

Report Summary

National Education Policy 2020

- The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 was released on July 30, 2020. The Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) had constituted a Committee for drafting the National Education Policy (Chair: Dr. K. Kasturirangan) in June 2017. The Committee submitted a draft NEP for public consultation in May 2019. The NEP will replace the National Policy on Education, 1986. Key aspects of the NEP include:

School Education

- Restructuring school curriculum:** The NEP recommends that the existing structure of school education must be restructured to make it more relevant to the needs of students at different stages of their development. The current 10+2 structure of school education will be redesigned into a 5-3-3-4 design comprising: (i) five years of foundational stage (for ages 3 to 8), (ii) three years of preparatory stage (for ages 8 to 11 or classes three to five), (iii) three years of middle stage (for ages 11 to 14 or classes six to eight), and (iv) four years of secondary stage (for ages 14 to 18 or classes 9 to 12).

Figure 1: Revised school curriculum

Existing structure	Proposed structure
Not covered (ages 3-6)	Foundational stage - 3 years of pre-primary (ages 3-6) + 2 years of Class 1-2 (ages 6-8)
Class 1-10 (ages 6-16)	Preparatory stage - Class 3-5 (ages 8-11)
	Middle stage - Class 6-8 (ages 11-14)
Class 11-12 (ages 16-18)	Secondary stage - Class 9-12 (ages 14-18)

- Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE):** ECCE consists of play-based and activity based learning comprising of alphabets, language, puzzles, painting, and music for children in early years of their life. The Committee observed that over 85% of a child’s cumulative brain development occurs prior to the age of six. It recommends that ECCE for children in the age group of 3-6 should be incorporated in the school structure by following the 5+3+3+4 design of school curriculum. ECCE will

be delivered through: (i) stand-alone aanganwadis, (ii) aanganwadis located with primary schools, (iii) pre-primary sections in existing primary schools, and (iv) stand-alone pre-schools. Further, a national curricular and pedagogical framework for ECCE will be developed by the National Council for Education Research and Training (NCERT). Aanganwadi workers with senior secondary qualifications and above, will be given a six-month certification programme in ECCE.

- Achieving foundational literacy and numeracy:** The Committee observed that a large proportion of the students currently enrolled in elementary school (over five crore) have not attained foundational literacy and numeracy (the ability to read and understand basic text, and carry out basic addition and subtraction). It recommends that every student should attain foundational literacy and numeracy by grade three. To achieve this goal, a National Mission on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy will be setup under the MHRD. All state governments must prepare implementation plans to achieve these goals by 2025. A national repository of high-quality resources on foundational literacy and numeracy will be made available on government’s e-learning platform (DIKSHA).
- Ensuring universal coverage and inclusivity:** The Committee observed that while the Right to Education Act, 2009 has been successful in achieving near universal enrolment in elementary education, retaining children remains a challenge for the schooling system. It noted the declining gross enrolment ratio (GER) as students move to higher grades indicating large dropouts from the schooling system. GER denotes enrolment as a percent of the population of corresponding age group.

Table 1: GER in school education

Grade	Gross Enrolment Ratio
Grades 6-8	90.9%
Grades 9-10	79.3%
Grades 11-12	56.5%

Further, it noted that the decline in GER is higher for certain socio-economically disadvantaged groups, based on: (i) gender identities (female, transgender persons), (ii) socio-cultural identities (scheduled castes, scheduled tribes), (iii) geographical identities (students from small villages and small towns), (iv) socio-economic identities (migrant communities and low income households), and (v) disabilities. It recommends that schemes/policies targeted for such groups should be strengthened. Further, special

education zones should be setup in areas with significant proportion of such disadvantaged groups. A gender inclusion fund should also be setup to assist female and transgender students in getting access to education.

- **Reforms in curriculum content:** Curriculum load in each subject should be reduced to its essential core content to allow for critical thinking, discussion and analysis based learning. Students should be given more flexibility and choice in subjects of study, particularly in secondary school. A new and comprehensive national curricular framework for school education will be undertaken by NCERT in accordance with these principles. This framework can be revisited every five to ten years.
- **Medium of instruction:** The medium of instruction should be in the local language/mother tongue of the child at least till grade five, and preferably till grade eight (in both public and private schools). The current three language formula will continue to be implemented. However, there should be more flexibility in the formula, and no language should be imposed on any state. The three-language formula states that state governments should adopt and implement study of: (i) Hindi, English and a modern Indian language (preferably a southern language) in the Hindi-speaking states, and (ii) Hindi, English and the regional language in the non-Hindi speaking states. The NEP recommends that the three languages should be based on choice of states and students. However, at-least two of the three languages should be native to India. Further, Sanskrit should be offered as an option at all levels of education.
- **Assessment of students:** The Committee observed that the current nature of secondary school exams and entrance exams have resulted in coaching culture, which is causing harm to student learning. It recommends that the existing system of such exams be reformed. Board examinations should test only core concepts, and cover a range of subjects. Students can choose their subjects, and will have the option to take the exams on up to two occasions during a given year. To track students' progress throughout their school experience, examinations will be conducted in grades three, five, and eight. The examination in grade three will test basic foundational literacy and numeracy, and its results will only be used for improvement of the school education system. Further, a National Assessment Centre will be setup under the MHRD as a standard setting body for student assessment and evaluation.
- **Teacher training and management:** The existing B.Ed. programme for teacher training will be replaced by a four-year integrated B.Ed. programme that combines high-quality content, pedagogy, and practical training. Further, teachers will be required to complete a minimum of 50 hours of continuous

professional development training every year. A national curriculum framework for teacher education will be formulated by the National Council for Teacher Education, in consultation with NCERT. Teachers should not be engaged in non-teaching administrative activities and excessive teacher transfers should be stopped (unless in special circumstances as decided by state governments).

- **Effective governance of schools:** The Committee observed that establishing primary schools in every habitation across the country has helped increase access to education. However, it has led to the development of schools having low number of students (the average number of students per grade in elementary education was about 14 in 2016-17). The small size of schools makes it operationally and economically challenging to deploy teachers and critical physical resources (such as library books, sports equipment). The NEP recommends grouping schools together to form a school complex. The school complex will consist of one secondary school and other schools, aanganwadis in a 5-10 km radius. This will ensure: (i) adequate number of teachers for all subjects in a school complex, (ii) adequate infrastructural resources, and (iii) effective governance of schools.
- **School regulation:** Currently, the Department of School Education is responsible for all functions of governance and regulation of school education. The Committee observed that this leads to a conflict of interest and centralisation of power. It recommends that the Department should only be involved in policy making and overall monitoring, but not in regulation of schools. An independent State School Standards Authority should be set up in each state. It will prescribe basic uniform standards for public and private schools. A self-regulation or accreditation system will be instituted for schools.

Higher Education

- **Increasing GER:** The NEP aims to increase the GER in higher education to 50% by 2035 (GER was 26.3% in 2018). Institutions will have the option to run open distance learning and online programmes to improve access to higher education, which will improve GER in the country.
- **Restructuring of institutions:** All higher education institutions (HEIs) will be restructured into three categories: (i) research universities focusing equally on research and teaching, (ii) teaching universities focusing primarily on teaching, and (iii) degree granting colleges primarily focused on undergraduate teaching. All such institutions will gradually move towards full autonomy - academic, administrative, and financial. All HEIs should eventually be transformed into large multidisciplinary universities and colleges with

3,000 or more students. By 2030, there should be one multidisciplinary HEI in, or near every district.

- **Multidisciplinary education:** The curricula of all HEIs should be made multidisciplinary to integrate humanities and arts with science, technology, engineering and mathematics. The undergraduate degree will be made more flexible with multiple exit options with appropriate certification. For example: students will receive a certificate after one year, diploma after two years, bachelor's degree after three years, and bachelor's with research degree after four years. Further, an academic bank of credit will be established to digitally store academic credits earned from various HEIs for awarding degrees based on credits. HEIs will have the flexibility to offer different designs of masters' programmes. The M.Phil. programme will be discontinued.
- **Regulatory structure:** The regulatory structure of higher education in India will be overhauled to ensure that the distinct functions of regulation, accreditation, funding and setting academic standards are performed by separate, independent bodies. This will minimise conflict of interest and eliminate concentration of power. To ensure this, the Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) will be setup with four independent verticals: (i) the National Higher Education Regulatory Council as a single regulator (including teacher education, excluding legal and medical education), (ii) the National Accreditation Council for accreditation of institutions, (iii) the Higher Education Grants Council for financing of higher education institutions, and (iv) General Education Council for specifying the curriculum framework and learning levels for higher education. Disputes between the four vertical will be resolved by a body of experts under the HECI.
- **Improving research:** The Committee observed that investment on research and innovation in India is only 0.69% of GDP, compared to 2.8% in the USA, 4.2% in South Korea and 4.3% of GDP in Israel. The NEP recommends setting up an independent National Research Foundation for funding and facilitating quality research in India. Specialised institutions which currently fund research, such as the Department of Science and Technology, Indian Council of Medical Research will continue to fund independent projects. The Foundation will collaborate with such agencies to avoid duplication.
- **Foreign universities:** High performing Indian universities will be encouraged to set up campuses in other countries. Similarly, selected top global universities will be permitted to operate in India. A legislative framework facilitating such entry will be put in place. Such universities will be given exemptions from regulatory and governance norms on par with autonomous institutions in the country.

- **Vocational education:** The Committee observed that less than 5% of the workforce in the age-group of 19-24 received vocational education in India during 2012-2017. This is in contrast to 52% in the USA, 75% in Germany, and 96% in South Korea. The NEP recommends that vocational education should be integrated in all school and higher education institutions in a phased manner over the next 10 years. A national committee for integration of vocational education will be setup under the MHRD for this purpose. The national skills qualifications framework will be detailed further for each discipline vocation and profession. The NEP aims to ensure that at-least 50% of learners in school and higher education should be exposed to vocational education by 2025.

Other recommendations

- **Financing education:** The NEP reaffirmed the commitment of spending 6% of GDP as public investment in education. Note that the first National Education Policy, 1968 had recommended public expenditure in education must be 6% of GDP, which was reiterated by the National Policy on Education, 1986. In 2017-18, public expenditure on education in India was 4.4% of GDP.
- **Adult education:** A national curriculum framework for adult education will be developed to cover five broad areas: (i) foundational literacy and numeracy, (ii) critical life skills (such as financial and digital literacy, health care and family awareness), (iii) vocational skills development, (iv) basic education (equivalent of middle and secondary education), and (v) continuing education (through engaging courses in arts, technology, sports and culture).
- **Technology in education:** The National Education Technology Forum (NETF) will be setup to facilitate decision making on the induction, deployment and use of technology. This Forum will provide evidence-based advice to central and state-governments on technology-based interventions.
- **Digital education:** Alternative modes of quality education should be developed when in-person education is not possible, as observed during the recent pandemic. Several interventions must be taken to ensure inclusive digital education such as: (i) developing two-way audio and video interfaces for holding online classes, (ii) creating a digital repository of coursework, learning games and simulations through virtual reality, (iii) use of other channels such as television, radio, mass media in multiple languages to ensure reach of digital content where digital infrastructure is lacking, (iv) creating virtual labs on existing e-learning platforms to provide students with hands-on experiment-based learning, and (v) training teachers on how to become high-quality online content creators.

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