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Reform and Reality: NEP 2020 vs. NPE 1986 in the Context of Indian Education

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the evolution of educational policies in India, focusing on the National Policy on Education (NPE) 1986 and the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. NPE 1986 was introduced to promote equality and access to education, emphasizing vocational training, technical education, and the eradication of disparities. However, it largely maintained a content-heavy, examination-centric approach, which led to challenges in fostering critical thinking and creativity. In contrast, NEP 2020 represents a paradigm shift towards a more holistic, flexible, and inclusive education system. It emphasizes competency-based learning, critical thinking, and the integration of technology to prepare students for the 21st-century global landscape. By comparing the objectives, curricular approaches, assessment methods, and inclusivity measures of both policies, this paper highlights the transformative vision of NEP 2020. It also discusses the challenges and realities of implementing such ambitious reforms, drawing lessons from the implementation of NPE 1986 to provide insights for the successful realization of NEP 2020's goals. This paper underscores the importance of adapting education policies to meet the evolving needs of society and the global knowledge economy.

KEY WORDS

NEP 2020, NPE 1986, Curriculum Development, Assessment Reform, Inclusivity in Education, Educational Reform.

INTRODUCTION

Education serves as the cornerstone of national development, shaping the future of societies and economies. In India, the evolution of educational policies reflects the changing priorities and aspirations of the nation. Two pivotal policies in this trajectory are the National Policy on Education (NPE) of 1986 and the National Education Policy (NEP) of 2020. Both policies represent significant milestones in the Indian education system, yet they address different challenges and aspirations in their respective eras. The NPE 1986 was introduced during a period marked by socio-economic transition and the need for educational reform. At that time, India faced numerous challenges, including disparities in educational access, a focus on rote learning, and the necessity to align education with national development goals. The primary objectives of NPE 1986 were to promote national integration, ensure equitable access to education, and address gender and social inequalities. The policy emphasized the importance of vocational education and technical skills to support the country's industrial growth, reflecting the economic priorities of the 1980s. It also aimed to enhance teacher education and integrate technology into schools to improve educational outcomes. The implementation of NPE 1986 encountered several challenges. The policy's focus on standardized examinations and content-heavy curricula often led to an education system that prioritized memorization over critical thinking. Furthermore, disparities in educational access persisted, particularly for marginalized communities. The vision of a common school system and the eradication of gender disparities were hampered by inadequate funding and infrastructural limitations. These issues highlighted the need for a more nuanced approach to education reform.

NEP 2020, the educational landscape in India had changed dramatically. Rapid technological advancements, globalization, and a growing emphasis on skills and innovation necessitated a new approach to education policy. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emerged as a response to these evolving needs. NEP 2020 marks a significant departure from its predecessor, focusing on creating an education system that is inclusive, flexible, and oriented towards holistic development. The policy aims to transform Indian education by fostering critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills, preparing students for the complexities of the 21st century. One of the key innovations of NEP 2020 is its emphasis on a competency-based approach to education. The policy introduces a new curricular structure, known as the 5+3+3+4 system, which aligns with cognitive developmental stages and aims to provide a more balanced and comprehensive education. This structure replaces the traditional 10+2 system, focusing on early childhood care and education (ECCE), foundational literacy and numeracy, and the integration of vocational education at the secondary level. NEP 2020 also advocates for the reduction of curriculum content to core essentials, allowing for deeper learning and the development of critical skills. Another significant shift in NEP 2020 is its approach to assessment. Moving away from high-stakes examinations, the policy promotes continuous and comprehensive evaluation methods that emphasize student growth and learning. Formative assessments, project-based evaluations, and digital tools are encouraged to provide a more accurate picture of students' abilities and progress. This approach aligns with the policy's broader goal of reducing academic stress and fostering a more supportive learning environment. NEP 2020 takes a proactive stance on ensuring equitable access to education for all, including children with special needs and those from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. The policy proposes the establishment of Special Education Zones (SEZs) in underserved areas and emphasizes the use of technology to bridge educational gaps. This focus on inclusivity builds upon the foundational efforts of NPE 1986 but aims to address the shortcomings identified during its implementation. This paper a comparative analysis of NEP 2020 and NPE 1986, examining how the latter's goals and strategies have influenced the current policy. By evaluating the objectives, curricular approaches, assessment methods, and inclusivity measures of both policies, the paper seeks to understand how NEP 2020 builds upon and diverges from its predecessor. Additionally, it will address the challenges of implementing NEP 2020 and provide insights into how the lessons learned from NPE 1986 can inform the successful realization of NEP 2020's transformative vision. Through this analysis, the paper aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the evolution of educational policy in India and its implications for the future of education.

Objectives

The NEP 2020 includes various measures to increase the quality and breadth of India's education system.

The aims of this investigation are as follows:

- To Draw Attention To The Salient Features Of NPE 1986.
- NEP 2020's Salient Features To Be Highlighted.
- To Compare NEP 1986 with NEP 2020 in India.
- To comprehend the basic outline of NEP 2020's revolutionary idea.
- Understand the advantages and disadvantages of NEP 2020.

Research Methodology

The paper is qualitative and theoretical in nature. The paper utilizes secondary data from journals, newspapers, and the internet. The technique begins with a conceptual discussion of the NEP 2020 and NPE 1986. The focus of this article is the comparison of NPE 1986 with the current educational policy of India NEP 2020

Significance of The Study

The NEP 2020's approach to higher education aligns better with the changing demands of society and the job market. Its emphasis on trans disciplinary learning, research, technology, and flexibility prepares students to excel in a rapidly changing global landscape and make valuable contributions to innovation and development.

To Draw Attention to the Salient Features of NPE 1986

The idea was outlined in the 1985 assessment of the current educational system by the Indian Government. "Challenge of Education: A Policy Perspective". Former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi introduced the National Policy on Education in May 1986. The new education policy was intended to prepare India for the 21st century.

1. Access to, enrolment in, and retention in schools for all children up to the age of 14.
2. Education quality can be improved by enhancing the school environment, implementing child-centered and activity-centered teaching methods, conducting ongoing assessments all year long, eliminating all forms of physical punishment, maintaining the elementary school policy of never failing a class, and setting up the necessary facilities in primary schools.
3. Setting up of Navodaya Vidyalaya was another landmark in the history of education
4. The policy emphasized on inclusion of motor-handicapped children in normal schools and the arrangement of special schools at district headquarters.
5. A national education system based on the well recognized 10+2+3 framework was proposed by NPE in 1986.
6. In isolated locations, such as ashrams or residential schools in tribal communities, elementary schools should be established.
7. Setting up informal education for kids who have dropped out of school, are in between schools, or live in areas without schools
8. It suggested adding the +2 level to the national curriculum.
9. The Indira Gandhi National Open University was established in 1985, further expanding the Open University system.

10. Placed a strong emphasis on the creation of new colleges and institutions as well as adult education.
11. Systemic reorientation to support gender equality, hiring instructors from marginalized communities, and hiring people with disabilities.
12. The NPE and POA stressed the use of regional languages as the medium of instruction at the university level and went into great detail about the idea of language development. At the school level, instruction should be conducted in the mother tongue.
13. To support the efforts of the State Councils of Educational Research and Training (SCERT), certain secondary teacher education institutes ought to be improved.
14. The National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) should be given the tools and capacity it needs to certify teacher education institutions and offer recommendations for curricula and instructional strategies.
15. The establishment of District Institutes of Education and Training (DIET) is necessary in order to provide pre-service and in-service training for elementary school teachers as well as non-formal and adult education.
16. Equal access to education, particularly for women and underrepresented groups.
17. From increasing scholarships to hiring more instructors from the designated categories and providing financial aid to encourage low-income families to attend their kids to school on a regular basis.
18. Common school curricula, minimum learning levels, value education, the role of media and educational technology, work experience, and a focus on teaching science, math, and physical education were some of the policy's key components.

Nep 2020's Salient Features to be Highlighted

Numerous reforms in both higher education and schooling, including technical education, are suggested under the National Education Policy 2020. The National Education Policy 2020 mentions a number of activities and action items that can be implemented in both higher education and schools. The following are specifics of NEP 2020's key characteristics:

1. Ensuring universal access from pre-primary through grade 12 at all educational levels.
2. Ensuring all children aged three to six receive high-quality early childhood care and instruction.
3. A New Pedagogical and Curricular Framework (5+3+3+4)
4. There are no strict divisions between academic and vocational streams, between extracurricular and curricular activities, or between the arts and sciences.
5. A focus on encouraging multilingualism and Indian languages; the mother tongue, home language, local language, or regional language will be the medium of instruction until at least Grade 5, but ideally until Grade 8 and beyond.
6. Assessment reforms: Board exams may be administered up to twice in a single school year, once for the primary exam and once for improvement.
7. Launching the National Foundational Literacy and Numeracy Mission.
8. Fair and inclusive education: Socially and economically disadvantaged groups (SDGs) receive particular attention.
9. Sturdy and open hiring procedures for educators and performance-based hiring.
10. The establishment of PARAKH (Performance Assessment, Review, and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development), a new national assessment centre.
11. The State School Standards Authority (SSSA) was established.
12. Being exposed to occupational training within the educational system
13. Raising GER to 50% in postsecondary education

14. Multidisciplinary and holistic education with a variety of access and exit points
15. The Academic Bank of Credit was established.
16. Establishment of the National Research Foundation (NRF) and Multidisciplinary Education and Research Universities (MERUs)
17. Special Education Zones for underprivileged areas and populations, as well as a distinct gender inclusion fund
18. The Common Entrance Exam for HEI Admission will be offered by NTA
19. The Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) will rise as open and remote learning are expanded.
20. The Center and the States will collaborate to boost public spending on education so that it reaches 6% of GDP as soon as possible.
21. The Higher Education Commission of India (HECI), which is the single umbrella organization for the promotion of the higher education sector, including teacher education but not medical or legal education, has separate bodies for standard-setting (the General Education Council), funding (the Higher Education Grants Council), accreditation (the National Accreditation Council (NAC), and regulation (the National Higher Education Regulatory Council (NHERC).
22. The establishment of an independent agency for the higher education system will include professional education as a fundamental component.
23. The National Educational Technology Forum (NETF) will offer a forum for the unrestricted sharing of ideas regarding the use of technology to improve administration, planning, assessment, and learning.
24. Strengthening of the Central Advisory Board of Education to ensure coordination to bring overall focus on quality education.

DIMENSIONS	NPE 1986	NEP 2020
Released By	Govt. of India, Ministry of Education	Ministry of Human Resource Development
GER Ratio	Gross Enrolment Ratio- 26.3% (2018)	Gross Enrolment Ratio -50% (2035)
Academic Structure	10+2 format	5+3+3+4 format
Age Break	The break-up of age: 6-16, 16-18	Break-up of age: 3- 8, 8-11, 11-14, 14- 18
Languages	3 languages Hindi, English, and the regional	3 language- by state, region, and choice of student
Stream Separation	Hard separation- Art, Commerce, Science	No hard separation between Art, Commerce, and Science. All will be mixed with the curriculum
Board Exam	Based on memorizing, facts used to be held once a year	Based on core competencies students are allowed to take the exam twice a year
School Education	The elementary system comprising 5years of primary and 3 years of upper primary and 2 years of high school education	School education would be 12 years of schooling with 3 years of Anganwadi /pre primary
Report Card	Report card to have reviewed by teachers	Report card to have reviewed by teachers, peers, and students
Percent of GDP	Education sector to get 4.5% of the GDP	Education sector to get 6% of the GDP
E-Courses	Introduction of elective computer science courses at a higher secondary level during the 7th Plan	E-courses will be developed in regional languages and virtual labs will be developed and a National Educational Technology Forum (NETF) is being created
PTR	It is recommended that the PTR be 30:1 at the primary level and 35:1 at the higher primary level.	A pupil-teacher ratio (PTR) of under 30:1 will be ensured at the level of each school.
Test Conducted by	A National Examination Reform Framework would be created to act as a set of rules for the examining bodies, who would then be able to modify and adapt the framework to fit the needs of the various circumstances.	National Testing Agency (NTA)- It will conduct aptitude tests and exams in the science, humanities, languages, arts, and vocational subjects,

Credit Scoring	Nothing said about Credit Scoring	Multiple entry and exit options for incomplete courses. Their credits will be transferred through Academic Bank Credits (ABC)
Aims of Higher Education	The main objective of the National Policy of Education of 1986 and Programme of Action, of 1992 was to establish a national system of education that implies that all students irrespective of caste; creed, sex, and religion have access to education of comparable quality	It aims at building the overall personality of students by strengthening infrastructure for open and distance learning, and online education and increasing the use of technology in education
MPhil Degree	First M.Phil., then Doctorate could be pursued	New Education Policy (NEP) 2020, the government has advised that the MPhil program should be discontinued.
Controlling Authority	Controlling Authority UGC, AICTE (Technical), ICAR (Agriculture), BCI (Legal), CCIM (Medical), ICAI, ICSI, CBSE, NCERT, etc.	Controlling Authority- HECI (Higher Education Commission of India) except Medical and Legal. The four divisions are the National Accreditation Council (NAC) for accreditation, the Higher Education Grants Council (HEGC) for funding, the General Education Council (GEC) for standard-setting, and the National Higher Education Regulatory Council (NHERC) for regulation.
Adult Education	NPE envisions adult education as a tool for addressing gender, social, and economic inequalities. The new National Programme of Adult Education's (NPAAE) main goal is to educate the approximately 100 million people in the 15–35 age range, including literacy.	Effective and creative government programs for adult education, especially to support community engagement and the seamless and advantageous integration of technology.
Vocational Education	The NPE 1986 placed a high importance on vocational education, which will be a remote stream that aims to prepare students for a variety of jobs in a range of fields.	According to NEP 2020, by 2025, at least 50% of learners shall have vocational exposure through school and higher education. It is expected that every youngster learn at least one profession and be exposed to a number of others.
Curriculum	The curriculum was designed by Curriculum Development Centres (CDCs), and various CDCs were to be set up to foster the needs of specialization and application oriented study	New Curricular and Pedagogical Structure: With an emphasis on Early Childhood Care and Education, Accreditation norms are to be made to categorize the autonomous colleges and universities into Research oriented and Teaching oriented based on their curriculum
Teachers Training	Policies were made for the training of teachers for all levels from elementary schooling to higher education	4-yr., 2-yr., and 1- yr. B.Ed. programs to be provided by all HEIs based on the no. of years the candidate has taken up under graduation
E-content	Lack of regional language e-content	E-content in total 8 languages
Multiple entry and exit options	With regard to credit storage for postsecondary education, this is the primary distinction between the two schemes.	Multiple entry and exit options for incomplete courses. Their credits will be transferred through Academic Bank of Credits
multidisciplinary institution	No such policy	By 2030, every district should have at least one sizable multidisciplinary institution.
IIT	No such policy	IITs will include multidisciplinary like arts, humanities etc.
Bag less policy	No such policy	Bag- less days encouraged
Exam	Exam- Each year up to class 12	Exam- class 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
Pedagogical Structure	10 + 2 + 3	5 + 3 + 3 + 4
Degree Completion	The degree will be provided After 3 or 4 Years	Offers multiple options with 1 year of training and 2 years of diploma
Vocational Studies	No such policy	From class 6th, along with an internship
Entrance Test	Multiple	One
Scores	Based on secured marks	Based on 360° Performance Evaluation

To Comprehend the Revolutionary Notion of NEP 2020 in its Brief Outline Outline of School education

1. The existing “10+2” school education structure will be replaced with a “5+3+3+4” structure, consisting of the Foundational Stage (in two parts, that is, 3 years of Anganwadi/pre-school + 2 years in primary school in Grades 1-2; both covering ages 3-8), Preparatory Stage (Grades 3-5, covering ages 8-11), Middle Stage (Grades 6-8, covering ages 11-14), and Secondary Stage (Grades 9–12, divided into two stages for ages 14–18; 9 and 10 in the first phase and 11 and 12 in the second).
2. Students in grades 2, 5, and 8 will only take three exams per academic year rather than all of them.
3. Although they will be changed, board exams for classes 10 and 12 will still be administered. There will be two types of exams: descriptive and objective. To make these examinations easier, they will be administered twice a year.

4. To develop norms, standards, and guidelines for student assessment and evaluation, a new National Assessment Center called PARAKH (Performance Assessment, Review, and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development) will be formed.
5. For children ages one to eight, NCERT will develop the National Curricular and Pedagogical Framework for Early Childhood Care and Education (NCPFECCE).
6. At least through Class 5 and preferably through Class 8, training should be conducted in the mother tongue or regional language.
7. The policy's objectives are to lessen the amount of coursework students must do and to enable them to be more "inter-disciplinary" and "multilingual." For instance, students will be able to mix their studies of fashion with physics or chemistry with their studies of baking.
8. Vocational education and coding will be offered starting in Class 6.
9. The Midday Meal Scheme will cover breakfasts.
10. In order to guarantee that all children between the ages of three and six get high-quality early childhood care and education by 2025, NEP 2020 emphasizes the significance of the early years.

An Overview of Higher Education

It encourages a broad, multidisciplinary undergraduate education with numerous options for entry and exit. The duration of the bachelor's degree program could be three or four years. The following is how these will be put into practice:

1. A certificate will be given after one year of study in a particular field, and a diploma will be given after two years of study.
2. A bachelor's degree will be awarded upon completion of the three-year program.
3. It takes as little as one or two years to acquire a master's degree. Graduates of four-year bachelor's programs with research are eligible for a one-year extension. For people who have earned a three-year bachelor's degree, two years will be offered.
4. The M.Phil. program will no longer be offered.
5. The establishment of the Higher Education Council of India (HECI) will oversee higher education. Under HECI, four distinct verticals will exist:
 - The National Higher Education Regulatory Council (NHERC) would be the first vertical under HECI. Its objective is to regulate higher education, which includes teaching but not law or medicine.
 - The National Accreditation Council (NAC), HECI's second vertical, will function as a "meta-accrediting body."
 - The Higher Education Grants Council (HEGC), HECI's third vertical, will oversee the financing and funding of higher education.
 - The General Education Council (GEC), HECI's fourth vertical, will decide on the ideal learning goals for programs in higher education.
6. To keep track of students' academic credits, an electronic Academic Bank of Credit (ABC) will be established.
7. By 2025, schools and higher education institutions will be able to offer vocational education to at least half of all pupils.
8. To increase the Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) from 26.3 percent in 2018 to 50% by 2035 in higher education, including vocational education.
9. Expanding higher education by 35 million spots.
10. The National Testing Agency (NTA) will conduct university entrance exams across the nation in addition to JEE Main and NEET.

11. The policy calls for internationalizing education in India. Foreign universities are now permitted to establish campuses in India, with preference given to the top 100 universities worldwide.

Outline of Teacher Education

1. In addition to the 4-year integrated B.Ed., the HEI may provide a 2-year B.Ed. for students with a Bachelor's degree in a specialised topic. Students with a four-year bachelor's degree in a specialised field may be eligible for a one-year B.Ed.
2. A new, comprehensive National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education will be developed by the NCTE by 2021.
3. According to the National Council of Teachers of Education (NCTE), the National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST) will be created by 2022.

Other Changes

1. The Indian Institute of Translation and Interpretation, as well as the National Institutes for Pali, Persian, and Procrit, will be formed.
2. Education spending will increase from 4.6 percent of GDP to 6%.
3. To develop and give education to women and transgender individuals, a Gender Inclusion Fund will be established.
4. The Ministry of Human Resource Development will be transferred to the Ministry of Education.

Understand the Advantages and Disadvantages of NEP 2020

Advantages

1. The flexibility of the school system.
2. A stronger focus on hands-on learning will be implemented starting in class 6.
3. Raising the GDP's allocation to education from 3% to 6%. No student will have their access to higher education denied because of financial limitations.
4. Students can achieve success in the fields they have selected thanks to the interdisciplinary approach to curricula.
5. Several entry-exit options are available in higher education.
6. Choices for credit transfers
7. A bank of credit for academics will be established.
8. Little ones will no longer have to bear heavy burdens. The university would receive
9. An extra 3.5 crore seats. improved computing proficiency at a young age. Coding will be introduced starting with the sixth grade.

Disadvantages

1. In accordance with this policy, instruction will be conducted in the home or regional language until at least grade 5, but ideally until grade 8 and beyond. Children whose parents are employed in transferable jobs, like the army or paramilitary, are the problem. How are they going to adapt?
2. Less emphasis is placed on the English language until fifth grade.
3. Coding is a mandatory subject starting in class 6. However, given that many Indian schools lack computers and even electricity, how is it possible to teach coding?

CONCLUSION

NEP 2020's observations and suggestions are, in fact, progressive. It offers the educational system, which is designed to be flexible and to be a mark of quality, a new look that can help shape India into a vibrant

society that is in line with our rich cultural legacy. Although NEP 1986 established a pool of educational resources and trained human capital that aided in the development of the value chain, NEP 2020 aims to produce human capital that will produce value propositions. As the new NEP 2020 is put into effect, the Indian educational system will get closer to meeting international standards. According to an online survey of 1103 Indian students, almost 96.4% expressed optimism about the outcomes of the new policy's implementation. The NEP, which aims to relieve students of the burden of classroom instruction and exams, will be crucial in shaping the nation's future. But consistent, open implementation at all levels with fair resource distribution is necessary for its success. Only when there is complete cooperation and collaboration among all parties, supported by institutional procedures, can this enormous undertaking be accomplished. India's educational system has been developed with the aid of the two previous national educational policies, and one of the platforms that will be utilized is the action plan for the third national educational policy. The outputs of the current national education policy's action plan will be used to assess the policy's effectiveness. This policy will be successful if it concentrates on the underlying causes of the problems and challenges it encounters.

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