

Contextual Challenges' Parturition across Meandering Pathways Under New Education Policy 2020

Ashish Tyagi^a, Uma Tyagi^b and BhavnaVidhani^{c*}

^aAssociate Professor, Department of Physics, Swami Shraddhanand College, University of Delhi, Delhi-110036. E-mail: ashishtyagi.du@gmail.com

^bAssociate Professor, Librarian, Vallabhbhai Patel Chest Institute (VPCI), University of Delhi, Delhi-110007. E-mail: tyagiuma@yahoo.com

^cAssociate Professor, Department of Physics and Electronics, Hansraj College, University of Delhi, Delhi-110007. E-mail: bhavna.vidhani@gmail.com

ABSTRACT:

The NEP 2020 replaces the 34 years old National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986. “Built on the foundational pillars of Access, Equity, Quality, Affordability and Accountability, this policy is aligned to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and aims to transform India into a vibrant knowledge society and global knowledge superpower by making both school and college education more holistic, flexible, multidisciplinary, suited to 21st century needs and aimed at bringing out the unique capabilities of each student”¹. This article will find whether the situation is on track since the implementation of the new education policy? What are the significant challenges facing this comprehensive education policy in the coming decades?

INTRODUCTION

The New Education Policy (NEP) was released in India in July, 2020. NEP is the first and most comprehensive policy of the 21st century for the education sector. Since 1986, a policy document with multiple objectives was put forward for the education world for the first time. There is no doubt that India's education sector is going through a crisis at the moment. Therefore, the challenge before the new education policy is to overcome these problems. In his address on the

first anniversary of NEP, our Prime Minister Narendra Modi said, “We are entering the 75th year of independence. In a way, implementing the new education policy has become a major event related to this occasion. This policy is going to play a big role in building a new India and preparing the youth for the future”².

Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan termed NEP 2020 as a visionary education policy according to the needs of the 21st century. He said

that through this policy, the development of the abilities of every student would be ensured in India. At the same time, we will move towards building capacities by making education accessible to all. He believed that the new education policy would bring about a radical change in the education-related landscape in the country. He stressed that NEP would make education in India inclusive, affordable and accessible. In such a situation, the question arises as to what progress has been made so far? Is the problem on track since the implementation of the new education policy? What are the significant challenges facing this comprehensive education policy in the coming decades?

ACHIEVEMENTS AND MILESTONES

More than 16 months have passed since the new education policy came into force. Despite the challenges posed by the global health crisis during this period, the NEP has crossed some critical milestones. From the beginning, the government has done a commendable job in creating interest and raising awareness about the objectives and goals of the new education policy among various characters belonging to the education world. In this regard, the example of the Teacher's festival ("ShikshaParv"), which lasted for around ten day's was held. During this, many functions were organized at the national level. All the top officials, including the Prime Minister, took part in it. Simultaneously, the government changed the name of the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) to the Ministry of Education to bring more clarity in intentions. Not only this, Dharmendra Pradhan was given the command as a new minister to bring new energy

and dynamism to this vital Ministry of the government. Dharmendra Pradhan brought about significant changes in important departments like the Petroleum Ministry. Pradhan has proved himself by taking the policies and decisions of the government on the ground. In the states ruled by opposition parties, many obstacles and protests may be faced in implementing the new education policy. In such a situation, the diplomatic skill of Dharmendra Pradhan can prove to be decisive in pursuing this policy after mutual consultation and understanding.

Now let us talk about the beginning of essential activities related to NEP. The school curriculum has been changed to meet the changing needs of the present era. Literature about Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the financial world has been included in the school syllabus. NEP has given the particular emphasis on mother tongue and local languages. Therefore, teaching these subjects in regional languages has been started as an experiment in many states. Along with this, the Ministry has also begun to the well-known Academic Bank of Credit. Higher education students will get many entry and exit options with this program. Apart from these, many more programs related to the new education policy have also been started which include Nipun (NIPUN) Bharat Mission, VidyaPravesh, Diksha (DIKSHA), and Nishtha (NISHTHA). Nipun Bharat Mission aims to improve children's reading, writing, and arithmetic skills and sharpen their learning abilities by completing the third grade. VidyaPravesh has been designed keeping in mind the children of class I. In this course of three months, children are prepared for school education. Diksha (DIKSHA) is a program related

to providing e-content. In this, educational material is being made available through the portal. At the same time, Nishtha (NISHTHA) is a program associated with the training of secondary-level teachers.

However, as far as the new education policy and related programs in the states are concerned, it has been started in only a handful of states. In most of these states, the ruling party's government is at the Center. Karnataka is the first state to implement the new education policy. The new education policy was implemented in Karnataka on 24 August, 2021. Recently, many programs related to NEP have also started in Madhya Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh. These programs have helped in taking forward the new education policy. Overall, now NEP has started gaining momentum.

MEANDERING PATHWAYS & CHALLENGES

NEP has gained momentum to some extent, but the path to its full implementation is full of obstacles. First, given the sheer size of a country like India and the diversity of its education world, implementing a new initiative is like climbing a mountain. "For example, we can only take the size of the school education system. India's education system is second in the world in terms of size. More than 15 lakh schools in India, more than 25 crore students, and 89 lakh teachers. The system related to higher education in the country is also massive. In the 2019 report of All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE), all the data associated with higher education in India has been presented. According to this report, 3.74 crore students pursue higher education in India in about thousand universities, 39,931 colleges, and 10,725 independent institutions"³. The exercise related to

implementing the new education policy across the country is enormous. It includes various state, district, tehsil, and block levels. There is much diversity in India at the state and district levels. Of course, creating a shared image of responsibilities and ownership status among all these characters and the private sector is a considerable challenge.

Secondly, the entire exercise of achieving the goals of the NEP is tied to the capacity of the state. The chairman of the drafting committee of the NEP, K. Kasturirangan, has also pointed this out. He believes that India's education system is a victim of scarcity. In our education system bureaucracy prevails. There is a lack of the necessary ability to innovate and raise one's level. However, under the NEP, a target has been set for radical changes in the education world. The internal capacity within the education ministries (both at the Center and in the states) and other regulatory bodies is insufficient to cope with such changes. Under the NEP, the goal is to move away from the existing education system based on pre-determined materials and rote-learning techniques towards practical education and education based on deep thinking. A revolutionary change will have to be brought in reviewing the people who run the education world. Along with this, it is essential to bring changes in the behaviour of teachers, students, and parents.

This means that thousands of schools and colleges will need capacity building accordingly. These institutions will have to be revamped according to the functional aspects of implementing such a massive program with multiple objectives and experience-based goals. In short, there is a need for a complete overhaul of the existing

organizational structure of the Ministry and its entire ecosystem. However, a pleasant thing in this regard is that in the document related to NEP, a comprehensive roadmap has been presented to bring about radical changes in the existing regulatory mechanism. The Ministry of Education is trying to bring a law regarding the formation of the Higher Education Commission of India. This commission will replace the existing regulatory bodies like UGC, AICTE, and National Council for Teacher Education. However, these legal initiatives will have to wait for the new institutional framework to be ready in the coming times.

Thirdly, the implementation and success of the NEP will largely depend on the cooperation between the Center and the states. Even though the central government has prepared the draft, NEP's implementation will depend on the active participation of the states as the state governments provide most of the service-based education. This is for sure that the Center will have to proceed very efficiently according to cooperative federalism and decentralization principles while starting all the programs related to the new education policy. However, this whole process is not easy. The method of political polarization has accelerated in recent years. The thread of trust between the Center and the states has been seen to be breaking. Many states ruled by opposition parties have raised strong objections to many essential provisions related to NEP and how they are implemented. The latest step of the Tamil Nadu government in this regard is worrying. Tamil Nadu government has decided not to implement NEP in the state. After this, the possibility of taking similar decisions in other

states ruled by opposition parties has increased. It is essential to correct the data between the Center and the conditions to get the NEP on the ground.

The fourth challenge, the role of the private sector (particularly in the case of the higher education system) is crucial in realizing the inclusive vision of the NEP. It is worth noting that about 70 percent of the institutions (colleges and universities) associated with higher education are run by the private sector. About 65-70% of the students pursuing higher education attend institutions run by the private sector. Active in higher education, the private sector brings financial resources and innovation. Therefore, governments and regulatory bodies have to consider the private sector as their equal partner in the entire process related to NEP. Working institutional arrangements will also have to be made to facilitate the private sector's contribution.

Furthermore finally, one important thing is that for the successful implementation of all the programs related to NEP, sufficient financial resources will be needed for many decades to come. In this regard, it has been clearly stated in the NEP that to realize the goals of the new policy, public expenditure for education will take up to 6 percent of GDP which is a tough challenge. At least it seems so given the promises made in the past and the real successes. In this regard, we can take the example of the National Education Policy of 1968. In that policy also, it was recommended to allocate 6 percent of GDP for the education sector. However, even after so many decades, public spending on education has not exceeded 3 percent of GDP. It is a strange irony that the year the NEP was launched, the allocation to the education

sector decreased in the Union Budget in the same year. The education budget of the Center was Rs 99,311 crore in 2020-21, which was reduced by 6 percent to Rs 93,224 crore in 2021-22. However, this year due to the Covid-19 epidemic, the government's priorities have changed. A large section of the country is struggling with the economic problems arising due to the pandemic. The reduction in the education budget due to an increase in welfare expenditure of the government because of Covid-19 is understandable. However, substantial financial resources will have to be juggled to take the spending on education to 6 percent of GDP. However, the modus operandi of this entire exercise is not yet clear.

CONCLUSION

Overall, NEP 2020 is a revolutionary document in every respect. Under this policy, along with many other issues, emphasis has been laid on educational matters and the settlement of structural disparities. In this, a blueprint has been drawn to make education comprehensive and accessible, keeping in mind the needs of India in the 21st century and preparing the students according to the future demand. Along with this, the NEP also has a difficult challenge to deal with many problems of the education world. Indeed, India wants to take advantage of its young population. At the same time, we also want to use the opportunities arising in the rapidly growing knowledge-based economy to our advantage. It becomes essential to implement the new education policy effectively in such a situation. NEP has the potential to transform the country. This is why despite of all the challenges related to the epidemic, the central government, realizing its

seriousness and purpose, has taken several steps immediately.

In recent months, the government has started many programs related to the new education policy. This policy has also been implemented officially in many states. The process of adopting it is going on in many other states. However, NEP still has a long way to go. There will be a need for coordination and cooperation among various stakeholders, including the state, district, and private sectors. This is undoubtedly a challenging task due to the sheer size and complexities involved in its execution.

Along with this, the problems related to the weak capacity of the state and the availability of financial resources will also have to be overcome. India's educational system does not accept new ideas and innovations easily. Therefore, concrete initiatives will be required on this front as well. However, the biggest challenge is to establish a consensus on the NEP. States will have to be prepared to join this program for the first time since 1986. In short, the NEP's success depends mainly on cooperative federalism. For this, the states will have to lead the reform process.

References:

1. <https://vikaspedia.in/education/policies-and-schemes/national-education-policy-2020>. Accessed 5 February 2022
2. <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1740410>. Accessed 5 February 2022
3. <https://www.orfonline.org/hindi/research/challenges-new-education-policy-2020-education-in-indian/>. Accessed 5 February 2022