

## National Education Policy 2020: Challenges and Opportunities – School Education

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### ABSTRACT

*National Education Policy 2020 shows a wide spectrum of several colours of knowledge- acquisition, that were somewhat hidden behind the traditional learning methods. Rote- learning culture and cramming up of facts and figures, are now left a way back. This revolutionary step taken by the government will not only prepare our future citizens for world, but also for life. Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) needs to be highlighted in the present scenario of school education system. Theoretical learning is now secondary with importance to activity-based and multi-sensory approach towards learning. But every major decision comes with obstacles and challenges which need to be overcome and rectified. Proper planning and straightforward vision will help us leap forward towards our goal.*

**Keywords:-** National Education Policy, Challenges, Opportunities etc

### I INTRODUCTION

National education policy 2020 is the first education policy of the 21<sup>st</sup> century which lays particular emphasis on the development of not only the cognitive capacities of children but also on their social, ethical and emotional capacities. This policy envisions an education system that aims towards the Holistic development of children. Since the Kothari Commission in 1964 the Education System saw only two reforms:-

- (a) **National Education Policy, 1968** - The first policy on national education was announced by the government Prime Minister Indira Gandhi which was based on the recommendations of Kothari Commission (1964-1966). This policy proposed the need for equal educational opportunities in order to achieve National Integration. Free and compulsory education up to the age of 14, specialised training for teachers and emphasis on the 'three language formula' were the major provisions of this policy.
- (b) **National Education Policy, 1986** - This Education Policy was announced by the government of Rajiv Gandhi which laid special emphasis on the removal of disparities and equalise educational opportunities specially for Indian women, Scheduled Tribes (ST) and scheduled caste communities (SC). The first call for the child centred approach in primary education came from this policy. 'Operation blackboard', a centrally sponsored scheme proposed in this policy laid down the minimum criteria of a primary school: two rooms, two teachers (one of them preferably female) and a set of minimum essential teaching learning aids (TLS) [NEP, 1986].

National Education Policy 2020 is the third very big reform bringing a total revamping. The NEP 20 envisions an education system that is not only child-friendly but also aimed at reducing hefty curricular load, thus enabling space for deeper and more experiential learning.

### II MAJOR PROVISIONS OF NEP 2020 IN SCHOOL EDUCATION

- (a) The existing 10 + 2 structure in school education will be modified with the new pedagogical and curricular restructuring of 5 + 3 + 3 + 4 covering ages 3- 18 years. Currently the 10 + 2 structure does not include the children of 3 to 6 years of age as Class 1 begins at age 6. For the universalization of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), 5 + 3 + 3 + 4 structure will promote overall learning and development right from its core foundation. Anganwadi schools will be organised with high quality infrastructure and play equipments.
- (b) **Foundational learning** - Immediate measures would be taken to promote literacy and numeracy at the foundational stage for all children. According to a report, only 41.5% children in private schools could read words while in government schools the percentage falls down to 19%. [Annual Status of Education Report, 2019]
- (c) **To ensure that all children are school-ready**, an interim 3 month play-based 'School preparation module' for all grade 1 students consisting of activities and workbooks for the learning of alphabet, sounds, words, colours, shapes and numbers in collaboration with parents and peers will be developed by NCERT and SCERTs. [NEP, 2020]
- (d) **Education for all** will be promoted at best. Steps will be taken to bring children, who have dropped out, back to school and to prevent further children from dropping out. Highlighting the learning crisis in India, on an average almost two-thirds of children dropout which waste valuable human, physical and financial resources [NSO Survey]. Although initiatives like Right to Education Act, 2009 and Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan have made tremendous efforts in increasing the enrolment ratio of children in schools but still there is a need to retain the children in the schooling system.

- (e) The scope of School Education will be broadened to facilitate learning in both formal and non formal education modes .This will include strengthening Open Distance Learning (ODL) through National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) and State Open schools.
- (f) **Three language formula** - More space will be given to the implementation of ‘three language formula’. Bilingual approach will be extended to class 8 which will also create a learning environment for children in a language they are familiar with.
- (g) The mid day meal programme will be expanded including both, a nutritious breakfast and mid day meal for pre-primary and primary school students.
- (h) Schools and local public libraries will be equipped with well-illustrated and inspirational books in all local and regional Indian languages.
- (i) **Flexibility and course choices** - Increased flexibility will be given in the choices of subjects to the students particularly of secondary level. Presently, choice of subjects is restricted to a particular stream, for instance Science student can not choose history or geography as a subject of study.
- (j) Experiential learning will be laid emphasis on with importance to art- integrated approach; sports-integrated approach and storytelling based learning .This integration will bridge the gap between education and Indian Arts and culture.
- (k) **Vocational exposure from grade 6** - Students will participate in 10-days bagless period where they intern with local vocational experts with hands-on experience of local crafts like carpentry, gardening, pottery making, electric worketc. The purpose of schooling should be to develop intelligence and to help people reach vocational and avocational goals that are appropriate to their particular stream of intelligence. People who are helped to do so feel more inclined to serve the society in a constructive way. [Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligence ]
- (l) **360° Multi-dimensional Report Card** - The progress card of the students will be more holistic with multi- dimensional approach towards assessment that will reflect the abilities of the learner in the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domain. Present system of traditional ‘marks- based assessment’ will be discarded.
- (m) **Elimination of Coaching culture** - Board exams for Grade 10 and 12 will be redesigned to eliminate the need for undertaking coaching classes. They will be provided with the opportunity to give exams two in a year . This will make examinations – a stress- free and convenient entity.

Summing up , NEP 2020 lays down several reforms that could revolutionize the present education system. But as said by Riane Eisler – “*For new ideas to be translated into new realities requires not only clarity of vision but also opportunity to change old realities*”

### III CHALLENGES AND SUGGESTIONS

#### (a) Broad Policy Changes –

- (i) The Right to Education Act, 2009 has successfully managed to increase enrolment in the upper primary level (Class6-8). Nationally , between 2009 to 2016 the number of students in the primary level increased by 19.4 % which presently covers children of 6 to 14 years of age. [Source: *District information system for education*]. According to NEP 2020, the RTE Act will be extended to the students of grade 12 which will prove to be a herculean task especially considering the children of the rural areas .Moreover, NEP2020 proposes a healthy Pupil-teacher ratio of under 30:1 in each school and 25 :1 for the socio-economically disadvantaged areas . This calls for the need to create a large pool of trained and passionate teachers who understand the pedagogical needs of children.
- (ii) As NEP 2020 lays strong focus on the foundational learning on which a productive education system will rest , strengthening and restructuring Anganwadi centres becomes the major challenge considering the present condition of these schools.
- (iii) NEP 2020 aims to raise expenditure on education upto 6 % of GDP which requires a lot of funding on the part of Government. Additional financial resources will be needed for the digitalization of education , technological uplifting , refurbishing government schools especially in socially-disadvantaged areas, recruitment of special educators for children with disabilities , particularly at Middle and Secondary school level. Bringing Private organisations into the mainstream of education , could tackle this problem to a great extent.
- (iv) Flexibility in the choice of subjects for students will enhance the burden on schools .They will be required to appoint teachers with a multi- faceted personality. Recruitment of such teachers will have to be supplemented with salary- increments, provision of incentives and other perks.
- (v) If we analyse the present scenario , most of the parents prefer their children to learn basic things at home only , especially in rural and socially- disadvantaged areas , which in most cases does not cater to the basic skill development in children. So,

firstly awareness about the importance of Foundational Learning needs to be checked, indeed a challenging task.

- (b) Benefits of NEP-20** - NEP 2020 has many advantages over the present education system as stated-
- (i) Elimination of Rote- learning method with more space to activity- based learning and critical thinking
  - (ii) Practical approach towards learning through inclusion of vocational training right from Grade 6
  - (iii) Stress- free examination system particularly for Board examinees
  - (iv) Multi- sensory approach of learning, thereby increasing the retention rate of learners
  - (v) Inclusion of socially-marginalised children into the mainstream of education
  - (vi) Curriculum imbued with the essence of Indian culture and values
- (c) Challenges**
- (i) There are certain challenges that must be looked upon
  - (ii) Roadmap must be laid out to address the increasing gap between rural and urban standards of education focusing their diverse culture and backgrounds.
  - (iii) Spreading awareness among the parents and guardians to modify their perspective on 'marks- based evaluation', biased views

regarding English and Hindi and leniency towards Early Childhood Care.

- (iv) To supplement the need of funds, Private Organisations should be involved to contribute in the long run of this educational vision.

#### IV CONCLUSION

Although NEP 2020 has a long way ahead in transforming present education system, it can not be denied that this policy will prepare our children for life and strife. Provisions given by this policy, if implemented, could definitely make India a global knowledge superpower.

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