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RESEARCH ARTICLE

NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY – A CRITICAL REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

The National Education Policy (NEP'2020) was established in 2020 with the goal of establishing India as a global educational superpower. The strategy, the third major overhaul of India's education system since independence, addresses fundamental issues such as Adaptability, interdisciplinary learning, cerebral understanding, reasoning, and moral values, mass education, and teacher priorities. The policy addresses problems raised by Indian students and faculty, with an emphasis on quality, affordability, fairness, access, and responsibility. It focuses on mass education from kindergarten to postgraduate students and handles legal concerns of the educational system. The government thinks that education is a vital entitlement for all Indian people, propelling national progress, economic prosperity, and social transformation. Addressing concerns such as terrorism, nationalism, extremism, and radicalism is critical to India's future. The aim of this article to critically examine the NET-2020 and exhibit a fair constructive criticism in light of a general review.

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INTRODUCTION

National Education Policy was incorporated in the year 2020 aiming to establish India as a super power in education field. Our education policy was not revived since a few decades. First education policy was introduced in 1968 and revised later in 1986. Both the policies were quite old and incompetent compared to the present global education system (Aithal & Aithal, 2020). So there was a serious need of preparing a international standard policy on Indian education system which would lead our country to the modern education era. Understanding the present need, Ministry of Human Resource also immediately approved the policy. NEP'2020 is considered as "the 1st improved education reforms of our country in the present era" which covers the crucial angels of education such as "Adaptability, interdisciplinary learning, cerebral understanding, reasoning, and moral values, mass education system, priority to the teachers in the education segment etc." (Sarta, 2020) The recommendations was submitted by Kasturirangan Committee shows the concern of "Excellence, cost-effectiveness, capital, accessibility, and reliability " in the existing education framework of India. The policy also highlighted the basic issues that common Indian students and faculties are encountering on day-to-day basis. The policy has also indicated the common problems which can be eradicated from system with a minor change, and a smooth education framework can be restored without any major change. (Kumar, 2021) It has also emphasized on the mass education from

Kinder – garden to post-graduate students. (Little, 2020) The policy has highlighted the solution to the legal aspects of the education system, and offered resilience to the same. The Government of India considers that education is the fundamental rights of all Indian citizens, and it would help them be a good citizen of the country. (Singal, 2021) By educating Indian society, a great national development and reform is possible. The educated society will take the country to the scientific advancement, cultural prevention and national integration. Education is always considered as the key driver of the country's economic growth. (Saxena, 2021) A strong educated youth forum can bring social changes, economic stability and progression in the country's mindset. Terrorism is one of the major problems that India faces in the recent days. Uneducated population can be easily motivated to be involved in the anti-national activities. Today, India suffers from Naxualism, extremists in different states, radicalism. Education is to be used as a weapon the win the war against these issues. (Smitha, 2020) The spastics reveals that India will have highest youth population by 2030, and offering high quality education opportunities would lead India to become "Biswa guru", and would also help to shape the future of our country. This article examines the different aspects of NEP' 2020, and also addresses the major issues which were not properly covered.

Background of the Study and Discussion

The world's information landscape is changing rapidly. In the revolution of massive amounts of information, AI, and

robotics, many non-specialised jobs around the world may be automated, while the demand for skilled labour, particularly in arts and sciences, as well as multifaceted abilities throughout the humanities, social sciences, and sciences, will rapidly increase (Dellot & Wallace-Stephens, 2017). Climate change and the fast loss of earth components would cause a significant shift in how we satisfy the world's power, water, and sanitation demands, resulting in a demand for new trained workers, notably in the fields of biology, chemistry, physics, and atmospheric science. (Yenugu, 2021) As India becomes more developed, there will be an increase of interest for academics and art. In fact, in today's rapidly changing job and global ecology, it is becoming increasingly crucial that youngsters not only study but also learn to learn. (Kumar, Prakash, & Singh, 2021) Education must thus shift away from content and towards teaching students how to reflect strategically and solve issues, be creative and multifaceted, and innovate, evolve, and assimilate fresh information in unique and changing sectors. While learning by rote can be useful in certain situations, pedagogy must improve to make education more immersive, holistic, integrated, discovery-oriented, student-focused, discussion-based, adaptable, and obviously, pleasurable. The goal must be for India to create a system of education that provides fair opportunity for high-quality education for all students, regardless of their socioeconomic status. To do this, effort needs to be made immediately and without haste. The disparity between present educational achievements and what is ideal can only be overcome by implementing fundamental changes to guarantee the greatest level of excellence and honesty across the system, from kindergarten to university learning. The vast tradition of prehistoric Indian knowledge served as an inspiration for this approach. The goal of attending school in prehistoric India was not solely to acquire information as preparing for life in this dimension or life after education, but also to achieve total self-realization and emancipation. Ancient Indian colleges like "Takshashila, Nalanda, Vikramshila, and Vallabhi exemplified transdisciplinary learning and instruction, welcoming researchers from all backgrounds and nations". The Indian educational system produced academics such as "Charaka and Susruta, Aryabhata, Bhaskaracharya, Chanakya, Madhava, Patanjali, Panini, and Thiruvalluvar", among others. They contributed significantly to subjects like mathematics, astronomy, metallurgy, medicine, civil engineering, and shipbuilding. Indian civilization and spirituality have had a significant impact on the globe. Our system of learning should not only conserve and investigate global heritage but also improve and use it for future generations. For example, they may be included into an integrated schooling to assist enhance the imagination of learners and uniqueness, as well as to foster innovation. The educator and their state of mind have to and will remain at the forefront of these developments. The new education strategy must assist in restoring teachers at all stages as the most valued and important people in the community, as they genuinely create our future generation of citizens. It must do whatever it can to empower teachers and assist them in doing their duties as efficiently as possible. The new education strategy must assist attract the absolute best and smartest into the educational industry at all levels, by assuring educators' income, respect, dignity, with independence, but also implementing fundamental techniques of quality assurance and monitoring. The new learning strategy must ensure that all students, regardless of where they live, have access to a superior educational framework, with a special emphasis on traditionally, disadvantaged, and underrepresented

populations. Education is a tremendous leveller and the most effective weapon for attaining economic and social mobility, inclusion, and equity. Efforts should be made to provide specific opportunities for students from underrepresented groups to achieve in school, despite their inherent challenges. The National Education Policy (NEP) of India is a comprehensive framework to guide the development of education in the country. The latest policy, NEP 2020, was approved by the Union Cabinet on July 29, 2020, replacing the previous policy of 1986. Here are some key highlights of NEP 2020:

School Education

"Universalization of Education": Compulsory and complementary education for students of all age groups were ensured through this policy. The basic education starts at the age of three years and mandatory upto eighteen years were the base of this.

- "5+3+3+4 Structure": Rejuvenates the existing ten Plus Two system with a new structure that includes five years of basic segment (ages Three to Eight), three years of growth segment (ages Eight to Eleven), three years of maturity segment (ages eleven to Fourteen), and four years of non-mandatory segment (ages Fourteen to Eighteen).
- ECCE): Emphasizes the importance of early "childhood education and proposes to include pre-primary schools under the formal education system.
- "Multilingualism": Emphasis was given to endorse mother tongue or implementation of regional languages for class teaching upto 5th standard, and was instructed to continue till 8th standard if possible.

Higher Education

- "Holistic and Multidisciplinary Education": Aims to provide broad-based, flexible learning opportunities with creative combinations of subjects.
- "Undergraduate Education": Proposes a flexible and innovative curriculum with "multiple entry and exit points," with a four-year undergraduate program as the preferred option.
- "HECI": This is the prime body for education which is likely to monitor India's higher education system barring medical and law segment.
- "Increased GER": It has a fantastic role of increasing gross enrollment share of HE to fifty percent within 2035.

Teacher Education

- "Reforms in Teacher Education": Proposes that by 2030, a Bachelor in Education of four years should be a minimum qualification for faculties.
- "Continuous Professional Development": Emphasizes the need for regular professional development for teachers.

Technology in Education

- "NETF": suggests the establishment of NETF to create a forum for the open exchange of ideas about the use of technological resources in academia.

- “Digital Infrastructure”: Promotes the use of technology in education, especially in remote areas, and aims to ensure digital literacy for all students.

Vocational Education

- “Integration of Vocational Education”: Vocational education was not given proper priority in the old policies, where the new one has given a major effort to bring vocational education into the main-stream education by 2025, fifty percent of learners will have received vocational education.

Inclusion and Equity

- “Special Education Zones (SEZs)”: Establishes SEZs in disadvantaged regions to focus on improving educational outcomes.
- “Gender-Inclusion Fund”: Sets up a Gender-Inclusion Fund to ensure equitable education for girls and transgender students.

NEP is fostering a strong research culture in higher education institutions. Here are the key points regarding research in the NEP 2020:

National Research Foundation (NRF)

- “Establishment of NRF”: The policy proposes the creation of a NRF to facilitate research in the country.
- “Funding and Support”: NRF will provide funding, mentorship, and support for research across disciplines, including science, technology, social sciences, and the humanities.
- “Coordination”: The NRF will coordinate with other funding agencies and institutions to ensure a holistic approach to research and innovation.

Research

- “Integration of Research and Teaching”: Encourages the integration of research with undergraduate education to foster a research mindset from early stages.
- “Undergraduate Research Opportunities”: Proposes the introduction of research internships and projects at the undergraduate level to expose students to research methodologies and practices.
- “Doctoral and Post-Doctoral Research”: Emphasizes the need to improve the quality and relevance of doctoral and post-doctoral research.

Multidisciplinary Research

- “Interdisciplinary Research”: Encourages interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research to address complex societal challenges.
- “Research Collaboration”: Promotes collaboration between academic institutions, research labs, industry, and international organizations to enhance research outcomes.

Infrastructure and Resources

- “Research Infrastructure”: Focuses on developing robust research infrastructure, including laboratories, libraries, and other resources necessary for cutting-edge research.

- “Access to Resources”: Ensures that researchers have access to necessary resources, including databases, journals, and other scholarly materials.

Research Ecosystem

- “Research Culture”: Aims to cultivate a culture of research and innovation in educational institutions.
- “Incentives for Research”: Proposes incentives for faculty and institutions to engage in high-quality research, including recognition, awards, and career advancement opportunities.
- “Intellectual Property Rights (IPR)”: Promotes awareness and protection of intellectual property generated from research activities.

Capacity Building

- “Training and Development”: Provides for continuous training and development programs for researchers and faculty members to keep them updated with the latest research techniques and methodologies.
- “Mentorship Programs”: Establishes mentorship programs to guide young researchers in their academic and professional journeys.

Research Funding

- “Increased Funding”: Aims to significantly increase public investment in research and development.
- “Diverse Funding Sources”: Encourages institutions to seek funding from diverse sources, including government agencies, private sector, and international organizations.

The NEP 2020 envisions a transformative approach to research in India, aiming to position the country as a global leader in innovation and knowledge creation. The policy's focus on establishing a strong research ecosystem is expected to contribute significantly to the nation's socio-economic development. It emphasizes the need for reforms at every level of education to make it more holistic, flexible, multidisciplinary, aligned to the needs of the 21st century. NEP focus on mass education aims to ensure that every child and adult in India has access to quality education. Here are the key aspects of the NEP 2020 related to mass education:

Universal Access to Education

“Universalization of Education from Preschool to Secondary Level”: NEP 2020 aim is to ensuring that all children receive basic learning from preschool to secondary school, focusing on the age group of 3-18 years.

“Open Schooling System”: Expansion and strengthening of the open schooling system to provide flexible learning opportunities for those who cannot attend regular schools.

Inclusion and Equity

- “Equitable and Inclusive Education”: Emphasizes providing equitable education to all, with “special focus on disadvantaged and marginalized groups”, including “socio-

economically disadvantaged groups (SEDGs)", girls, special child and children from rural areas.

- "Gender-Inclusion Fund": Establishes a "Gender-Inclusion Fund" to ensure that girls and transgender students have access to quality education.
- "Special Education Zones (SEZs)": Sets up SEZs in regions with a large population of disadvantaged groups to focus on improving educational outcomes in these areas.

Curriculum and Pedagogy

- "Multilingual Education": Encourages the use of a native or local language as a means of teaching until at least Level five but preferably until eighth grade and beyond, in order to improve learning outcomes and inclusiveness.
- "Holistic and Multidisciplinary Education": Introduces a flexible, multi-disciplinary curriculum that includes a broad range of subjects and activities to cater to the diverse needs and interests of students.

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)

"Universal Access to ECCE": Ensures that every child in the age group of 3-6 years has access to free, safe, high-quality ECCE at Anganwadis, preschools, and primary schools.

Infrastructure and Resources

- "Improving School Infrastructure": Focuses on improving the infrastructure of schools to make them more child-friendly, inclusive, and conducive to learning.
- "Digital Infrastructure": Enhances digital infrastructure to provide e-learning opportunities, especially in remote and underserved areas. The policy promotes initiatives like the DIKSHA platform for teacher training and e-content.

Teacher Training and Professional Development

- "Continuous Professional Development": Teachers are encouraged to participate in frequent professional development programmes in order to improve their teaching abilities and keep current with the newest educational methods.
- "Recruitment of Teachers": Proposes measures to recruit and retain high-quality teachers, especially in rural and remote areas.

Vocational Education

- "Integration of Vocational Education": The conversion of job-oriented education into the general education is generally welcomed, but there are concerns about its implementation
- "Exposure to Vocational Skills": Ensures that at least fifty percent of learners have exposure to job-oriented exposure by 2025.

Adult Education

- "Promotion of Adult Education": Focuses on promoting adult education to ensure that individuals who missed out on formal education have opportunities to learn and improve their skills.

- "Use of Technology in Adult Education": Encourages the use of technology and digital platforms to provide flexible learning opportunities for adults.

Scholarships and Financial Support

- "Financial Aid and Scholarships": Provides scholarships and financial support to students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds to ensure that financial constraints do not hinder their access to education.

Community Participation

- "Strengthening School Management Committees (SMCs)": Encourages active participation of parents and communities in the management and development of schools through strengthened SMCs.

Academician's Perception on National Education policy – Critical review: Academicians have expressed a range of perceptions regarding the "National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 in India". While many appreciate its forward-looking vision and comprehensive approach to education reform, others raise concerns about implementation challenges and potential drawbacks. The Positive Perceptions are of "Holistic and Multidisciplinary Approach" where many academicians commend the NEP for promoting a holistic and multidisciplinary approach to education. They appreciate the flexibility it offers students to choose subjects across streams, which can foster creativity and critical thinking. They also praised on giving "Emphasis on Early Childhood Education" where the policy's focus on nursery education (ECCE) is widely praised. Experts believe that quality early education is crucial for cognitive and social development. They mentioned about the "Focus on Research and Innovation" where the establishment of the "National Research Foundation (NRF)" and the emphasis on integrating research with education are seen as significant steps towards fostering a research culture and improving the quality of higher education in India. Majority of the higher educationists also appreciated "Inclusion and Equity" which emphasis on inclusion and equity, particularly the measures aimed at supporting marginalized and disadvantaged groups. The introduction of the Gender-Inclusion Fund and Special Education Zones are viewed positively. Most appreciated part was the "Use of Technology" which has push for integrating technology in education, especially through initiatives like digital infrastructure and e-learning platforms, is seen as a necessary step to modernize education and make it accessible to a broader audience.

Criticisms of National Education Policy: Many academicians are concerned about the practical aspects of implementing the policy. They point out that transforming the education system requires substantial funding, trained personnel, and robust infrastructure, which might be challenging to achieve. Language Policy was no appropriately drafted. Some academicians worry about its feasibility and the potential impact on English language proficiency, which is important in a global context. There are concerns that the NEP's push towards self-financed institutions and the promotion of private participation might lead to increased privatization of education, which could exacerbate inequalities if not properly regulated. The success of the NEP hinges on the quality of teachers. Academicians stress the need for rigorous

and continuous teacher training programs. They worry that without adequately addressing the current gaps in teacher education, the ambitious goals of the policy may not be met. The shift from rote learning to competency-based assessments is welcomed, but academicians highlight the need for a clear and practical roadmap to transition to new assessment methods effectively. The creation of HECI is viewed with mixed feelings. While it aims to streamline governance, some fear it may lead to excessive centralization and bureaucratic control. There are mixed reactions also which is on vocational education. The conversion of job-oriented education into the general education is generally welcomed, but there are concerns about its implementation, the stigma associated with vocational training, and ensuring its alignment with market needs. The subject matter fails to embrace modern international pondering, such as the importance of thinking critically and creatively, training in an unrivalled and informal environment, and pursuing one's actual interest beyond dread. Even with an emphasis on early children care and education, implementing planned improvements for educational institutions may be challenging. Volunteer instructors, tutoring among peers, school system rationalisation, and resource sharing do not appear to be sustainable alternatives. Inconsistent government initiatives for the private sector, including city schools, state-run organisations, and Kendra Vidyalayas.

CONCLUSION

Overall, while the NEP 2020 is seen as a progressive and visionary policy with the potential to transform Indian education, academicians stress the importance of careful planning, adequate funding, and robust implementation mechanisms to realize its full potential. The policy has brought a reform in the India's old education system which much needed for Indian academicians and students. Mass education became the base of NEP'2020. The most crucial part is the flexibility and credit shift in the graduation and post-graduation levels. The policy has indicated a new golden education era of India, and it has become most competitive to the global education system.

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