

## Relevance of National Education Policy-2020

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### Abstract

The history of education in India is deeply intertwined with the history of Indian civilization, as the trajectory of social development and transformation consistently reflects the evolving role and significance of education. Fundamentally, education is indispensable for realizing the full potential of human beings, fostering a just and equitable society and contributing to national development. **The National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020)**, which superseded the **National Education Policy of 1986**, is a landmark reform in the educational landscape. Drafted on the recommendations of the committee chaired by eminent space scientist **K. Kasturirangan**, the policy was officially announced on **29 July, 2020**. Structured into **27 chapters across 4 parts**, the policy redefined institutional frameworks by retaining the **Ministry of Human Resource Development** as the **Ministry of Education** and proposing the establishment of a single apex regulatory body, the Higher Education Commission of India, to oversee all higher education-excluding the domains of legal and medical education. The policy articulates its core objectives as the holistic development of learners, emphasizing the cultivation of rational and critical thinking, combined with **compassion, empathy, courage, resilience, scientific inquiry, creativity and ethical foundations**. It envisions nurturing citizens capable of contributing effectively to the realization of an envisaged in the Constitution of India. Significantly, the NEP 2020 integrates provisions responsive to contemporary socio-economic challenges, thereby enhancing both equity and quality in education. It places strong emphasis on Indian cultural and pedagogical traditions, while simultaneously promoting the mother tongue/regional languages as a medium of instruction at the foundational levels. One of its innovative provisions is the introduction of

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vocational education from class 6 onward, which seeks to bridge the long-standing gap between academic learning and employability by imparting industry-oriented skills and hands-on training. Moreover, the policy underscores the importance of **multilingualism** and **multidisciplinarity**, thereby reinforcing the paradigm of comprehensive and integrated education. By aligning individual growth with national development, the NEP 2020 positions itself not only as a reformative document but also as a transformative framework capable of reshaping the educational ethos of India in the twenty-first century.

**Keywords:**

*Inclusive, pluralistic, multilingualism, multidisciplinary, vocational education*

**Introduction**

**According to Alteakar (1934)**, education in India has been regarded as a source of enlightenment since the Vedic period, illuminating the path of human life in diverse fields. Ancient India witnessed the flourishing of major centers of learning such as *Kashi, Takshashila, Nalanda, Vikramshila, Vallabhi, Odantapur, Mithila, Prayag* and *ayodhya* (Sharma, 2002). These institutions produced eminent scholars such as *Charak, Sushruta, Aryabhata, Varahamihira, Bhaskar Acharya, Brahmagupta, Chanakya, Chakrapani, Madhava, Panini, Maitreyi, Gargi* and *Thiruvalluvar* whose intellectual contributions shaped the trajectory of Indian civilization (Singh, 2010). In the medieval period, the nature of education became primarily religious, with instruction imparted through *maktabs* and *madrasas*. The Mughal rulers supported the establishment of educational institutions and libraries, thereby consolidating Islamic scholastic traditions (Habib, 1999). The introduction of modern education in India was significantly influenced by Lord Macaulay, whose *Minute on Education (1835)* paved the way for the English education system, leaving a lasting imprint on Indian society (Macaulay, 1835/1972). However, Indian reformers and thinkers sought to reshape education in accordance with indigenous needs. Swami Dayanand Saraswati emphasized a *return to the Vedic tradition* (Shastri, 1961). Jyotirao Phule pioneered schools in *Pune* and strongly advocated for *women's and adult education* (O'Hanlon, 1985). According to **Swami Vivekananda** "*Education is that which enables the formation of character; strengthens the mind, develops the intellect and empowers individuals to stand on their own feet*" (Vivekananda, 112). Similarly, **Dr. B.R. Ambedkar**, the principal architect of the Indian Constitution, emphasized the transformative potential of education by asserting that "*Education is like the milk of a lioness; whoever drinks it roars*" (Ambedkar 56). Mahatma Gandhi envisioned "*An education system rooted in Indian culture, emphasizing basic education in the mother tongue with the objective of creating a society free from exploitation*" (Gandhi, 1953). After independence, a new revolution emerged in the field of education, and several commissions were formed for its development. Among them, the University Grants Commission (1953), the National Education Commission (1964), the National Education Policy (1968) and the New Education Policy (1986)

were significant. Now, the NEP 2020 has replaced the National Education Policy (1986). Its main objective is to provide education enriched with Indian tradition, and to make education more holistic, multidisciplinary and focused on problem-solving and innovation. The period of being Indian should not only be reflected in thought but also in behavior, intellect and actions-along with knowledge, skills, values and mindset. This policy also envisions allocating **6 percent** of the country's GDP to education.

**Objectives:**

- To study the new Education Policy in the present context.
- To study the relevance of the structure of the New Education Policy.

**Hypothesis:**

- The changing nature of education has a positive impact on society.

**Collection of Data & Methodology:**

The data has been sourced from various books related to education and the official website of the Ministry. Therefore, the researcher has reviewed the relevant books of the period and incorporated various facts into this research paper. Secondary data has been used to the greatest extent, including information obtained from online portals, books, newspapers and various articles.

**Relevance of the New Education Policy in the Present Context:**

Considering the changing circumstances of India and the evolving needs of the people, the introduction of a new education policy has become inevitable. Today, while the entire world is going through a phase of rapid transformation. India too is compelled to reform its educational system. This new education policy, enriched with human values and oriented towards employment, is highly relevant in the present context. The main objective of the policy is to make the long-prevailing single-stream education system multidisciplinary and to ensure that education reaches every individual. Development on the foundation of Indian values, this educational system should instill in students a sense of pride in being Indian-not only in thought but also in behavior, intellect and actions, encompassing knowledge, skill, values and reasoning. A good education system is one that welcomes every student, provides a safe and inspiring learning environment and ensures access to adequate infrastructure and appropriate resources for all learners of which are embodied in the NEP 2020.

If seen in the context of the present scenario, the NEP 2020 was indeed necessary, as it provides students with the freedom to choose subjects according to their talents and interests, thereby nurturing their abilities and ensuring their holistic development. It establishes coherence across all levels of education-from school to

higher education. The previous 10+2 education structure has been replaced with a new 5+3+3+4 model. Under this system, a child will study in pre-school and primary school up to grade 2 for the first eight years, continue up to grade 5 from ages 8 to 11, up to grade 8 from ages 11 to 14, and then up to grade 12 by age 18 after which the student will enter higher education. By replacing the single-track education system with a multidisciplinary approach, this policy has created a framework that eliminates the distinction between arts and science, allowing students the freedom to choose any subject and to develop comprehensively in their overall education. In order to keep pace with global development, emphasis has now been placed on conceptual understanding rather than rote learning, enabling individuals to use their thinking abilities to foster creativity and logical reasoning for innovation. The main objective of education is to develop morality, human and constitutional values such as empathy, respect for others, cleanliness, courtesy, democratic spirit, sense of service, respect for public property, scientific temper, pluralism, equality and justice (Government of India, 2020). In contrast to Macaulay's English education system, the NEP 2020 promotes Indian languages and also provides protection to regional languages. It concludes a provision for imparting education up to Class 5 in the mother tongue. To preserve and develop languages, the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution mentions 22 languages. Additionally, an "**Indian Institute of Translation and Interpretation**" will be established for the preservation and development of languages (Ministry of Education, 2020). In our country, there are 200 languages, and according to UNESCO, 197 of them are on the verge of extinction; hence, their preservation is extremely necessary (UNESCO, 2021).

It emphasizes multidisciplinary education, allowing students the freedom to choose any subject of their interest. In other words, the rigid boundaries between the arts, science and commerce streams have been removed. This enables an arts student to study science subjects easily and thus enhance their intellectual capabilities. As the policy promotes skill-based education, it will foster innovation among learners and help link educational institutions with vocational training. From class 6 onwards, special emphasis will be given to vocational education, which is currently a major concern in India. Countries such as the United States, Germany and South Korea are far ahead of India in this field. Under this policy, teachers will be given continuous opportunities for self-improvement, to learn modern ideas and innovations related to their profession. Through **Career Management and Profession (CMP)**, teachers with outstanding performance will be identified and rewarded with promotions and salary increments, thereby motivating others to excel as well. The policy stresses continuous evaluation for learning, rather than focusing solely on year-end

examinations. This approach will encourage the holistic development of the learner's personality, while also promoting the effective use of technology. Moreover, it ensures equity and inclusion in academic activities and decision-making processes, making learning easier for all students. The policy aims to eliminate rote learning, develop instead a sense of critical thinking, reasoning and curiosity among students, along with practical learning, for example, enhancing their abilities through tools like map-based learning. This policy is relevant in the present context because it incorporates India's rich and diverse ancient as well as modern cultures, knowledge system and traditions. It emphasizes the integration of fundamental arts, crafts, humanities, sports and fitness, languages, literature and cultural values. One of its core principles is to identify and nurture the abilities of each child in order to enhance their literacy and knowledge. The policy highlights the development of children's creative and logical thinking, morality, human and constitutional values, respect for others, empathy, cleanliness, democratic spirit, respect for public property, and scientific temper. For any nation to progress, the holistic development of its students is essential. In the current scenario, technological advancement is occurring at such a rapid pace that without its assistance, we would lag behind in the field of education. To overcome language barriers and to improve educational planning and management, the use of technology is encouraged, as it is impossible to complete globally without technological support. In the age of Artificial Intelligence, technology has become a crucial tool. Since education is a public service, access to quality education is considered a fundamental right of every person.

Higher education plays a vital role in the development of individuals and society as a whole by fostering critical thinking, problem-solving and decision-making abilities. Consequently, higher education significantly contributes to economic, cultural and national development, as well as policy formulation and other related aspects. It is not merely an academic institution for obtaining a degree, but also a key driver of regional development, innovation and participation in global competitiveness. The New Education Policy emphasizes faculty and institutional autonomy to ensure high-quality education, allowing institutions to confer their own degree. While the **Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER)** was 26.3 percent in 2018, the policy aims to increase it to 50 percent by 2035, thereby enhancing literacy rates and contributing positively to national development. The policy primarily focuses on creating an optimal learning environment for students through well-designed curricula, engaging teaching methods and creative assessment, ensuring the holistic development of learners. It also promotes **Open and Distance Learning (ODL)** to make education accessible even to those living in remote and underserved areas.

Furthermore, internationalization of educational institutions has been recognized as a universal necessity to establish global recognition. The New Education Policy envisions an increase in the number of international students in Indian educational institutions, strengthening India's position in the global education landscape. The unity, equality and inclusion of school and higher education are also key features of higher education; only then can the goal of "**Sabka Sath, Sabka Vikas**" (collective effort, inclusive growth) be achieved. The primary factor in the success of higher educational institutions is motivating faculty members, keeping all programs active and empowering them. Seminars, workshops, webinars or any other academic events are not possible without the participation of faculty members. In any field, research plays a vital role in maintaining and advancing the economy, thereby contributing to the upliftment of society. At present, it is essential to focus more on research, as the United States invests about 2.8 percent of its GDP in research, Israel invests 4.3 percent and South Korea invests 4.2 percent, whereas India invests only 0.69 percent (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023). The National Education Policy emphasizes promoting research through the establishment of the **National Research Foundation (NRF)**, which is a positive initiative aimed at conducting research in a collaborative and effective manner.

The NEP also describes other central issues. Considering the growing unemployment in the country, the government has focused on vocational education, with the main objectives being **agricultural and health education**. Revitalization and re-envisioning agricultural and health education have become an essential aspect. The enrollment in agricultural education is less than one percent of the total education sector. To enhance agricultural productivity, it is necessary to improve the competence and quality of subjects related to this field, for which providing education in this sector is extremely. In addition, diploma and degree programs in technical fields such as **engineering, technology, management, town planning and hotel management** should be promoted, as these are vital areas for India's overall development. This policy also emphasizes adult education as a key point so that all illiterate citizens of the country can become aware and educated. Political will, organizational **structure, adequate financial support, skilled voluntary workers, community participation and unity** are the major factors for the success of adult literacy programs. When the National Literacy Mission began in 1988, it was solely dependent on voluntary participation, which resulted in an increase in overall literacy, including female literacy, between 1991 and 2011. Through innovative government initiatives and the effective integration of technology, the goal of achieving 100 percent literacy can be realized.

**Conclusion:** In conclusion, it can be said that after the education policies of 1968 and 1986, this is the third education policy of independent India. In this policy, the name of the **HRD Ministry** has been changed to the **Ministry of Education**. Special emphasis has been given to areas such as access to education in remote regions, equality, quality, affordability and accountability. This policy will also contribute effectively to building an inclusive and pluralistic society as envisioned by the constitution. The NEP focuses primarily on being holistic, multidimensional, multidisciplinary, skill-based, employment-oriented and rooted in Indian culture. It aims to ensure that students' knowledge is not limited to textbooks but promotes creativity, critical thinking and innovation. It is a positive step toward making the Indian education system globally competitive, flexible and future-oriented. This policy will not only make education accessible to all but will also pave the way for developing capable, responsible and innovative citizens. Ultimately, it can be said that the main objective of this policy is to establish India's global identity by enabling students to choose subjects of their interest and develop creative knowledge.

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