

NEP-2020: Reflections of Atma-Nirbhar Bharat and Celebrations of Amrit Mahotsav

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Abstract

It's a matter of intense pride and honour for the countrymen to be a part of this glorious celebration "AZADI KA AMRIT MAHOTSAVA" which symbolises a hard-earned freedom from the British colonisers who ruled over us for more than two centuries. It's an occasion of joy and festivities along with an opportunity to realize "how far we have travelled" and "how far we have to go further" in terms of being "Aatm Nirbhar". Our achievements during the span of these seventy years have been incredible and unimaginable. We have successfully journeyed up from being the SLAVES to the MASTER OF OUR OWN and from here onwards, we need to raise the bar to be the "VISHWA-GURU". In the paper, we shall discuss the chronology of developments in the field of education and how the New Education Policy-2020 can turn out to be a gamechanger in the process of imparting education. It will also highlight the paradigm shift being brought in the system of education such as more attention on practical perspectives, providing hand-on experiences to the students along with conceptual clarity, development of skills and inculcation of virtues will be the top priorities to transform our young learners from being the "job seekers" into "job creators".

Keywords: Education, Multidisciplinary, Holistic, Innovative, Inclusion.

Introduction :-

The 15th of August 1947, a remarkable and memorable day of Indian history when Bharat Mata got Independence from the shackles of slavery by the enormous efforts and supreme sacrifice of her brave sons who did not hesitate from laying down their lives for this noble cause. All they wanted is to ensure their upcoming descendants breathe in free India. Now, after 75 years of Independence, we are fortunate enough to celebrate the 'Azaadi Ka Amrat Mahotsav' and enjoy the sweetest fruits of the tree, for the plantation of which many sacrificed their all without expecting anything in return. But to lead the nation and to take the country forward is not as easy as it sounds; there are a number of hurdles and challenges present in the way of its progress. India started its journey as the new born country with limited resources in hand and number of serious issues looming over; acute poverty, illiteracy, and communal clashes are the major ones among them. Amidst all the weapons in her armoury that the country has, India mostly depends on its lethal and the most effective one called 'Education', the means to bring development, prosperity and transformation.

Education plays an important role in the socio-economic development of a country. It is education that makes a person responsible, civilized and worth living in a human society by making him self-realized that the progress of the nation is his duty and responsibility just like the growth of his family. Education raises the living standards of people bring qualitative improvements in his way of life, thought process and behaviour. But we had to travel a long

distance because the literacy rate at the time of Independence was very low nearly 18% and most of the literates acquired basic education enabling them to read and write only. Therefore, it becomes the primary need of the country to educate our people so that they can make their contribution in the growth of nation. India and her countrymen accept the challenge positively as we have already started working hard to take the nation at the top of the world. We take pride in the fact that every iota of our achievements is hard earned and for which we have given our sweat and blood and hence, working hard, toiling day in and day out, making efforts tirelessly and perseverance has become a part of our destiny. The truth of attaining everything by the dint of sheer hard labour, tireless strivings, collective contribution and indomitable spirit is the source of our strength, inspiration and determination that make us believe in ourselves.

Progress of Education: Building of the Nation

Considering the urgency to build a proper roadmap for smooth functioning of the education system, in November 1948 **Radhakrishnan commission** was formed that plays a remarkable role in the field of **University Education**. On its recommendation, the **University Grant Commission** (UGC) was established in 1953 to oversee university education and to examine the level of education and research facilities in universities. Later in 1952, **Secondary Education Commission** was constituted to study and diagnose the defects of secondary education in the system and to make recommendations for its improvement. As per the suggestion of the commission, government brought many reforms but still it was experienced that they were not enough. So to examine all aspects of education and to make recommendations at all levels of the system and to develop a common pattern of education throughout the country, **Indian Education Commission popularly known as Kothari Commission** was established in 1964 under the chairmanship of Mr. D. S. Kothari. Kothari commission made many revolutionary recommendations like **three language formula, Common School System, 10+2+3 pattern of education** for the whole country, **providing free education** upto class 8, recruitment of people having teaching experience in **Indian Education Services** and formulation of **Education Policy** for the nation are the chief ones. On its suggestion in 1968, first **National Education Policy** of India came into existence. **NEP-1968** was the first attempt of its kind in the nation towards establishing uniformity in imparting education, setting aims and objectives to be achieved, structuring the system of education, developing nation and empowering the citizens. The policy called for "**Radical Restructuring**" and proposed for equalization of educational opportunities to achieve national integration and social development along with democratic citizenship. But unfortunately, due to lack of funds and ineffective implementation, it failed at the level of execution. Later in 1986, India's second education policy known as **National Policy of Education-1986** was developed which made various essential recommendations for betterment of educational practices throughout the country. Establishment of **National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs), National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS), the renowned Operation Blackboard**, establishment of the **Navodaya Vidyalayas: the Pace Setting Schools** to nurture the rural talents and Initiation of **computer education** in the school education system were some

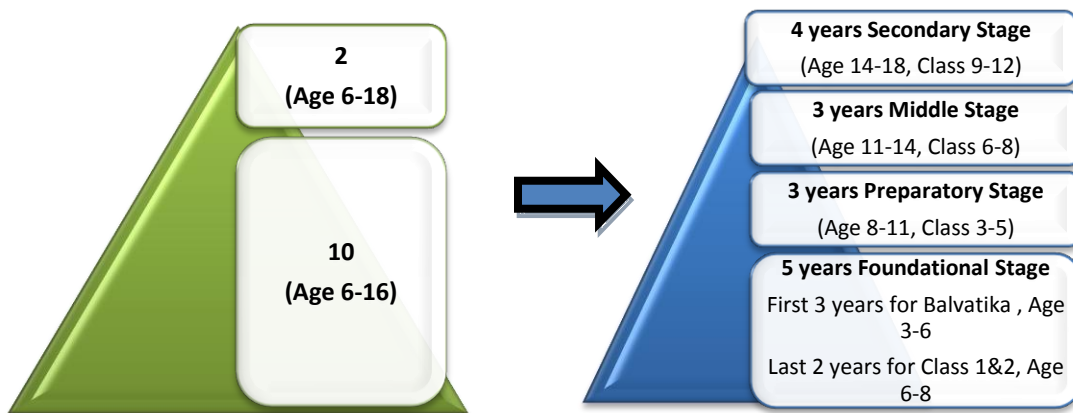
of the path-breaking developments in the history of Indian education system introduced by the NEP-1986.

NEP-2020: A Revolutionary Step

Globally, the things are changing rapidly and to keep up with time we have to adapt ourselves with the changes. The Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi Ji, has dreamt of making India a knowledge hub, superpower, and the Vishwa Guru. He states that “**education system of a country has a greater role in preparing the youth who are possessed with skills and ability and have the spirit to do something for nation**” not only this, he also admitted the importance of education by saying “**New heights we will achieve in the future will depend on what kind of education we are giving to our youth at present**”. So under his dynamic supervision, India has decided to make some revolutionary changes in its 34-year old principles, traditions and practices of education system and to develop an omnibus education policy for the country that aims at inclusion and is based on five principles – **Equity, Quality, Affordability, Accessibility, and Accountability**. The New Education Policy of India has been developed under the influence of ancient Indian knowledge and thought. Indian culture and philosophy has a significant place in the world. The New Education Policy of India emphasizes upon the preservation of these rich Indian legacies for the generations and focuses that they must be researched, enhanced and used by the education system. It considers education as the tool for achieving economic and social mobility, inclusion and equality and aims at providing opportunities to all students to enter and excel in the education system. The policy believes that to meet the demands of changing global ecosystem, India needs a creative and multidisciplinary education system that prepares the young children to innovate, adapt and absorb novel ideas and fields. It lays emphasis to evolve pedagogy to make education holistic, integrated, flexible, learner centric, interesting, engaging and enjoyable. This first education policy of the century proposes the revision in all fields of education to develop a totally new system of education that will suit the needs and necessities and ambitions and aspirations of 21st century India. On one hand, it will be novel, creative and dynamic and on the other a junction to connect us with our tradition, values and philosophy. Some of the innovative ideas enshrined in the NEP-2020 are as follows;

– Inclusion of Children under the Age Group of 3-6 into the Education System

The present system is running on the pattern of 10+2+3, covering the children between 6 to 18 years of age but leaving behind the children below the age of 6. Acknowledging the fact that over 85% of a child’s cumulative brain development occurs prior to the age of 6, NEP-2020 recommends for the restructuring of education system to 5+3+3+4 where first 5 years implies foundational year of learning that includes three years of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) that aims at holistic development of the child for the building of solid foundation for lifelong learning.



Present Structure of Education

Recommended Structure of Education

– ***To Attain Foundational Literacy and Numeracy***

The Policy takes into consideration that the nation has been facing a severe learning crisis as most of the students attending to the elementary schools, are not able to read, write and comprehend a basic text and cannot even perform basic calculations such as subtractions and additions. To address this grave problem and improve the quality of instructions, it recommends to take immediate measures to attain foundational literacy and numeracy by 2025. The NEP-2020 suggests MHRD for the setting up a National Mission for Foundational Literacy and Numeracy. Recruitment of trained teachers, establishment of Pupil-Teacher Ratio (PTR) 30:1, three-month **School Preparation Module** for all class 1 entering students, development of inspirational and enjoyable books are some other valuable suggestions made by NEP-2020 in the way of making learning more effective.

– ***Emphasis on Experiential and Experimental Learning***

For a long time, the system of education has highly relied on theoretical learning. It's been the subject of staunch criticism for our education system which had a little to offer in terms of practical perspectives of learning. As Swami Vivekanand says, “**Education is the manifestation of perfection already present in man**”. The aim of education should not be mere making people aware what is written in the books rather it must help the individual to express his thoughts, develop rationality and critical thinking, realise his potential, and inculcate virtues. To equip the young learners with 21st century skills, NEP- 2020 recommends for the experimental learning in place of rote memorization for the upcoming navigators of the country. The dynamic suggestions include the inclusion of story telling based pedagogy methods, hands on experiences, sports integrated education and art imbibe education in the process of teaching and learning. They will not only ensure mental wellbeing of the learners but also improve their physical and psychological wellness.

– ***Dismantling the Boundaries among Disciplines***

The NEP-2020 stresses upon multidisciplinary education. The main aim of education is to ensure the holistic development of the individual. The policy recommends for a flexible system of education by dissolving the boundaries existing among the streams of science, humanities, arts

and other learning domains. The newly recommended path-breaking change will establish learners autonomy and help them to choose the subjects of their interest and aspiration to prepare the path of progress and prosperity.

– ***Acknowledges the Power of Language***

Acknowledging the beauty and relevance of Indian classical languages such as Sanskrit, Tamil, Telugu, Odia and others to preserve their enriched classical literature for future generations and providing the cognitive benefits of multilingualism to the learners, the NEP-2020 proposes to expose the children to three different languages from the foundational stage and for this the state, region and ofcourse the learner will be free to choose the language according to his interest, need and ambitions. The only compulsion is that the two languages out of three must be native to India. The policy also suggests for the development of bilingual books especially for science and mathematics so that the students could think, understand and speak both these subjects in their mother tongue as well as in English.

– ***Empowering the Teachers***

The teachers play the most important role both in process of imparting education and in building the nation. The NEP - 2020 exhorts, '**Teachers truly shape the future of our children and, therefore, the future of our nation**'. Effective implementation of the education policy depends upon the efficiency of the teachers. To empower the teachers, NEP-2020 recommends for removal of the burden of non-teaching works, providing them the opportunity of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) and full autonomy in choosing the aspects of pedagogy for the development of a common guiding set of National Professional Standard for Teachers (NPST) by 2022.

– ***Governance through School Complexes***

The policy makers analysed U-DISE 2016–17 data and found that the average number of students per grade in the elementary schooling system (Grades 1–8) is about 14 during the year 2016–17, there were 1,08,017 single-teacher schools, the majority of them being primary schools serving Grades 1–5. Running these schools is not good economically besides having a negative effect upon education as a single teacher teaches in multiple grades and multiple subjects neglecting the subjects like art, music and sports. The policy recommends to solve these problems by establishing 'school complexes' which consist of a secondary school and all primary schools within the radius of its 5 to 10 kilometer range. These school complexes will ensure sharing of resources and more effective governance and management of schools in the cluster.

– ***Establishment of Academic Bank of Credit***

Extreme income inequality is the major drawback in India. Ten percent of the population enjoys all the luxuries but a big portion of the Indian population has a limitation of resources and they have to adjust in meager quantity. Thus, education suffers the most due to scarcity of resources because in spite of various efforts, education fails to top the list of our priorities in most of the cases. Some of us don't get the opportunity to educate themselves and many of us have to leave incomplete owing to our personal, social and financial obstacles. The female students give up their running educational courses because of marriage, pregnancy and various other marital compulsions. Economically backward students are forced to quit their education to earn money and support their families. The policy wants to create a new environment where a

student can leave the course at any point with proper certification or degree and also rejoin the course to complete as per his convenience. The NEP recommends a four year undergraduate degree where student will get a ‘certificate’ if he wants to leave the course at completion of first year, ‘diploma’ in second year, ‘bachelor’s degree’ in third year and ‘bachelor’s with research degree’ at the completion of the course. The multiple exit and entry points in a four year degree programme and establishment of Academic Bank of Credit which would store the academic credit earned by the student from the recognized higher education institutes during studentship. The credits earned will remain stored in credit bank and taken into account while awarding degree by the universities. They will also help to decrease the drop-out rates and increase the Gross Enrollment Ratio.

– ***Internationalization of Higher Education***

The NEP-2020 stresses upon to attain global quality standards in higher education to attract international students. Keeping this in view, this policy has suggested to establish the International Students Office at every Higher Education Institute (HEI) for supporting students hailing from abroad, collaboration in the field of teaching and research with foreign institutions and counting the credit acquired by foreign university in awarding the degree in India. High performing universities of India will be encouraged to establish their campuses in other countries and similarly selected foreign universities will be permitted to open their campuses in India. When implemented, this idea will turn out to be a revolutionary step that will benefit a large section of learners belonging to middle class who nurture the dream of getting international education but could not attain due to unbearable financial expenses.

– ***Declaration of Special Education Zone (SEZ)***

India is the land of diversity. People of various religions, faiths and culture have been coexisting together with peace and harmony. The government is committed to ensure their welfare and wellbeing and protect their fundamental and constitutional rights. But still, there exists socio-economically disadvantaged groups (SEGDs) which lack the access to quality education. The NEP-2020 recommends for the identification of the regions of the country where high proportions of SEGDs are living and declaring them as Special Education Zones (SEZ). In these zones, policies related to education must be implemented with additional effort and special intervention must be made to change their educational landscape.

– ***Allotment of Gender Inclusion Funds***

The biggest hurdle in the way of development of the nation is gender disparity. Unfortunately, even in the 21st century, our women, young girls and transgenders still lag behind in terms of access and availability of opportunities to quality education compared to their male counterparts. The policy suggests to constitute gender inclusion fund to uproot this deep-rooted gender disparity to help the deprived and bring them back to the mainstream education. This fund will be available for the states to ensure the assessibility of quality education for female and transgenders. Similar to gender inclusion fund, other inclusion funds will also be developed for the removal of barriers in the way of education of SEGDs.

– ***Promotion of Technology***

Recent scientific and technological innovations exert a great deal of impact on education. These innovations are not related to what students will learn but they deal with how students will

learn more effectively. Accepting the role of technology in improving different aspects of education, the NEP-2020 suggests for the creation of an autonomous body the **National Educational Technology Forum (NETF)** that will serve as the platform to exchange the ideas on use of technologies in the whole process of education. The NETF will advise to central and state governments on technology based interventions, build intellectual and institutional capacities in educational technology for new research areas in this domain.

– ***Catalysing Quality Academic Research***

New education policy has enlightened that the India has a historical tradition of research and knowledge creation in different disciplines but the current investment in the field of research and innovation is only 0.69% of GDP which is not at par in comparison to other countries. To make the nation lead in research and innovation and to make the country an enlightened knowledge society, the policy recommends for the creation of **National Research Foundation (NRF)** to recognise outstanding research, to fund quality research proposals in all disciplines, to facilitate research through mentoring the institutes and to serve as the link between the researcher and industry so that the scholars become aware of the national research issues and the industry remains aware of the research breakthroughs.

Conclusion :

“One can see the dream but to convert it into reality, needs lot of hard work and patience”. The statement is well suited for the recommendations of the policy. These revolutionary ideas are in black and white and well enshrined into the document, and to bring the revolution on field, the National Education Policy needs an effective implementation. Education exists in the concurrent list of the constitution hence, it's a collective responsibility of both the Central and the State governments. Every state is free to implement its recommendations either as a whole or in parts. July 29th, 2021 marks the completion of first anniversary of the NEP-2020 and several states observed the day as NEP day unofficially. Within the very first year of its introduction to the nation, our academicians, educators and educational experts have worked hard to integrate its provisions, effectively and efficiently, into the present system of education. Recently, on the occasion of completion of one year of NEP-2020, ten new schemes in compliance with the policy have been launched by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi Ji, in which National Digital Education Architecture (NDEAR), National Education Technology Forum (NETF), Vidya Pravesh for early childhood education, Artificial Intelligence scheme, Multiple Entry and Exit and a new version of teacher training NISHTHA 2.0 are the ambitious ones. The Prime Minister glorifies the occasion by saying **“We are entering into the 75th year of Independence. In a way, implementation of NEP has become a vital part of this occasion. This will play a key role in creating a new India and future-ready youth”.** The transformation of any system that has been intact for decades does not take place overnight as the old proverb says **Rome was not built in a day.** The unprecedented recommendations and valuable suggestions of the policy when implemented with a strong fist and sheer determination will certainly create a roadmap for leading in the domain of learning and make an everlasting impact on the system of education of one of the fastest growing countries in the world. Now, we,

the people of India must be ready to adapt ourselves with the changes that are for our betterment and enrichment. Let's bring the change, let's be the change.

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