

**Swami Vivekananda Advanced Journal for Research and Studies**Online Copy of Document Available on: www.svajrs.com

ISSN:2584-105X

Pg. 31-37



The Contribution of the New Education Policy 2020 to the Development of Education

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*Accepted: 31/08/2026**Published: 10/09/2026**DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.22706625>*

Abstract

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, India is a progressive policy that addresses the country's social, economic, technological, cultural, and other needs in the twenty-first century. The new educational policy promotes equity, inclusion, accessibility, affordability, and high-quality education at all levels. The present research paper aims to demonstrate how the NEP-2020 contributes to developing the educational system in India. The emphasis is on school education, higher education, teacher education, vocational education, digital education, research, and skill development. The study highlights the alternative 5+3+3+4 curricular and pedagogical structure to choice-based education of the previous 10+2 structure, foundational literacy and numeracy, early childhood care and education, multidisciplinary higher education, and flexible academic curricula and exit options. In addition, the paper sheds light on the NEP-2020's attempts to promote inclusive and equitable education by focusing on socially and economically disadvantaged groups, females, children with special needs, regional disparities, and so forth.

Keywords: *National Education Policy 2020; Educational Development; Inclusive Education; Digital Education; Higher Education.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the most significant domains for individual development, social change, economic growth, national integration, and democratic values. For a pluralistic country like India, education is also an important tool to promote equity, social justice, inclusion, scientific temper, cultural preservation, and human development. The policy recognizes the need for universal access to quality education to usher in human development, social justice, and equality, scientific temper, national integration, cultural preservation, and so on.¹

1.1 Background of Education in India

Education in India has come a long way from ancient times until the present day. Education in India was deeply connected with individual development and included a holistic development of character, intellect, society, culture, and spirituality. It was during the colonial period that the modern education system evolved and took shape. The Indian Constitution and its provisions play a vital role in promoting and developing education in the country. In particular, the Directive Principles of State Policy (Article 45) and Fundamental Rights (Article 21A) shaped the education policies and legal framework of independent India. In addition, various parliamentary committees and commissions have made valuable contributions to the field of education in the country.

The Constitution of India and the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009, reflect the educational philosophy of India. Article 45 of the Indian Constitution mandates the State to provide free and compulsory education to all children, while the 86th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2002, made the Right to Education a Fundamental Right. Education is recognized as a Fundamental Right under the Indian Constitution, which reflects the country's commitment to providing quality education to all Indians. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009, provides for a legal framework for children's free and compulsory education between the ages of six and fourteen.

After independence, several parliamentary committees and commissions were formed to suggest and recommend measures for higher, secondary, and

elementary education. For example, the University Education Commission (1948-49) chaired by Prof. S. Radhakrishnan and the Secondary Education Commission (1952-53) were formed to address higher and secondary education, respectively. Apart from them, the Education Commission (1964-66), also known as the Kothari Commission, was the most comprehensive and contributed significantly to education policy-making in post-independent India. The recommendations of the Kothari Commission formed the basis of the National Policy on Education, 1968. The National Policy on Education, 1968, highlighted the importance of national integration and a common educational program, quality education, science and technology, and moral regeneration.² Various other policies, such as the National Policy on Education, 1986, and its subsequent revision in 1992, were formulated to address the issues of gender inequality, universalizing elementary education, women's education, disadvantaged groups, teacher education, adult education, and improving the overall quality of education. The Indian Government itself acknowledged that the Education Policy of 1986, revised in 1992, served as the guiding policy framework for more than three decades.

1.2 Need for Educational Reforms

India's need for educational reforms stemmed from the discrepancy between the traditional educational model and the changing needs of society and the economy. Increasing the number of students' enrollment did not necessarily mean improving their learning experience. Indian students needed a more comprehensive and better-rounded education rather than exam-oriented studies. Hence, there was a need to shift toward competency-based, experiential, analytical, and learner-centered education. NEP 2020 recognized the need for reducing the syllabus to only essential concepts while emphasizing holistic, discussion-based, analytical, and experiential learning.³

Another pressing need was the lack of equal opportunity in receiving a good education. Social and economic factors still significantly influenced the chances of Indian students in accessing education. Educational reforms became necessary to bridge this gap between different groups of Indians in terms of

¹ Ministry of Education, Government of India, *National Education Policy 2020*, Introduction, pp. 3–4.

² Government of India, Ministry of Education, *National Policy on Education, 1986 (as modified in 1992)*, Part I, paras. 1.4–1.5.

³ Ministry of Education, Government of India, *National Education Policy 2020*, provisions concerning curriculum load, holistic learning, discussion and analysis-based learning.

access to education. NEP 2020 recognized the need to focus on universal access to education, disadvantaged groups, gender equality, and children with special needs.⁴

The new policy covers the age from three to six and views this period as crucial in terms of cognitive and social development.⁵

1.3 Emergence and Objectives of NEP 2020

NEP 2020 emerged as a result of a long process of policy development and consultations. The Government of India realized the need to revise the National Policy on Education, 1986, as amended in 1992. The Ministry of Human Resource Development notes that about thirty years have passed since the last reform, while Indian society and the economy have undergone profound changes. In addition, new challenges and opportunities arose at the global level.⁶ The Government of India initiated the development of a new education policy to meet the needs of the twenty-first century. The Committee for the Draft National Education Policy submitted its report to the Ministry of Human Resource Development at the end of 2019. The Union Cabinet approved the National Education Policy 2020 on July 29, 2020⁷. NEP 2020 replaced the previous National Policy on Education, 1986, and provided a comprehensive concept for school education, higher education, vocational education, teacher education, research, technology, adult education, and governance.⁸

One of the objectives of NEP 2020 is to ensure universalization of education. One of the main goals of the new policy is to provide free and compulsory education from pre-primary to secondary school so that all children, regardless of their social and economic status, have equal educational opportunities. Furthermore, NEP 2020 wants to ensure the universalization of access, enrollment, and retention in schools while also providing alternative and open schooling for out-of-school children.⁹

2. OVERVIEW AND VISION OF NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY 2020

2.1 Meaning and Concept of NEP 2020

National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) is a visionary policy that aims to reform the education system at all levels from pre-school to higher education so as to usher the country into a new era of holistic, multidisciplinary, flexible, and inclusive education. It supersedes the National Policy on Education, 1986, as amended in 1992, and lays down the framework for transforming school education as well as higher education.¹⁰

2.2 Vision and Mission of NEP 2020

The new policy's vision is to provide good quality education to all and to make India a global leader in matters relating to education. NEP 2020 views education as a means to individual empowerment and seeks to promote social justice, gender equality, scientific temper, national integration, and cultural heritage.¹¹ The broad objective of the policy is to make India a vibrant knowledge society by nurturing the innate potential of every learner.

2.3 Major Objectives of the Policy

The major objectives of NEP 2020 are to provide access to education, foundational literacy, holistic and multidisciplinary education, vocational education, and skill development to achieve India's dream of Atmanirbhar Bharat. The other objectives include promoting Indian languages, enhancing the quality of education, and promoting research, innovation, and technology.

2.4 Guiding Principles of NEP 2020

NEP 2020 has emphasized on the principles of access, equity, quality, affordability, and accountability as the guiding principles of the policy. The policy has taken a learner-centric approach and has aimed to make education more flexible, multidisciplinary, and inclusive. It has laid stress on learning concepts rather than rote learning and has

⁴ Ministry of Education, Government of India, *National Education Policy 2020*, provisions concerning universal access, equity and inclusion.

⁵ Ministry of Education, Government of India, *National Education Policy 2020*, para. 1.1, "Early Childhood Care and Education: The Foundation of Learning."

⁶ Ministry of Education, Government of India, *About New Education Policy—Consultation Process*.

⁷ Press Information Bureau, Government of India, "National Education Policy 2020 announced," 29 July 2020.

⁸ Ministry of Education, Government of India, *National Education Policy 2020*, Introduction.

⁹ Ministry of Education, Government of India, *National Education Policy 2020*, provisions on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy.

¹⁰ Ministry of Education, Government of India, *National Education Policy 2020*, Introduction.

¹¹ *Ibid*.

emphasized on developing creativity, critical thinking, and ethical values.

3. STRUCTURAL TRANSFORMATION OF SCHOOL EDUCATION UNDER NEP 2020

3.1 Replacement of the 10+2 System by the 5+3+3+4 Structure

NEP 2020 has done away with the 10+2 system and has proposed a 5+3+3+4 system that covers early childhood to higher education. The new system aims to provide flexible education based on the developmental stages of learners. The first five years would be the foundational stage, the next three years would be the preparatory stage, followed by the middle stage of three years and the secondary stage that would last for four years. This way, students who complete secondary school would be old enough to make choices about their career.¹²

3.2 Early Childhood Care and Education

The new policy has given priority to Early Childhood Care and Education so as to lay a strong foundation for future learning as well as overall development. Education for children aged 3-6 years has been included in the foundational stage with Anganwadi/pre-school education and classes one and two. This stage lays stress on play-way, activity-based and inquiry-based learning.¹³

3.3 Foundational Literacy and Numeracy

Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) has been identified as a national mission since literacy and numeracy skills enable a child to learn subsequent concepts easily. The policy recognizes the fact that children need FLN to gain access to higher education and to develop their cognitive abilities. Therefore, the policy proposes that a National Mission on FLN be launched with the aim of providing FLN to every child.

3.4 Universal Access to School Education

NEP 2020 aims to provide universal access to school education. The policy proposes to make provisions for infrastructure and track students' attendance. It also proposes to provide alternative modes of education such as open schooling, etc. to ensure access to education. It also proposes to provide special support to out-of-school children and restore them to the mainstream education system. The policy

aims to achieve a 100 percent Gross Enrolment Ratio in schools by 2030.

3.5 Vocational Education and Skill Development

The new policy aims to do away with the binary between vocational and general education. It proposes to introduce vocational education from the middle school itself. Such education would provide students with work exposure, training, and internship opportunities. It would motivate them to make a career in the various vocations and help develop respect for the various occupations and services. Vocational education aims to make students capable and confident to pursue any profession.

4. CONTRIBUTION OF NEP 2020 TO HIGHER EDUCATION

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 aims to transform the higher education system in India. It strives to make higher education institutions (HEIs) more multidisciplinary and holistic. It also aims to increase the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education to 50% by 2035 and promote the development of large multidisciplinary universities and colleges.¹⁴

4.1 Multidisciplinary and Holistic Education

NEP 2020 aims to break down the "old and rigid dichotomies" between arts, science, humanities, vocational, and professional streams. It allows students to pursue their areas of interest and aptitude.

4.2 Flexible Undergraduate Programmes

NEP 2020 aims to introduce more flexibility in undergraduate programmes. For instance, degrees can be of three or four years, with the four-year multidisciplinary bachelor's programme as the preferred model. In addition, students can earn different qualifications at various stages of study.

4.3 Multiple Entry and Exit Options

NEP 2020 proposes multiple entry and exit options in higher education. For instance, students who complete one year of study can receive a certificate, while those who complete two years can earn a diploma. Meanwhile, those who finish three years of study can graduate with a bachelor's degree. Finally, a four-year programme can lead to a multidisciplinary bachelor's degree with opportunities for research.

¹² Ministry of Education, Government of India, *National Education Policy 2020*, para. 4.1.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Ministry of Education, Government of India, *National Education Policy 2020*, paras. 9.1–9.2, available at the official Ministry of Education website.

4.4 Academic Bank of Credits

The Academic Bank of Credits (ABC) is a digital repository of academic credits earned by students at HEIs. It is a framework that allows easier transfer of credits and promotes greater educational flexibility.

4.5 Promotion of Research and Innovation

Research and development (R&D) will play a critical role in NEP 2020. The new policy aims to foster a research culture in universities and colleges and provide competitive funding through the National Research Foundation.¹⁵ This proposal is expected to propel India's status as a global knowledge hub and innovation ecosystem.

5. NEP 2020 AND PROMOTION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Inclusive education is one of the pillars of NEP 2020. It entails ensuring that education is equitable and accessible to all, including marginalized, vulnerable, and disadvantaged groups.

5.1 Education of Girls and Women

NEP 2020 proposes measures to promote girls' education and addresses gender disparities through the Gender-Inclusion Fund. It also recognizes gender inequality as a barrier to achieving educational equity.

5.2 Education of Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups

NEP 2020 acknowledges the challenges faced by Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs) and proposes targeted measures to address them. It focuses on vulnerable groups, including disadvantaged groups, economically weak groups, rural populations, and other marginalized communities.

5.3 Education of Children with Disabilities

Children with disabilities should be included in the education system. They require proper infrastructure, resources, trained teachers, and appropriate pedagogy to access education.

5.4 Gender-Inclusion Fund

The Gender-Inclusion Fund aims to provide States with resources to ensure quality education for girls and transgender students. It can also support providing sanitary napkins, bicycles, and cash assistance to economically disadvantaged girls.

5.5 Special Education Zones

NEP 2020 proposes the creation of Special Education Zones (SEZs) to address the educational needs of vulnerable populations. SEZs will provide targeted support to educationally disadvantaged areas and help States provide quality education to marginalized communities.

6. TECHNOLOGY AND DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION UNDER NEP 2020

Technology has become an integral part of modern education. NEP 2020 promotes digital education and recognizes its potential to make education more accessible, equitable, and of higher quality.

6.1 Digital Education

NEP 2020 promotes the use of digital resources to support teaching and learning. It encourages the use of online and digital tools to complement traditional learning resources.

6.2 Online and Blended Learning

NEP 2020 promotes online and blended learning to increase access to education. However, the policy recognizes that digital learning cannot replace conventional face-to-face learning.

6.3 Artificial Intelligence and Emerging Technologies

NEP 2020 promotes emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence and innovation to ensure that students are equipped with relevant digital skills.

6.4 Digital Infrastructure

Digital infrastructure plays a critical role in supporting digital education. NEP 2020 promotes the development of digital infrastructure and resources to support technology-enabled learning.

6.5 National Educational Technology Forum

The National Educational Technology Forum (NETF) will provide a platform for sharing knowledge and innovations on the use of educational technology.

7. NEP 2020 AND PROMOTION OF INDIAN LANGUAGES AND CULTURE

NEP 2020 is committed to promoting India's cultural and linguistic diversity. It encourages using the mother tongue, home language, local language, or regional language as the medium of instruction, where

¹⁵ Ministry of Education, Government of India, *National Education Policy 2020*, para. 18.2.

feasible, up to at least the primary level and preferably up to the higher levels. It also promotes multilingualism and indigenous knowledge systems, including languages, literature, arts, and traditions.

8. TEACHER EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT UNDER NEP 2020

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 lays great emphasis on teacher education and professional development. It focuses on transforming the teaching career into a “highly qualified”, “competent”, “ethical” and “innovative” profession. NEP 2020 lays out a plan to achieve this goal while also meeting the demands of quality education by 2030. It proposes that “in order to impart quality education, a four-year integrated B.Ed programme will be mandatory for school teachers.” The teacher education system will be multifaceted and offer multi-disciplinary studies conducted at “research-intensive universities.” Moreover, the NEP 2020 focuses on continuous professional development and training through workshops, mentoring, peer interactions, etc. Thus, it calls for upgrading their skills in technology, pedagogy, assessment, and inclusive education. The policy promotes transparency and meritocracy in teacher appointments and promotes professional autonomy and effective leadership. Furthermore, NEP 2020 encourages the implementation of the National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST). Teacher recruitment will be more transparent and based on merit, and professional development will be continuous and relevant to the needs of the learners.¹⁶

9. NEP 2020 AND QUALITY ENHANCEMENT IN EDUCATION

NEP 2020 emphasizes improving the quality of education. It proposes several measures to achieve this goal, including transforming rote learning into conceptual learning and competency-based learning.

9.1 Competency-Based Learning

Assessment policies will focus on understanding and higher-order skills rather than memorization and rote learning.

9.2 Holistic Progress Card

The Holistic Progress Card will provide a comprehensive view of students' cognitive, affective, and psychomotor development.

9.3 PARAKH – National Assessment Centre

The PARAKH (Performance Assessment, Review, and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development) will establish norms and standards for assessments.

9.4 Accreditation and Quality Assurance

NEP 2020 proposes strengthening accreditation and quality assurance at the institutional level to promote transparency and accountability.

10. CONTRIBUTION OF NEP 2020 TO RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Research and development (R&D) play a pivotal role in NEP 2020. It proposes the creation of the National Research Foundation, which will provide competitive funding to support research and innovation.

11. CHALLENGES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF NEP 2020

Despite the many benefits of NEP 2020, several challenges may hinder its effective implementation. *First*, financial constraints and inadequate infrastructure may limit the uniform adoption of the new policies. NEP 2020 acknowledges the need for increased public expenditure on education. *Second*, the digital divide may affect the uniform uptake of digital education. *Third*, the shortage of qualified teachers and the need for extensive professional development may impede progress. *Fourth*, regional and socio-economic disparities may contribute to uneven implementation of the policy. *Fifth*, linguistic barriers may hinder the adoption of mother tongue instruction due to a lack of teaching materials and qualified teachers. Finally, education is a concurrent subject, and effective implementation will require the cooperation of both the Union and State Governments.

12. SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

12.1 Infrastructure Development

There is a need to develop educational infrastructure, especially in rural and disadvantaged areas. Improving school infrastructure and providing

¹⁶ Press Information Bureau, Government of India, “National Education Policy 2020,” 29 July 2020, identifying Access,

Equity, Quality, Affordability and Accountability as the foundational pillars of the policy.

learning resources will enhance the quality of education.

12.2 Increased Public Expenditure on Education

Public expenditure on education needs to increase to support the implementation of various initiatives proposed in the policy. NEP 2020 itself proposes increasing public expenditure on education to 6% of GDP.

12.3 Teacher Education and Continuous Professional Development

There is a need to invest in teacher education and continuous professional development. Teachers are the backbone of any education system, and their capacity building is critical to enhancing educational quality.

12.4 Addressing the Digital Divide

The digital divide must be addressed by ensuring that all students have access to affordable digital devices and connectivity.

12.5 Inclusive Education

Inclusive education should be prioritized and receive adequate funding and support.

12.6 Monitoring, Evaluation, and Accountability

There is a need to strengthen monitoring, evaluation, and accountability mechanisms to ensure transparency and effectiveness in the implementation of the policy.

13. CONCLUSION

NEP 2020 is one of the most comprehensive education policies ever proposed in independent India.

It addresses many of the shortcomings of the previous education system and proposes a wide range of measures to enhance educational access, equity, quality, and relevance. By replacing the 10+2 system with the 5+3+3+4 system, promoting foundational literacy and numeracy, flexible higher education, multiple entry and exit options, and the Academic Bank of Credits, among other measures, NEP 2020 seeks to make education more accessible, equitable, and flexible. The emphasis on inclusive education, digital education, Indian languages, Indian Knowledge Systems, teacher education, and research and development will ensure that education is relevant to the needs of the 21st century. However, the success of NEP 2020 will be determined by its effective implementation. Increased public expenditure on education, investment in teacher education, addressing the digital divide, and strengthening monitoring and evaluation mechanisms will contribute to the successful implementation of the policy.

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