The New Indian National Education Policy 2020 : A Study Towards Achieving Its Objectives

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Abstract

The New Education Policy 2020 is a comprehensive framework that seeks to revolutionize the Indian education system. The policy aims to address the current challenges and shortcomings of the system by introducing several changes. These changes include the introduction of a new curriculum, an emphasis on vocational education, and the use of technology to enhance learning outcomes. It is crucial to evaluate both the benefits and drawbacks of this policy critically. Stakeholders need to collaborate and work towards implementing the new policy effectively. This will ensure that the policy's objectives are met, and the education system becomes more inclusive, fair, and equitable.

Keywords: *Higher education, NEP-2020, Overview & analysis, Implementation strategies, Predicted implications, Predicted impediments & merits.*

Introduction:

Education is a fundamental requirement for realizing the full potential of human beings, creating a fair and impartial society, and advancing the development of the nation. Ensuring that high-quality education is accessible to all is crucial for India to continue its growth and to lead the world in terms of economic progress, social justice, scientific innovation, national unity, and cultural preservation. Providing universal access to quality education is the best possible way to unlock the talent and resources of our country and to utilize them for the betterment of individuals, society, the nation, and ultimately, the world.

It has been observed that more than 20% of colleges have an annual enrollment of less than 100 students, which makes them nonviable to improve the quality of education. Additionally, only 4% of colleges enroll more than 3,000 students annually. This is due to regional imbalance as well as the quality of education offered by these institutions. One of the major reasons for the fragmentation of the higher education system in India is the early streaming of students into different disciplines. Lack of access to higher education, especially in socio-economically disadvantaged areas, has resulted in a low gross enrollment ratio (GER) of 25%.

Objectives of the Study:

The National Education Policy 2020 includes various initiatives aimed at enhancing the quality and scope of education in India. The objectives of this study on National Education Policy 2020 are as follows:

- To offer suggestions for further improvements in the effective implementation of NEP 2020 to achieve its goal.

- To discuss the merits of the Higher Education Policy of NEP 2020.
- To discuss the demerits of the Higher Education Policies of NEP 2020.
- To compare National Education Policy 2020 with the policies currently in practice in India.

Methodology:

The methodology involves discussing the main points of the national educational policy framework, focusing on different sections of policy NEP 2020, and comparing it with the current education policy. We use focus group discussions to identify any innovations made, and predictive analysis to analyze the implications of the policy. Based on the focus group analysis, we give various suggestions.

Focal points of the New Education Policy:

- **Foundation Stage-** Five years of foundational stage provides basic education which is flexible, multilevel, play-based, activity-based, and discovery-based learning. Using time-tested Indian traditions and cultures, this stage is continuously improved by research and innovation for the cognitive and emotional stimulation of children.
- **Preparatory Stage –** During the three-year preparatory stage, students engage in play-based discovery and activity-based learning. This stage also gradually introduces formal classroom learning with textbooks. The main focus is to expose students to different subjects and prepare them to delve deeper into insights.
- **Middle school education Stage–** During the three years of middle school education, students will focus on more abstract concepts in subjects such as sciences, mathematics, arts, social sciences, and humanities. Specialized subjects will use experiential learning methods with subject teachers. The semester system will be used, and two class-level examinations will be conducted each year.
- **Secondary education Stage –**Secondary school education spans four years and aims to provide a well-rounded education in a variety of subjects, including liberal arts. The curriculum is designed to be subject-oriented and pedagogical, with in-depth study, increased flexibility, critical thinking, and attention to life goals. Students will be exposed to the semester system and will study 5 to 6 subjects each semester. Board exams will be held at the end of 10th and 12th standards.
- **Under-graduation Education Stage–** The undergraduate degrees in all subjects will have duration of either three or four years, and students will have the choice to exit the program at various stages. After passing the first year, one can obtain a certificate; after passing the second year, a diploma; and after passing the third year, a Bachelor's degree. The four-year multidisciplinary bachelor's programs, however, shall be the preferred option since it allows the opportunity to experience the full range of holistic and multidisciplinary education in addition to a focus on the chosen major and minors as per the choices of the student. The four-year programs may also lead to a degree 'with research' if the student

completes a rigorous research project in their major area (s) of study as specified by the HEI.

- **Post-graduation Education Stage –** The Master's degree is a programs that can be completed in one year for students who have completed a four-year bachelor's degree programs, while it takes two years for those who have completed a three-year bachelor's degree programs. There is also an integrated five-year degree program which focuses on high-quality research in the final year. The Master's degree programs places a strong emphasis on research to develop student's professional competence and prepare them for a research degree.
- **Research Stage –** To obtain a Ph.D. degree in any core, multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary subject, a candidate must go through a thorough research stage that lasts for a minimum of three to four years for full-time and part-time studies, respectively. During this stage, they must conduct high-quality research and complete 8-credit coursework in teaching, education, or pedagogy related to their chosen Ph.D. subject. It is important to note that the one-year M.Phil. programs has been discontinued.

Advantages of the New Education Policy:

For Students-

Comprehensive Development*:* The NEP 2020, proposes a comprehensive educational approach that caters to the diverse needs of the students. This policy strives to support their intellectual, social, emotional, and physical development through new methods of teaching. Its goal is to empower the students to think critically, creatively, and collaboratively. It encourages them to apply these skills to solve real-world problems. By providing a well-rounded education that fosters personal growth, it prepares students for the demands of the modern world. This equips them with the tools they need to thrive both in their studies and in life. It is committed to creating a positive learning environment that enables the students to reach their full potential.

Flexible Learning Pathways: The policy provides students with the flexibility to select courses that align with their specific interests and aspirations for their future careers. This approach creates a unique educational experience for every student, as they have the opportunity to explore their passions and gain expertise in their chosen fields of study. By offering this level of personalization, students are empowered to take ownership of their education and make informed decisions about their academic journey. This policy is designed to foster a love of learning and support the growth of well-rounded individuals who are equipped with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in their chosen professions.

Focus on Overall Development*:*The National Education Policy 2020 introduces a new structure of 5+3+3+4 to replace the previous 10+2 structure, which emphasizes the early years of a student's education. This structure is designed for students aged 3 to 8, 8 to 11, 11 to 14, and 14 to 18 years, respectively. The curricular and pedagogical structure and the curricular framework for school education will therefore be guided by a 5+3+3+4 design, consisting of the

Foundational stage (in the parts, that is, 3 years of Anganwadi/pre-school + 2 years in primary school in Grades 1-2; both together covering ages 3-8), Preparatory Stage (Grades 3-5, covering ages 8-11), Middle Stage (Grades 6-8, covering ages 11-14), and Secondary Stage (Grades 9-12 in two phases, i.e., 9 and 10 in the first and 11 and 12 in the second covering age 14-18).

Reduced Curriculum Burden:The National Education Policy is a comprehensive framework that aims to revolutionize the education system in India. It is focused on prioritizing fundamental concepts and reducing the burden of the academic curriculum by promoting a more holistic learning approach. The NEP emphasizes the importance of developing learners' cognitive abilities, critical thinking skills, and creativity, while also ensuring their physical, social, and emotional well-being. It also seeks to bridge the gap between vocational and academic education and encourage learners to pursue their interests and passions. The NEP is a game-changer for the education sector in India and has the potential to equip learners with the skills and knowledge necessary to thrive in the 21st century.

Inclusive Education:The policy aims to provide equal opportunities in education for students from all walks of life, including those from marginalized communities and with disabilities. It emphasizes the importance of creating a supportive and empathetic learning environment where every student feels safe, respected, and valued. By prioritizing inclusive education, the policy intends to ensure that no student is left behind and that everyone has access to quality education.

For Teachers-

Professional Development Opportunities:The recently introduced education policy acknowledges the critical role played by continuous professional development in enhancing the quality of education. It makes provisions for teachers to receive regular training, attend workshops, and collaborate with fellow educators to stay up-to-date on the latest pedagogical practices and teaching methods. Through these initiatives, teachers will be able to improve their skills, gain new perspectives, and remain informed about advancements in the field of education. This will enable them to provide students with a high-quality education that prepares them for success in their academic and professional lives. The recently introduced education policy acknowledges the critical role played by continuous professional development in enhancing the quality of education. It makes provisions for teachers to receive regular training, attend workshops, and collaborate with fellow educators to stay up-to-date on the latest pedagogical practices and teaching methods. Through these initiatives, teachers will be able to improve their skills, gain new perspectives, and remain informed about advancements in the field of education. This will enable them to provide students with a high-quality education that prepares them for success in their academic and professional lives.

Enhanced Teaching Practices:The educational policy has a goal to transform conventional teaching methods by emphasizing student-centred education. Through the promotion of interactive and experiential learning techniques, teachers can effectively involve students in the learning process. This approach encourages a more profound comprehension and retention of concepts, enabling students to apply their knowledge in real-world situations.

***Integration of Technology**:*The National Education Policy (NEP) recognizes the significance of technology in education. It encourages educators to integrate digital tools, online resources, and educational apps into their teaching methods to enhance the effectiveness of their instruction. By doing so, they can create more interactive and engaging learning experiences for their students, while also catering to different learning styles and abilities. This approach aims to equip students with the necessary skills and knowledge to thrive in today's rapidly advancing digital world.

Transforming Teachers as Facilitators:The policy provides teachers with the opportunity to take on the role of learning facilitators, instead of just information providers. This means that teachers can guide their students through a more personalized learning journey, where each student's unique interests and talents are taken into account. By doing this, teachers can help foster critical thinking, creativity, and a love for learning in their students. This approach to teaching can lead to a more engaging and effective learning experience for all students involved.

Focus On the ODL Platforms:The current higher education system in India is unable to meet the demands of university students due to several gaps. The NEP-2020 aims to fill these gaps and provide modern education. The success of this policy depends on its effective implementation. The policy plans to transform higher education institutions into large multidisciplinary universities with more than 3,000 students each. This transformation will require significant investments in infrastructure and human resources. Open and Distance Learning Institutions with study centre throughout the country can play a vital role in cost-effectively way meeting these requirements. They will not only be limited to offering regular graduate and postgraduate programs but also be facilitators in research activities and teaching multidisciplinary and skill-oriented courses.

The Open and Distance Learning (ODL) system has been integrating technology to reach students since the inception of technology. The efforts to integrate technology in the education sector have always been to bring about quality enhancements and outreach of education to learners at a distance. The ODL system in the context of India has grown over the past six decades leading to the changing paradigms with the integration of technology concerning pedagogy and the use of technology in it. The ODL system has benefitted India by contributing to an increase in the Gross Enrollment Ratio of the country.

Distance education means learning distantly, without direct contact with the teacher in the regular classroom. Distance Education has often been attributed with several other terms such as distributed learning, e-learning, online learning, etc, however, distance education is preferred. It includes the process of distance learning and distance teaching. It extensively allows a learner the maximum favours to continue the learning, and dedicated support to match and balance the process of learning with his work and personal life, where the learner can (usually) set his own pace of study and can decide as to when and where to study. It doesn't hinder a learner from acquiring knowledge and a degree from anywhere in the world. A learner can study undergraduate, postgraduate and professional-level courses through distance education. University Grants Commission has ensured that degree from both distance Education University

as well as conventional system is considered at par. Distance education gives the learner ample opportunities for new choices and newfound suppleness and flexibility in their learning and development. The learner benefits from greater educational access and greater flexibility to learn and get qualified without having regularly scheduled classes, even when there are lots of other personal commitments to deal with in an already busy life. Also, as distance education can usually be completed on the learner's schedule, it is much easier to complete distance courses while working than more traditional educational programs. Such limitless opportunities for flexibility have been possible due to the technological integration in distance education. Students can study from their homes to complete their class assignments provided there's a computer and internet connection at home. The stakeholders of distance education have started to use the technology parallel with the advancements of ICTs. Distance education also employs some portion of face-to-face interactions as per the requirement of the programs such inclusion of face-to-face with distance education and the simultaneous expansion of ICTs and its integration has blurred all the boundaries giving it a blended format of education.

The structure and infrastructure of state-open universities are such that it has a wider canvas in terms of access and reach to the masses of the state. Our university, Uttar Pradesh Rajarshi Tandon Open University, Prayagraj has a robust network of more than 1350 study centers and 12 regional centres across Uttar Pradesh, connecting major districts as well as interior belts. Every year, the university enrolls thousands of students; hence, it has the potential to reach out to artists and craftsmen who shall teach arts and skills to generate employable individuals. It might not be possible for some universities to arrange for teachers/trainers for various languages under three language formula described in National Education Policy–2020 or artists for 64 arts. In that case, Open Universities can do that quite easily by preparing course content, courses, and programs. Further, not only higher education, but policy has introduced the concept of teaching home language/regional language to children till the 5th Standard, in this scenario, state open universities can offer their crash courses/certificate courses for training English medium teachers in regional languages. This shall be suitable for Open Distance Learning to meet access challenges in the Implementation of the National Education Policy–2020.

Disadvantages of the New Education Policy:

Increased Focus On Competition*:*The policy has raised concerns about increased pressure and competition among the students. The National Education Policy (NEP) highlights the significance of standardized examinations and calls for board exams at multiple levels, even in the early years. This approach could result in an excessive emphasis on grades and academic performance, which may hinder the overall development and well-being of students.

Narrowness of Subject Choices:Under the new policy, there is a proposed shift towards a multidisciplinary approach that aims to offer the students a wide range of subjects. However, this could have the unintended consequence of limiting their options. With a greater focus on

vocational education and skill development, subjects like arts, humanities, and social sciences may receive less attention. This narrow focus could hinder the overall intellectual and creative growth of students.

Insufficient Teacher Training and Support:The current NEP 2020 policies and practices fall short of providing effective teacher training and support. There is a lack of clear guidance for continuous professional development and a dearth of incentives to encourage teachers to engage in such training. This deficiency may lead to negative consequences in terms of the quality of education delivered in classrooms. It is crucial to recognize the importance of ongoing professional development for teachers and to establish clear policies and guidelines to support it. By doing so, we can ensure that teachers are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to provide high-quality education to their students.

Challenges of the Standardization:The primary objective of the policy is to create a standardized education system across the country, but there is a possibility that it may not take into account the unique regional and cultural diversities that exist. The one-size-fits-all approach might not cater to the individual needs and aspirations of students belonging to different states and regions, resulting in a negative impact on the quality of education and student outcomes.

Shortcomings of Implementation Strategy*:*There is a significant issue with the policy, which is the absence of a well-developed plan to implement it. The policy suggests substantial modifications but fails to provide a definite roadmap for its execution. This lack of clarity can cause confusion among teachers, students, and educational institutions, leading to inconsistent application across the nation. If a clear and concise plan is not formulated, the policy's potential benefits may never be realized.

Conclusion:

Amidst the backdrop of unfulfilled ambitions and aspirations, the NEP 2020 raises a crucial question: Can we achieve our goals? Historically, our inappropriate allocation of resources has led to our failure to achieve these goals. For instance, despite all previous Education Commissions and Policy Documents recommending a budget of 6% of the GDP for education, it has never materialized. Now, the NEP 2020 document also promises a 6% GDP Budget for education, but it only states that the Central and State Governments will make efforts to allocate these funds. Given the current economic slowdown and the negative impact of COVID-19, it is unlikely that the education sector will receive the necessary funding during the revamping of the economy. The next 3-4 years are going to be challenging for countries to recover their economies from the impact of Covid-19. It is improbable that the debt-ridden and financially weakened state governments will be able to allocate 6% of the GDP to the education sector in the next five years.

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