



*LawPublicus*  
The Legal Portal

Volume 1 : Issue 1  
Maiden Issue

September 2020

Email ID: [Lawpublicusportal@gmail.com](mailto:Lawpublicusportal@gmail.com)  
Website: [www.Lawpublicus.com](http://www.Lawpublicus.com)

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# **National Education Policy 2020: Evolution & Re- Structuring of Public Policy on Education**

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## **NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY 2020: EVOLUTION AND RE-STRUCTURING OF PUBLIC POLICY ON EDUCATION**

### **Abstract**

Several trends at the global level are shaping the policies of respective countries to bring developmental changes in their national set-up whereas in India public policy is in a state of flux. One of the major reasons behind this is the backwardness of education system as education policy is the mother of all other public policies. Our education system is facing tricky challenges both its aims and the structures of them must be rethought from the roots. Our education system leaves many students behind intellectually, civically and morally. In light of this, through an analysis of some earlier educational policies of independent India the paper tries to make an attempt in analyzing the role played by them in the evolution of National Education Policy, 2020 along with its goals and futuristic approach. Major transformational changes i.e. change of education structure from 10+2 to 5+3+3+4, introduction of multi-disciplinary approach, mother tongue as medium of instruction, inclusive education, academic credit bank and exit option after class 10 as well as during graduation course has been explained. This paper also tries to analyze the challenges which will be faced in the process of implementation of NEP 2020.

**Key Words:** public policy, National Education Policy, education system, schools, Higher Education Institution (HEIs)

### **Introduction**

George R. Terry, American management author defines policy as a verbal, written or implied basic guide to action that is adopted and followed by a manager.

Similarly, Marshall Dimock, another management author defines policies as the consciously acknowledged rules of conduct that guide administrative decisions.

Thus, it can be said that public policy is a domain of life which can be in the form of:

1. A declaration of goals
2. A declaration of course of action
3. A declaration of general purpose
4. An authoritative decision

Education is a tool which can strengthen democracy by imparting means to the citizens by which they can participate in the process of governance. Education acts as an integrative force as it imparts values in the society that foster social cohesion and national identity. Education is at the heart of entire process of development and it is because of this reason that it plays the role of mentoring, developing and implementing all the public policies. Thus it can be said that education policy is the source of all other policies and in light of this education policy of a country must be of an overwhelmingly perfect nature.

Four main features of a good educational policy are:

1. Access: The challenge of access can be tackled through a multi-pronged strategy which includes assessment of problems of most vulnerable categories of children. For this we need to develop inclusive learning spaces.
2. Equity: For achieving equity, we need to remove barriers to access arising out of social and economic realities. There is still a large gap in learning levels among historically disadvantaged and economically weaker children.
3. Quality: Improvement of the quality of education depends on the quality of physical space, textual materials, classroom processes, teachers, assessment procedures, parents and community involvement.
4. Governance: Specific and targeted measures of student learning along with measures to make teachers, school and its management accountable for learning outcomes will improve the governance also.

### **National Education Policies of India**

India which was once known as the land of knowledge, scholars and saints is now-a-days having educational system which is not considered globally competent and fails to provide employability to its students. Though a lot of efforts have always been made to develop a



modern system of education in India prior and after Indian Independence through various educational commissions and committees such as Wood's Dispatch of 1854, Hunter Commission of 1882, Lord Curzon's Educational Policy, The Indian University Commission of 1902, The Hartog Committee which came in 1929, The Sapru Committee flagged in 1934, Wardha Scheme of Education in 1937-38, Sargent Report of 1944, University Education Commission, 1948-49, Five Years Plans of India, Secondary Education Commission, 1952-53, Indian Education Commission, 1964-66, National policy on Education, 1968, International Commission on Education, 1971-72, New Policy on Education, 1986, New Policy on Education, 1992(revised). But even after so many efforts Indian schools and Higher Education Institutions are in a wretched condition. The plausible reason behind this might be the mere replication of education system introduced by British in India whose main motive of doing so was production of clerical and bureaucratic class which will serve their purposes only. The system of rote learning introduced by British is still prevailing in India.

The Government of India for the purpose of promotion of education amongst people of India formulated the National Policy on Education. The policy covers curriculum and instruction in schools and elementary education in colleges of rural as well as urban India. After independence only three full-fledged nationwide education policies have been passed.

The first National Education Policy came up in 1968 which was based on the recommendations of Kothari Commission (1964-1966). This policy went for re-structuring and thus proposed for 'equal educational opportunities' in order to achieve national integration and greater cultural and economic development. Another focus area of the policy was 'three language formula' where English was the official language and learning of Hindi and Sanskrit was promoted to common language for all Indians. The policy was laudable but it ignored the recommendation of Kothari Commission regarding the expenditure of 6% of its GDP on education.

Afterwards, National Education Policy was formulated in 1986. This policy aims towards emphasising on the removing of disparities and also equalising educational opportunity for women, Scheduled Tribes (ST) and the Scheduled Caste (SC) communities. This policy moved towards 'child-centred approach' in primary education and is responsible for the launching of Operation Blackboard to improve primary schools nation-wide. Even this time the expectation of spending 6% of GDP on education was not taken seriously. Though the policy was amended in 1992 also but the basic structure remained the same.

Now the passage of National Education Policy (NEP) Bill in 2020 (yet to be passed in the Parliament to become an Act) is expected to bring landmark changes in the entire Indian education system which aims at making it globally competent with the focus on emphasis of development of critically thinking, analysing and creative skills among the students. National Education Policy 2020 has been formulated after full scrutiny and proper process of consultations, suggestions and recommendations which involved nearly 2 lakh suggestions from 2.5 lakhs Gram Panchayats, 6600 Blocks, 6000 Urban Local Bodies and 676 districts. Apart from these two major committees played significant role in its draft-

1. Committee for Evolution of the New Education Policy (May 2016) under the chairmanship of Late Shri T.S.R Subramanian was set up. Based on the recommendations of the committee, a report was prepared 'Some Inputs for the Draft National Education Policy, 2016 which was handed over to the HRD Ministry.
2. Committee for the Draft National Education Policy (June 2017) constituted under the eminent scientist Dr. K. Kasturirangan which submitted its draft National Education Policy, 2019 to the HRD Ministry on 31<sup>st</sup> May, 2019.

### **Five Transformational Changes Brought by National Education Policy, 2020**

#### **1. Change in education structure from 10+2 to 5+3+3+4**

The most important change which aims at making our education structure at par with global education institutions is to de-structure it and aim for development of different capabilities in students at every stage of their academic life. In this, the earlier academic structure of 10+2 covers the students from the age group of 6-18 while it ignores the most important age of learning between 3 to 6 years. NEP 2020 envisages modifying it into the structure of 5+3+3+4 with a new pedagogical and curricular re-structuring.

Under this structure the initial years of schooling in pre-school or Anganwadi initiative and Class 1 and 2 should focus towards play-based, activity-based, and inquiry-based learning. The ultimate aim being attainment of optimal outcomes in the domains of: physical, motor and cognitive development along with the development of their socio-emotional-ethical fields, and skills related to cultural and artistic area, and the development of communication and early language, literacy, and numeracy capabilities. This stage is termed as Foundation stage.

Then at the Preparatory Stage Class 3 to 5 students will be taught about education building on foundation stage and students will also begin to incorporate some light text books which will ensure formal and interactive classroom learning, in order to lay a solid groundwork across subjects, including reading, writing, speaking, physical education, art, languages, science and mathematics.

Middle stage i.e. students from Class 6 to 8 will be taught about experiential learning within each subject, and explorations of relations among different subjects will be encouraged and emphasized despite the introduction of more specialized subjects and teachers for respective subjects.

The Secondary Stage will comprise of four years from Class 9 to 12. The focus of this stage being development of multidisciplinary approach the focus of the teachers should be towards building on the subject-oriented pedagogical and curricular style with greater depth, greater critical thinking, greater attention to life aspirations, and greater flexibility in the student's choice of subjects eliminating the system of streams (Arts, Commerce and Science). This will give students opportunity to get specialisation in any subject combination of their choice.

## **2. The Medium of Instruction can be Mother Tongue**

National Education Policy, 2020 recommended educational institutions to give students option to receive educational instructions in their own mother tongue. The policy document states that children learn, grasp and express non-trivial concepts more easily, quickly and appropriately in their home language. It is recommended that wherever possible, the medium of instruction until at least Class 5, preferably up to Class 8 and beyond will be mother tongue, local, regional or home language. This will be implemented in both public and private institutions.

## **3. Inclusive Education**

Like the previous educational policies, NEP,2020 also geared up to make all possible efforts to incentivize the merit of students belonging to SC, ST, OBC and other socially and educationally disadvantaged groups. For this, National Scholarship Portal will be expanded to support, foster and track the progress of students who receive scholarship. Private Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) will be encouraged to offer scholarships and freeships to the students belonging to lower economic strata of the society. Moreover, Special funds will be earmarked for special education.

#### **4. Multi-disciplinary Approach**

The new education policy aims towards adoption of ‘broad-based, flexible learning’ by HEIs of India. Institutions which offer only a single stream such as technical education must be phased out and instead of that all universities and colleges must focus on becoming multi-disciplinary by the year 2030. Standalone HEIs and professional education institutes will be evolved to adopt multi-disciplinary educations. The policy aims towards the setting up of at least one large multi-disciplinary HEI in or near every district by 2030.

#### **5. Exit Options at Grade 10 as well as in Degree Courses**

Students will have an option of exiting after Grade 10 and re-entering in the next phase to pursue vocational or any other courses available in Grades 11- 12, including at a more specialized school, if they desire so. Afterwards, the undergraduate degree which is of 3 to 4-year duration, it will have multiple exit options. If a student drops out after completion of one year, he/she will get a Certificate for that discipline including vocational and professional areas. On dropping out after two and three years’ students will get a Diploma and Bachelors degree respectively. However, the four years multi-disciplinary Bachelor’s program will be the preferred option. It will award a degree along with research if a student has opted for a project along with it.

#### **Other Innovative Proposals of the Policy**

1. Board exams will be kept at low stakes where students can take up them twice during any schooling year. There will be one main examination and another one for improvement.
2. Students will be taught coding from Class 6 onwards and they will be given small internship projects also for the development of their application knowledge.
3. PARAKH (Performance Assessment, Review and Analysis for Knowledge and Holistic development) will be set up in the form of new National Assessment centre.
4. Under NEP 2020, there will be a common entrance exam for entry in all universities or colleges.
5. Like all previous policies this policy also aims at the allocation of 6% of the GDP for the education sector

6. For assessment of college students apart from testing their theoretical knowledge, Aptitude test will be there for those students who could not mug up the theories in order to test their conceptual knowledge.
7. A system of Academic Bank of Credit will be established which will digitally store all the credits earned through the degrees and certificates of HEIs and these credits will be counted as a part of final degree.
8. A uniform type of curriculum will be developed to be adopted by all schools and colleges on pan-India level to give equal importance to schools of all regions and all educational institutes.
9. A single regulatory body will be set up in the name Higher Education Commission of India by omitting the different bodies UGC, AICTE AND NCTE. All public and private HEIs will be governed by the set of norms guided by it, except legal and medical education institutions.
10. Last but not the least, Ministry of Human Resource Development will be renamed as Education Ministry.

### **Challenges in Implementation**

1. Introduction of inter-disciplinary studies requires a shift in the cultural set up of schools and universities. So far, our education system has been departmentalised in schools as well as in colleges. This culture of disciplinary mooring has been very strongly embedded among the scholars and professors with few exceptions. Now, teachers and professors to become curious about other disciplines along with the expertise of their own area of study will not be an easy task.
2. Many of the curriculum and pedagogical changes to be brought through NEP 2020 can be achieved only with the help of well-trained teachers who have expertise in technical know-how also. For this we need a large pool of trained teachers.
3. As per the NEP 2020, 6% of GDP will be spent on education. This need was envisaged in 1968, reiterated in 1986 and reaffirmed in the 1992 review of policy. This shows a consistent lack of political will for investment in the field of education. Further, the fact that the current regime has reduced its budgetary allocation from 4.14% in 2014-15 to 3.2% in 2020-21 gives little confidence in this proposed change. Finally, owing to the COVID-19 crisis, the budget expenditure on education is expected to fall further.

4. Last but not the least is the current situation of healthcare and economy which is the first priority of the government. It will hamper the implementation of this policy for a while.

## **Conclusion**

Though it was recommended way back in 1964 by Kothari Commission for allocation of at least 6% of GDP for education and was repeatedly suggested in 1986 and 1992 also but India never spent 6% of GDP since independence. In fact, public expenditure on education in India was 2.7% of GDP in 2017-18. Thus there has always been seen a gap between recommendations and its implementation. The NEP, 2020 once again re-affirmed this recommendation. The structural and functional change it aims to bring can become attainable only with the allocation of resources. So, this time serious initiatives need to be taken for bringing the aforesaid transformations in Indian education system. If implemented successfully its impacts can be seen in not only enhancing the knowledge level of students, but also formulating of concrete actions leading to overall development of students and as a result development of the nation.

Therefore, it can be said that human capacities can be developed and enhanced through a broad range of educational means, such as formal and non-formal education, training and public awareness rising. Education is humanity's best hope and most effective means in the quest to achieve development in all spheres of life.

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