



An education policy that is sweeping in its vision

Context:

- The approval of the new National Education Policy by the Union Cabinet.

What are challenges in the Educational sector?

- India faces many challenges in providing quality education to children and the youth.
- Despite many schemes like the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, there continues to be a **lack of adequate resources and capacity in the public education system.**
- **Poor learning outcomes** have been a consistent concern in India as indicated by the Annual Status of Education Report. Primary schools have recorded poor literacy and numeracy outcomes.
- The dropout levels in middle and secondary schools have been significant.
- India faces huge inequality challenges. The challenge faced by the disadvantaged and disabled in accessing quality education is only further deepening the inequality in India.
- The increasing private sector share in school education has led to the **rapid commercialisation of the critical educational sector in India.** Despite the Right to Education Act, fee regulations exist only in some States even now. This can lead to exclusion of the disadvantaged classes while further accentuating access asymmetries.
- The presence of multiple mother tongues in India and the lack of adequate English language skills in the populace of the country pose critical questions on the language of education in India.
- There has been a persistent **mismatch between the knowledge and skills imparted in degree courses and the job requirements.**

NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY 2020

Universalization of Education from pre-school to secondary level with **100% GER in school education by 2030**

<p>GER in higher education to be raised to 50% by 2035; 3.5 crore seats to be added in higher education</p>	<p>NEP 2020 will bring 2 crore out of school children back into the main stream</p>	<p>New 5+3+3+4 school curriculum with 12 years of schooling and 3 years of Anganwadi/Pre-schooling</p>
<p>No rigid separation between academic streams, extracurricular, vocational streams in schools</p>	<p>Vocational Education to start from Class 6 with Internships</p>	<p>Teaching upto at least Grade 5 to be in mother tongue/regional language</p>



National Education Policy (NEP) 2020:

- The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 marks the fourth major policy initiative in education since Independence. It replaces the **1986 National Education Policy**.
- The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is based on two committee reports and extensive nationwide consultations.
- Recommendations made by the **Committee for Evolution of the New Education Policy (NEP) Chaired by T S R Subramanian (2016)** and a **panel headed by K. Kasturirangan (2018)** have been incorporated in the NEP.
- NEP 2020 seeks to address the entire gamut of education from preschool to doctoral studies, and from professional degrees to vocational training.

Significance:

- **Necessity of the policy:** Given the importance of education in the process of national development, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is an important step forward in India's transition from deprivation to development.
- Given **India's current demographic profile and the aspirations of the youth**, the new policy has come at the right time.
- The National Education Policy 2020 sets for itself the goal of transforming the system to meet the **needs of 21st Century India**.
- **Improving learning outcomes:** By **adopting a 5+3+3+4 model for school education starting at age 3**, the NEP 2020 recognises the primacy of the formative years from ages 3 to 8 in shaping the child's future. This could help address the challenge of poor learning outcomes in schools.
- The NEP 2020 recognises the importance of **learning in the child's mother tongue** until at least Class 5. This can also play a critical role in helping improve learning outcomes.
- Among the many imperatives, the deadline to achieve universal literacy and numeracy by 2025 would lead to considerable progress at higher levels too.

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- The NEP 2020 aims to **eliminate problems of pedagogy** through the following provisions:
 - The doing away with rigid straitjackets of arts, commerce and science streams in high school would allow the students to take up courses of their choice, thus **allowing flexibility**.
 - The **introduction of vocational courses with internships** would help streamline vocational education in India.
 - The introduction of early childhood education from age 3, the offering of school board examinations twice a year to help improve performance and moving away from rote learning mark important changes in approach to education in India.
- The NEP, 2020 thus rightly acknowledges the 21st century need for flexibility, **alternate pathways to learning, and self-actualisation**. These would give rise to better learning outcomes.
- **Language education:** The NEP 2020 recognises the importance of learning in the child's mother tongue until at least Class 5. This along with exposure to English between ages 3 and 8 would allow for **multilingual skills** to become the USP of the educated Indian.
- **Higher Education:** The NEP 2020 proposes a **multi-disciplinary higher education framework** with portable credits, and multiple exits with certificates, diplomas and degrees. This would provide interested students with the flexibility to plan their education according to their means and interests.
- The phasing out of the affiliated college system and recognizing the colleges as autonomous degree-granting institutions, empowers such colleges to contribute to the attainment of the **ambitious GER target of 50% by 2035**.
- **Research and Development:** The Multidisciplinary Education and Research Universities would form the apex of the higher education system. Research in these institutes would be supported by a **new National Research Foundation**. This will give the necessary impetus to research and development in India.
- **Inclusive education:** Inclusion is a major theme of the NEP, 2020.

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- The provision for a **'Gender-Inclusion Fund'**, the designation of **aspirational districts as 'special educational zones'** and **special funds earmarked for the education of challenged children** will help ensure that no child is deprived of education. The creation of 'inclusion funds' will help socially and educationally disadvantaged children pursue education. These measures will help provide **equitable quality education to all**.
- The NEP 2020's **recognition for online education** would enable an increase in the GER and increase inclusivity in higher education.
- The **provision of an energy-filled breakfast**, in addition to the nutritious mid-day meal, will help children achieve better nutrition and also increase enrolment among the disadvantaged sections.
- **Regulatory system:** The creation of a Higher Education Commission of India is a welcome move. The NEP 2020 proposes a single regulatory body with four verticals for standards-setting, funding, accreditation and regulation. This would provide for **"light but tight" oversight**.
- This would free the schools, colleges and universities from periodic "inspections" and place them on the path of self-assessment and voluntary declaration.

What are challenges in implementation?

- **Resource allocation:** The implementation of NEP 2020 will require enormous resources.
- The ambitious **target of public spending for the educational sector at 6% of GDP** though necessary, will be difficult to ensure, given the current tax-to-GDP ratio and competing claims on the national exchequer of healthcare, national security and other key sectors.
- **Language policy:** The provision for education in mother tongue till class 5 could pose **challenges to the mobility of students in a large and diverse country like India**.
- The option to study in a language like English or Hindi that enables a transfer nationally needs adequate attention.

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- **Resentment by states:** The idea of a **National Higher Education Regulatory Council as an apex control organisation and a national body for aptitude tests is bound to be resented by States.**
- In a federal system, any educational reform can be implemented only with support from the States, and the Centre has the task of building a consensus on the ambitious plans.
- **Other challenges:** The **lack of popularity of vocational training and the 'blue-collarisation' of vocations in the society** act as obstacles in the introduction of vocational training in school.
- The shift to a four-year undergraduate college degree system may lead to a situation where overzealous parents may stream their children into professions at the earliest thus **burdening the students further.**

Way forward:

- Apart from resource allocation, there is a **need for public and political will** to ensure the targets set by the NEP, 2020 are achieved.
- **Private investment in the educational sector will have to complement the public expenditure in the sector.**