment outside of school and their impact on studies at home. This article is based on literature review, the author's experience and expert opinions. According to the author of the successful institution, it has a vision, values, beliefs, ethics, standards, leadership, participation in management and administration, independent, challenging goals, continuous improvement and an attitude of learning together.

Rupesh S. Wankhade (2021) this research paper focuses on the importance of school education as it is an important aspect in deciding the economy, social status, technology adoption, and healthy human behavior in every country. Improving GER to include every citizen of the country in school education offerings is the responsibility of the education department of the country government.

Purna Prabhakar Nandamuri (2015) researched the current situation of school self-management and for this purpose a sample of 188 secondary schools was selected from the "stratified sampling" technique. A survey was administered and interviews were conducted to collect primary data. Chi-square test and simple percentage were used to analyse the data. The results show that there is not much management and financial management, and there is partial freedom in the work area. Respondents from various management schools mostly preferred freedom in all areas (management, education and finance). But there are strong calls for full independence in unaided schools.

Kalyani (2020) explored the impact of NEP-2020 on various stakeholders including students, parents, and teachers. The study revealed that students are influenced by multiple factors when selecting their subjects, prioritizing the enhancement of knowledge and skills to improve employability prospects. Parents were noted to play a crucial role by providing valuable guidance in subject selection and extending financial support to their children.

Aithal and Aithal (2020) conducted a comparative analysis between the educational policies of 1986 and NEP-2020, highlighting innovative practices proposed in the latter. Their study discussed the potential implementation of these practices and their merits, particularly focusing on their effects on teacher education, professional education, and private educational institutions.

Overview of NEP 2020

NEP 2020 is the first education policy of the twenty-first century in India. It seeks to transform the educational landscape through a holistic and multidisciplinary framework.

The policy is guided by the principles of:

- Equity and Inclusion
- Holistic Development
- Flexibility
- Multilingualism
- Critical Thinking
- Experiential Learning
- Technology Integration
- Continuous Assessment
- Teacher Empowerment
- Lifelong Learning

The policy aligns with the aspirations of the Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG-4), which focuses on ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education for all.

Structural Transformation in School Education

One of the most significant reforms introduced by NEP 2020 is the replacement of the traditional 10+2 structure with the 5+3+3+4 curricular and pedagogical framework.

1. Foundational Stage (5 Years)

- Ages 3–8 years
- Includes three years of preschool and Grades 1–2
- Focus on play-based, activity-based, and discovery-oriented learning

2. Preparatory Stage (3 Years)

- Grades 3–5
- Introduction to formal classroom learning
- Development of language, numeracy, science, and arts

3. Middle Stage (3 Years)

- Grades 6–8
- Experiential learning
- Exposure to vocational education
- Development of critical thinking skills

4. Secondary Stage (4 Years)

- Grades 9–12
- Flexible subject choices
- Multidisciplinary learning
- Increased focus on analytical and conceptual understanding

This restructuring recognizes the importance of early childhood education and aligns schooling with developmental psychology.

Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN)

NEP 2020 identifies foundational literacy and numeracy as an urgent national mission. Research indicates that many children complete primary schooling without acquiring basic reading and mathematical skills.

To address this concern, the policy launched the **National Mission on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (NIPUN Bharat)**, which aims to ensure that every child achieves foundational learning competencies by Grade 3.

Key initiatives include:

- Early language development
- Reading comprehension programs
- Numeracy enhancement activities
- Teacher training
- Learning outcome-based education

Improvement in foundational learning is expected to reduce dropout rates and improve overall educational outcomes.

Curriculum and Pedagogical Reforms

The **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020** introduced a comprehensive transformation of school education in India by reforming curriculum design, teaching-learning processes, and assessment practices. The policy aims to move the education system away from rote memorization and towards **competency-based, experiential, multidisciplinary, and learner-centered education**. Its ultimate goal is to develop students who are creative, critical thinkers, problem-solvers, and responsible citizens equipped with 21st-century skills.

Assessment Reforms

Traditional examinations often emphasize rote memorization. NEP 2020 proposes comprehensive assessment reforms.

Key Changes

Competency-Based Assessment

Assessment will measure:

- Conceptual understanding
- Application of knowledge
- Analytical skills

PARAKH

The establishment of the **Performance Assessment, Review, and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development (PARAKH)** aims to standardize assessment practices.

Holistic Progress Card

Students will be evaluated through:

- Self-assessment
- Peer assessment
- Teacher assessment

The new system emphasizes learning progress rather than examination scores.

Integration of Technology in Education

The **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020** recognizes technology as a transformative force capable of improving the quality, accessibility, equity, and efficiency of education in India. The policy emphasizes the thoughtful integration of digital technologies into teaching-learning processes, educational administration, assessment, teacher education, and lifelong learning. NEP-2020 envisions a technology-enabled education system that prepares learners for the demands of the 21st century while ensuring inclusive and equitable access to educational opportunities.

National Educational Technology Forum (NETF):

NEP-2020 proposes the establishment of the National Educational Technology Forum (NETF) as an autonomous body to facilitate the exchange of ideas on educational technology.

Functions of NETF

Provide independent advice on technology use in education.

- Promote innovation and research.
- Share best practices among educational institutions.
- Support policymakers and educators in technology adoption.

The forum is expected to act as a platform for collaboration among educators, researchers, and technology experts.

Online and Digital Education:

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of online learning, which is strongly acknowledged in NEP-2020.

Key Recommendations

- Development of high-quality digital content.
- Promotion of blended learning models.
- Use of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs).

- Expansion of online teacher training programs.
- Flexible learning opportunities for students.

Online education is intended to complement rather than replace face-to-face instruction.

DIKSHA Platform:

The policy encourages wider use of **DIKSHA (Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing)**.

Features

- Digital textbooks.
- Interactive learning resources.
- Teacher training modules.
- Assessment tools.
- Multilingual educational content.

DIKSHA serves as a national platform for digital learning and professional development.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Emerging Technologies:

NEP-2020 highlights the importance of emerging technologies such as

- Artificial Intelligence (AI)
- Machine Learning (ML)
- Data Analytics
- Robotics
- Blockchain
- Internet of Things (IoT)

Educational Applications

- Personalized learning pathways.
- Intelligent tutoring systems.
- Learning analytics.
- Automated assessments.
- Adaptive learning environments.

Vocational Education and Skill Development

The policy seeks to eliminate the distinction between academic and vocational streams.

Key provisions include:

- Vocational exposure from Grade 6
- Internships with local artisans and industries

- Skill-based education
- Entrepreneurship development

This approach aims to improve employability and bridge the gap between education and industry requirements.

Teacher Education and Professional Development

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 recognizes teachers as the cornerstone of the educational system and emphasizes that no education reform can succeed without well-qualified, motivated, and professionally competent teachers. The policy envisions transforming teacher education and professional development through rigorous preparation, continuous learning opportunities, enhanced autonomy, and professional standards. NEP-2020 seeks to create a cadre of educators who are reflective practitioners, innovators, facilitators of learning, and agents of social change.

Major Reforms in Teacher Education under NEP-2020:

1. Four-Year Integrated B.Ed. Programme

One of the most significant reforms is the introduction of the **four-year integrated Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) degree** as the minimum qualification for teaching by 2030.

Key Features

- Integrated study of subject knowledge and pedagogy.
- Multidisciplinary learning approach.
- Strong emphasis on classroom practice.
- Research-based teacher preparation.
- Development of professional competencies.

2. National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST)

NEP-2020 proposes the development of **National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST)**.

Purpose of NPST

- Define professional competencies.
- Establish benchmarks for teacher performance.
- Guide recruitment and career progression.
- Support professional development.

The standards are intended to ensure consistency and excellence in teaching practices across the country.

3. Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

The policy emphasizes lifelong learning for teachers through regular professional development activities.

CPD Requirements

Teachers are expected to participate in at least **50 hours of Continuous Professional Development (CPD)** annually.

Areas of Professional Development

- Pedagogical innovations.
- Assessment techniques.
- Educational technology.
- Inclusive education.
- Leadership and management.
- Subject enrichment.

CPD ensures that teachers remain updated with changing educational needs and practices.

Inclusive and Equitable Education

The **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020** places strong emphasis on **inclusive and equitable education** as a fundamental principle for achieving quality education for all. The policy recognizes that education is a powerful tool for social transformation and seeks to ensure that every learner, regardless of socio-economic status, gender, caste, language, disability, geographic location, or cultural background, has access to quality educational opportunities. NEP-2020 aligns with the vision of **Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG-4)**, which advocates inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all.

Vision of NEP-2020 for Inclusive and Equitable Education:

1. Gender Inclusion Fund

A significant initiative under NEP-2020 is the establishment of the **Gender Inclusion Fund (GIF)**.

Objectives

- Promote girls' education.
- Address gender disparities.
- Support gender-sensitive infrastructure.
- Improve access and retention of female learners.

The fund aims to create conditions that enable girls to participate fully in education.

2. Special Education Zones (SEZs)

The policy proposes the creation of **Special Education Zones** in regions with high concentrations of disadvantaged populations.

Purpose

- Improve educational access.
- Provide additional resources.
- Enhance educational quality.
- Reduce regional disparities.

These zones are intended to support underserved communities effectively.

Challenges of NEP 2020 for School Education

Challenges of the National Education Policy 2020 for school education include:

1. Financial: Successful implementation requires substantial investment in

- Infrastructure
- Technology
- Teacher training
- Educational resources

2. Skill Teacher: Many teachers require training in

- Competency-based education
- Digital pedagogy
- Multidisciplinary teaching

3. Digital Divide: Rural and disadvantaged communities continue to face

- Limited internet connectivity
- Lack of digital devices
- Inadequate technological infrastructure

4. Administrative Coordination: Effective coordination among central, state, and local agencies is essential for successful policy execution.

5. Language Implementation Issues: Implementing multilingual education across diverse linguistic contexts may pose practical challenges.

These challenges underscore the complexity and scale of the reforms envisaged by the NEP 2020, requiring strategic planning, robust implementation strategies, and continuous stakeholder engagement to navigate effectively towards achieving the policy's objectives.

CONCLUSION

The National Education Policy 2020 represents a transformative vision for school education in India. By emphasizing foundational learning, holistic development, multilingualism, competency-based assessment, technology integration, and teacher empowerment, the policy seeks to create an inclusive, equitable, and future-ready education system. Its learner-centered approach aligns with the demands of the twenty-first century and supports India's aspiration to become a knowledge-based society.

However, the realization of NEP 2020's objectives depends largely on effective implementation, adequate funding, teacher preparedness, and sustained stakeholder engagement. If implemented successfully, the policy has the potential to revolutionize school education and significantly contribute to India's social, economic, and educational development.

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