



A CRITICAL STUDY OF NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY 2020

Sudip Kumar Pal Assistant Teacher, Kachua High School (H.S.), South 24 Parganas, West Bengal, India

ABSTRACT This National Education Policy 2020 (NEP) is the first Education policy of the 21st century and aims to address the many growing developmental imperatives of our country. The NEP 2020 contains 66 pages. In this context we present a critical analysis of the policy that is going to change the face of education post 2022. Curriculum and pedagogy will be transformed by 2022 in order to minimize rote learning and instead encourage holistic development and 21st century skills such as critical thinking, creativity, scientific temper, communication, collaboration. A new policy in place is very crucial for a country where the population of youth is larger than the entire population of Europe, hence investments in education and skill development is an obvious step. Equitable education serves as one of the solutions for empowerment to nearly all the kinds of disparity present in the country, whether they are caste based, class based, religion based, gender based or disability based. Previous NEP (formed in 1986 and amended in 1992) could not anticipate post liberalization that has been taken place in India and thus has become redundant today. The implementation of the previous education policy is still irregular and incomplete.

KEYWORDS : National education Policy 2020, Ministry of Human Resource Department (MHRD), Under-Represented Group (URG)

INTRODUCTION

Education is a powerful weapon to civilisation. The NEP 2020 has been published. Drawing inputs from T. S. R. Suchramanian Committee report and the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), the Kasturirangan Committee has provided the policy document. In January, 2015 MHRD initiated the process of developing NEP for India. This effort culminated into a 66-page NEP 2020 which was published on 31st May, 2019. The initial 30-day period was granted to the public. Then a month was extended. The drafters took over 4 years before submitting to the Govt in Dec. 2018, whereafter the Govt took another five and a half months before publication. The draft lacks the depth and context necessary for a policy of such importance to be implemented. The policy drafters are clearer in their vision of India's education sector that is evident through NEP. This policy will eventually lead to India struggling to propagate equality, inclusiveness, empathy, and most importantly unity across demographics.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study are to

- 1) find out the salient features of the NEP 2020
- 2) find out the merits and demerits of the NEP 2020
- 3) analyse the challenges in implementing the NEP 2020

METHODOLOGY

The study is a survey-based research. So a format of survey-based research is followed by the researcher to carry on study and in presenting research report.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS OF THE STUDY

This study has the underlying research questions framed by the researcher according to the framed objectives. The research questions are:

- 1) What are the salient features of the NEP 2020.
- 2) What are the merits and demerits of the NEP 2020
- 3) What are the challenges in implementation of the NEP 2020.

DATASOURCE

The sources for data collection used by the researcher are basically secondary in nature but primary data sources are also used for this purpose!

DATA ANALYSIS

For the analysis of the collected data, documentary analysis method has been adopted by the researcher to find answer to the above-stated research questions.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

SALIENT FEATURES OF NEP 2020

The salient features of NEP 2020 are stated as follows:

- 1) Ensuring Universal Access at All Levels of schooling from pre-primary school to Grade 12;
- 2) Ensuring quality early childhood care and education for all children between 3-6 years;

- 3) New Curricular and Pedagogical Structure (5+3+3+4);
- 4) No hard separations between arts and sciences, between curricular and extra-curricular activities, between vocational and academic streams;
- 5) Establishing National Mission on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy;
- 6) Emphasis on promoting multilingualism and Indian languages; The medium of instruction until at least Grade 5, but preferably till Grade 8 and beyond, will be the home language/mother tongue/local language/regional language.
- 7) Assessment reforms - Board Exams on up to two occasions during any given school year, one main examination and one for improvement, if desired;
- 8) Setting up of a new National Assessment Centre, PARAKH (Performance Assessment, Review, and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development);
- 9) Equitable and inclusive education - Special emphasis given on Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs);
- 10) A separate Gender Inclusion fund and Special Education Zones for disadvantaged regions and groups;
- 11) Robust and transparent processes for recruitment of teachers and merit-based performance;
- 12) Ensuring availability of all resources through school complexes and clusters;
- 13) Setting up of State School Standards Authority (SSSA);
- 14) Exposure of vocational education in school and higher education system;
- 15) Increasing GER in higher education to 50%;
- 16) Holistic Multidisciplinary Education with multiple entry/exit options;
- 17) NTA to offer Common Entrance Exam for Admission to HEIs;
- 18) Establishment of Academic Bank of Credit;
- 19) Setting up of Multidisciplinary Education and Research Universities (MERUs);
- 20) Setting up of National Research Foundation (NRF);
- 21) Light but Tight' regulation;
- 22) Single overarching umbrella body for promotion of higher education sector including teacher education and excluding medical and legal education - the Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) - with independent bodies for standard setting - the General Education Council; funding - Higher Education Grants Council (HEGC); accreditation - National Accreditation Council (NAC); and regulation - National Higher Education Regulatory Council (NHERC);
- 23) Expansion of open and distance learning to increase GER.
- 24) Internationalization of Education
- 25) Professional Education will be an integral part of the higher education system. Stand-alone technical universities, health science universities, legal and agricultural universities, or institutions in these or other fields, will aim to become multidisciplinary institutions.
- 26) Teacher Education - 4-year integrated stage-specific, subject-specific Bachelor of Education
- 27) Establishing a National Mission for Mentoring.

- 28) Creation of an autonomous body, the National Educational Technology Forum (NETF) to provide a platform for the free exchange of ideas on the use of technology to enhance learning, assessment, planning, administration. Appropriate integration of technology into all levels of education.
- 29) Achieving 100% youth and adult literacy.
- 30) Multiple mechanisms with checks and balances will combat and stop the commercialization of higher education.
- 31) All education institutions will be held to similar standards of audit and disclosure as a 'not for profit' entity.
- 32) The Centre and the States will work together to increase the public investment in Education sector to reach 6% of GDP at the earliest.
- 33) Strengthening of the Central Advisory Board of Education to ensure coordination to bring overall focus on quality education.
- 34) Ministry of Education: In order to bring the focus back on education and learning, it may be desirable to re-designate MHRD as the Ministry of Education (MoE).

MERITS OF THE NEP 2020

Merits of the NE P2020 are stated below:

The school education will cover children of 3-18 years, instead of the present 6-14 years under the RTE Act.

It covers three years under early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) & under four years under secondary education.

ECCE facilitates play and discovery based learning for children of that age group. Its emphasis on mother tongue and oral language is critical.

The policy focuses on online learning as an alternative to regular classroom interaction between teacher and learners.

Twin objectives of cutting costs and increasing enrollment can be achieved through this policy.

It aims to protect and promote our culture through the study of classical languages, mother tongues and regional language.

Teacher education system will be transformed with rigorous preparation through a four year integrated stage and subject specific programs offered in multi disciplinary institutions.

The policy discusses about the better engagement of the private sector and provides for government funding for R & D work through a proposed national research fund.

Professional education will become an integral part of the higher education system.

DRAWBACKS OF THE NEP 2020

There are many drawbacks of the NEP 2020 which are stated below:

- 1) The policy proposes largely oral activities for the pre - primary grades, reading hours for grades 1-3, and writing activities in grades 4&5. A teacher teaches learners listening, speaking, reading and writing simultaneously. But this policy contradicts this.
- 2) The policy doesn't emphasize the role and importance of State government in imparting education to the masses.
- 3) This policy doesn't focus on the importance of English. Those who speak English fluently live in households with three times higher income than those without any knowledge of English. By neglecting this, the NEP 2020 has laid out a 'language trap' which will create social inequality and impede economic growth due to loss of the demographic dividend.
- 4) The Constitution puts education in the concurrent list giving authority and responsibility to both the states and the Centre. But the draft robs the states by creating an excessively centralized structure of authority and vesting overarching powers with the PM-led Rashtriya Shiksha Aayog (RSA).
- 5) The National Research Foundation (NRF) permeates the culture of research and innovation and addresses social changes. But there is no mechanism such as innovative curricula or extension units for tier two or three institutions to work on local problems. It has no access or accountability to people or their representatives!
- 6) The policy is silent on the Institutions of Eminence and agencies like the Higher Education Funding Agency.
- 7) The policy should have focussed more on how to teach and not only on what to teach with increasing knowledge and technology for easy access to information.

- 8) It misdiagnoses the causes behind the severe learning crisis—namely poor school teacher accountability. There is no fundamental reform proposed for revamping the accountability structure for schools. Instead NEP provides School Management Committees (SMCs) which already indicated ineffectual under the RTE Act
- 9) The policy does not address with sufficient clarity curricular, pedagogical and teacher education related issues that obstruct the teaching and learning of early literacy in many Indian classrooms.

CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTATION

- 1) NEP recommends doubling of public funding to 6 per cent of the GDP and increasing overall public expenditure on Education to 20 per cent from the current 10 per cent.
- 2) This is desirable but is not feasible in the near future, given that most of the additional funding has to come from the states.
- 3) The report appeals to philanthropists and companies to utilise their corporate social responsibility (CSR) funding to supplement Govt. efforts but it forgets that such funds will not be ideologically neutral.
- 4) Expanding coverage under the RTE Act to include pre- school children is extremely important but should perhaps be introduced gradually keeping in mind the quality of infrastructure and teacher vacancies. Amendment of the Act can perhaps wait for a while.
- 5) The idea of setting up the RSA is crucial in order to integrate the approaches and programs of multiple departments.

However, bringing medical or agricultural or legal education under one umbrella is likely to be met with stiff opposition. These issues have to be handled sensitively in view of their emotional overtones, as witnessed recently.

CONCLUSION

The NEP 2020 will play a critical role in the transformation of the Indian Education System. It helps India in reaping its demographic dividend. Implementation of NPE 2020 will require multiple initiatives and actions which will have to be taken by multiple bodies like MHRD, CAGE, Union and State Govts. in a synchronized and systematic manner.

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