

NEW EDUCATIONAL POLICY ENVISAGES DECOLONISING THE INDIAN MIND

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By Raghavendra P Tiwari

On July 29, the government announced the long-awaited National Education Policy-2020. The policy aims to pave the way for transformational reforms in the country's school and higher education systems.

In trying to address the curricular and pedagogic needs of the youth, the NEP draws from the experiences of past educational policies. It is also alive to the virtues of the ancient education system. Such an understanding makes the NEP markedly different from earlier educational endeavours. The nation required such a policy in the new millennium to overcome both indigenous and global challenges through knowledge and educational resources that draw on past experiences and modern technological developments. These can surely contribute towards conceiving and creating a more humane and equitable society. Presented by HRD Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank, NEP-2020 presents a vision for self-reliant India.

Since Independence, the country struggled to re-create and decolonise the Indian self through educational initiatives. NEP-2020 provides us with a roadmap for reclaiming, re-articulating and restructuring the Bhartiya self for becoming a global leader (Vishwaguru) where equity, equality and fraternity will be celebrated.

It won't be an understatement to say that both on the national and international scenario, there have been unprecedented changes with far-reaching consequences in the educational discourse. Of these, the most significant are developments and innovations in the realm of technology pertaining to school education — especially in communication — which are effective pedagogical tools. The policy has been framed keeping these developments in mind. If its concerns, as well as content, are any indication, NEP-2020 will help us understand the imperatives and challenges of the nation. The linkages between school and society have been underlined by the policy in order to re-position education as the responsibility of society itself. This, in a way, is a homage to the traditional Bhartiya educational system, the gurukul.

The policy reasserts the importance of Indian knowledge and lokvidya along with scientific methodologies in curriculum and pedagogy. It is a historic document that aims to liberate Indians from the clutches of a neo-colonial mindset. This policy is also distinct in epistemological and ontological references in that it tries to remove the disjunction between the curriculum and everyday social reality. It is important to underline that NEP comprehensively visualises education — it talks of reforms in curriculum, pedagogy and assessment. It endorses a competency-based model for teachers — and teaching — in the form of a tenure-track system and emphasises the continuous professional development of teachers. Without competent teachers, we cannot enhance the quality of the classroom, where the future of the nation is nurtured.

All school students will be provided with lunch (mid-day meals). This will not only increase enrollment and reduce drop-out rates but also have a positive impact on the girl child's education. This meal will be suited to the student's local environment and their indigenous food and culture. At the secondary level, the policy recommends the semester system and a comprehensive and progressive remodelling of school into the 5+3+3+4 system.

In a multilingual country, the development of all languages is necessary: The NEP acknowledges this fact and provides for the adoption of the three-language formula. It lays great importance on foundational literacy and numeracy, vocational education, 360-degree assessment reforms, tracking student progress in learning outcomes, and the availability of e-courses in regional languages for education planning, teaching, administration, and regulation.

The policy envisages systemic and structural changes in higher education. A format for remodelling higher educational centres into three types of institutions — research-intensive universities, teaching-intensive universities and degree colleges — will be developed.

The new world order requires alignment with global standards for accelerating the professional pace of learners. So, the proposed framework for the internationalisation of higher education is the most welcome step. The discourse on higher education has changed drastically with a focus on multi- and trans-disciplinary initiatives. This policy also envisages a new structure of higher learning in the form of four-year graduation with a provision for multiple-exit options, and a one-year masters' programme to meet the global aspirations. The proposed National Research Foundation will promote seminal as well as community-oriented research that has national importance.

The policy aims for the all-round growth of every student in scholastic and co-scholastic domains and emphasises educating the students, teachers, and parents to nurture their potential to serve the nation. Its flexibility allows learners to select their preferred field of study and subsequent path in life following their academic and professional inclination and interests. The policy will prove extremely beneficial in dismantling hierarchies and barriers between different knowledge streams by providing easy and accessible methodologies. It will promote co-curricular activities and learning techniques in professional and academic streams. This will pave the way for a new multi/trans-disciplinary education system. The NEP will help to replace the rote method of learning and examination-based education with a system based on conceptual understanding that aims to hone the student's analytical skills.

In the policy, the idea of "public" is truly informed by the concern for the common people. That is why it talks of allocating 6 per cent of the GDP for the betterment of the citizenry through education. It rejects the idea of a human being as a mere "resource" to be developed, an idea that goes against the cultural ethos of Bharat, and identifies humans as what they are — independent, free-thinking sentient beings. That is why it proposes to rename the Ministry of Human Resource Development as the Ministry of Education.

Keeping in mind the evolving needs of the future, the NEP will transform the existing structure of educational administration with a light but tight regulatory framework for ensuring integrity, transparency, and resource efficiency while encouraging innovation, autonomy, good governance and empowerment. The Higher Education Commission of India having four verticals (National Higher Education Regulatory Council, National Accreditation Council, Higher Education Grants Council and General Education Council) has been proposed to implement these objectives.

In sum, the NEP will strengthen the fundamentals of moral and basic education and provide opportunities for equitable and qualitative development that is sensitive to local cultural contexts and global possibilities. This, in turn, will lead to the development of an innovative, analytical, just and aware Indian consciousness — expediting the development of a prosperous and self-reliant nation (Aatmanirbhar Bharat).

This policy is in tune with the ideals of Swami Vivekanand (education being a manifestation of the perfection inherent in human beings), the vision of [APJ Abdul Kalam](#) (education being

capable of transforming humans as a creative and reflective being) and the approach of Pandit Deen Dayal Upadhyaya (antodaya). It obviously bears the signature of the visionary, dynamic and democratic leadership of Prime Minister [Narendra Modi](#) for making India self-reliant Bharat. All Indians should embrace NEP whole-heartedly.

The challenge is to implement this policy in letter and spirit. There is a need to create comprehensive, efficient and realistic guidelines and framework. I am fully convinced that the present dispensation will ensure this to happen for the good of humanity.

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