

# National Education Policy - 2020: Milestone towards Strengthening Holistic and Multidisciplinary Education in India

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**Abstract:** *The world is undergoing rapid changes in the knowledge landscape. With various dramatic scientific and technological advances, such as the rise of big data, machine learning, and artificial intelligence, many unskilled jobs worldwide may be taken over by machines, while the need for a skilled workforce, particularly involving mathematics, computer science, and data science, in conjunction with multidisciplinary abilities across the sciences, social sciences, and humanities, will be increasingly in greater demand. In this paper an attempt has been made to understand evolution of education policy in India and overview on New Education Policy - 2020, its background and formation and its vision elaborately. This policy has made new phenomenon in higher education in 21<sup>st</sup> century. It describes the key concerns of holistic approach to multidisciplinary education.*

**Keywords:** Higher Education Institutes (HEIs), Global Knowledge, National Education Policy, Multidisciplinary Education, Research, Development and Innovation

## 1. Introduction

National Education Policy 2020 is the first education policy of the 21st century and aims to address the many growing developmental imperatives of our country. This Policy proposes the revision and revamping of all aspects of the education structure, including its regulation and governance, to create a new system that is aligned with the aspiration goals of 21st century education, including Sustainable Development Goal (SDG4), while building upon India's traditions and value systems. It is built on the foundational pillars of Access, Equity, Quality, Affordability and Accountability. It promotes active pedagogy, development of core capacities and life skills, including 21st century skills, experimental learning at all stages, low stake board exams, holistic progress card, transformation in assessment to promote critical and higher order thinking among students, mainstreaming of vocational education and reforms in teacher education. NEP also puts focus on empowerment of teachers and improving their recruitment, service conditions, and transfer policy and career progression opportunities at all levels.

### Evolution of Education Policy in India

- University Education Commission (1948 - 1949)
- Secondary Education Commission (1952 - 1953)
- Education Commission (1964 - 1966) Under Dr D S Kothari
- National Policy on Education (1968) Passed by Parliament (First NEP)
- 42<sup>nd</sup> Constitutional Amendment (1976) Education in concurrent List
- National Policy on Education (NPE) (1986) (Second NEP)
- NPE 1986 modified 1992 (Programme of Action 1992)

- In May 2016, Committee for evolution of New Education Policy under the chairmanship of Late Shri TSR Subramanian submitted its report.

## 2. Background

- Accordingly, the committee for National Education Policy (NEP) was constituted by Ministry of Human Resources Development in June 2017. The committee was headed by Dr K Kasturirangan submitted its report on 31<sup>st</sup> May 2019.
- Consequently, the draft of National Educational Policy 2019 was shared by Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) by public for comment.
- The National Education Policy (NEP), 2020 has been approved by the Union Cabinet on 29th July 2020.

### Vision of NEP - 2020

This National Education Policy envisions an education system rooted in Indian ethos that contributes directly to transforming India, that is Bharat, sustainably into an equitable and vibrant knowledge society, by providing high-quality education to all, and thereby making India a global knowledge superpower. The Policy envisages that the curriculum and pedagogy of our institutions must develop among the students a deep sense of respect towards the Fundamental Duties and Constitutional values, bonding with one's country, and a conscious awareness of one's roles and responsibilities in a changing world. The vision of the Policy is to instill among the learners a deep - rooted pride in being Indian, not only in thought, but also in spirit, intellect, and deeds, as well as to develop knowledge, skills, values, and dispositions that support responsible commitment to human rights, sustainable development and living, and global well-being, thereby reflecting a truly global citizen.

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**Language**

The policy raises the importance of mother tongue and regional languages; medium of instruction until class 5 and preferably beyond should be in these languages. Sanskrit and foreign languages will also be given emphasis. The policy also states that no language will be imposed on the students. Shortly after the release of the policy, the government clarified that the language policy in NEP is a broad guideline; and that it was up to the states, institutions and schools to decide the implementation. A more detailed language strategy would be released in the National Curriculum Framework in 2021.

**Multidisciplinary Education in Ancient India**

India has a long tradition of holistic and multidisciplinary learning, from universities such as Takshashila and Nalanda, to the extensive literatures of India combining subjects across fields. Ancient Indian literary works such as Banabhatta's Kadambari described a good education as knowledge of the 64 Kalaas or arts; and among these 64 'arts' were not only subjects, such as singing and painting, but also 'scientific' fields, such as chemistry and mathematics, 'vocational' fields such as carpentry and clothes - making, 'professional' fields, such as medicine and engineering, as well as 'soft skills' such as communication, discussion, and debate. The very idea that all branches of creative human Endeavour, including mathematics, science, vocational subjects, professional subjects, and soft skills should be considered 'arts', has distinctly Indian origins. This notion of a 'knowledge of many arts' or what in modern times is often called the 'liberal arts' (i. e., a liberal notion of the arts) must be brought back to Indian education, as it is exactly the kind of education that will be required for the 21st century.

**Key Concerns of Holistic and Multidisciplinary Education**

Holistic and multidisciplinary education would aim to develop all capacities of human beings - intellectual, aesthetic, social, physical, emotional, and moral in an integrated manner. Such an education will help develop well - rounded individuals that possess critical 21st century capacities in fields across the arts, humanities, languages, sciences, social sciences, and professional, technical, and vocational fields; an ethic of social engagement; soft skills, such as communication, discussion and debate; and rigorous specialization in a chosen field or fields. Such a holistic education shall be, in the long term, the approach of all undergraduate programmes, including those in professional, technical, and vocational disciplines.

**Imaginative and flexible curricular structures** will enable creative combinations of disciplines for study, and would offer multiple entry and exit points, thus, removing currently prevalent rigid boundaries and creating new possibilities for life - long learning. Graduate - level, master's and doctoral education in large multidisciplinary universities, while providing rigorous research - based specialization, would also provide opportunities for multidisciplinary work, including in academia, government, and industry.

**Large multidisciplinary universities and colleges** will facilitate the move towards high - quality holistic and

multidisciplinary education. Flexibility in curriculum and novel and engaging course options will be on offer to students, in addition to rigorous specialization in a subject or subjects. This will be encouraged by increased faculty and institutional autonomy in setting curricula. Pedagogy will have an increased emphasis on communication, discussion, debate, research, and opportunities for cross - disciplinary and interdisciplinary thinking.

Departments in Languages, Literature, Music, Philosophy, Indology, Art, Dance, Theatre, Education, Mathematics, Statistics, Pure and Applied Sciences, Sociology, Economics, Sports, Translation and Interpretation, and other such subjects needed for a multidisciplinary, stimulating Indian education and environment will be established and strengthened at all Higher Education Institutes (HEIs). Credits will be given in all Bachelor's Degree programmes for these subjects if they are done from such departments or through open and distance learning (ODL) mode when they are not offered in - class at the higher education institute.

**Flexible and innovative curricula:** Towards the attainment of such a holistic and multidisciplinary education, the flexible and innovative curricula of all Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) shall include credit - based courses and projects in the areas of community engagement and service, environmental education, and value - based education. Environment education will include areas such as climate change, pollution, waste management, sanitation, conservation of biological diversity, management of biological resources and biodiversity, forest and wildlife conservation, and sustainable development and living. Value - based education will include the development of humanistic, ethical, Constitutional, and universal human values of truth (*satya*), righteous conduct (*dharma*), peace (*shanti*), love (*prem*), nonviolence (*ahimsa*), scientific temper, citizenship values, and also life - skills; lessons in *seva*/service and participation in community service programmes will be considered an integral part of a holistic education. As the world is becoming increasingly interconnected, Global Citizenship Education (GCED), a response to contemporary global challenges, will be provided to empower learners to become aware of and understand global issues and to become active promoters of more peaceful, tolerant, inclusive, secure, and sustainable societies.

**The structure and lengths of degree programmes** shall be adjusted accordingly. The undergraduate degree will be of either 3 or 4 - year duration, with multiple exit options within this period, with appropriate certifications, e. g., a certificate after completing 1 year in a discipline or field including vocational and professional areas, or a diploma after 2 years of study, or a Bachelor's degree after a 3 - year programme. The 4 - year multidisciplinary Bachelor's programme, however, shall be the preferred option since it allows the opportunity to experience the full range of holistic and multidisciplinary education in addition to a focus on the chosen major and minors as per the choices of the student. An Academic Bank of Credit (ABC) shall be established which would digitally store the academic credits earned from various recognized Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) so that the degrees from an Higher Education

Institutes (HEIs) can be awarded taking into account credits earned. The 4 - year programme may also lead to a degree 'with Research' if the student completes a rigorous research project in their major area (s) of study as specified by the Higher Education Institutes.

Higher Education Institutes will have the flexibility to offer different designs of Master's programmes:

- There may be a 2 - year programme with the second year devoted entirely to research for those who have completed the 3 - year Bachelor's programme;
- For students completing a 4 - year Bachelor's programme with Research, there could be a 1 - year Master's programme;
- There may be an integrated 5 - year Bachelor's/Master's programme. Undertaking a Ph. D. shall require either a Master's degree or a 4 - year Bachelor's degree with Research. The M. Phil. programme shall be discontinued.

**Model Public Universities** for holistic and multidisciplinary education, at par with Indian Institute of Technologies (IITs), Indian Institute of Managements (IIMs), etc., called Multidisciplinary Education and Research Universities (MERUs) will be set up and will aim to attain the highest global standards in quality education. They will also help set the highest standards for multidisciplinary education across India.

**Focus on research and innovation** by setting up start - up incubation centres; technology development centres; centres in frontier areas of research; greater industry - academic linkages; and interdisciplinary research including humanities and social sciences research. Given the scenario of epidemics and pandemics, it is critical that HEIs take the lead to undertake research in areas of infectious diseases, epidemiology, virology, diagnostics, instrumentation, vaccinology and other relevant areas. HEIs will develop specific hand holding mechanisms and competitions for promoting innovation among student communities. The NRF will function to help enable and support such a vibrant research and innovation culture across HEIs, research labs, and other research organizations.

### 3. Conclusion

Higher education must enable the development of an enlightened, socially conscious, knowledgeable, and skilled nation that can find and implement robust solutions to its own problems. It must form the basis for knowledge creation and innovation thereby contributing to a growing national economy. The purpose of quality higher education is, therefore, more than the creation of greater opportunities for individual employment. It represents the key to more vibrant, socially engaged, cooperative communities and a happier, cohesive, cultured, productive, innovative, progressive and prosperous nation.

The National Education Policy lays particular emphasis on the development of the creative potential of each individual. It is based on the principle that education must develop not only cognitive capacities - both the 'foundational capacities' of literacy and numeracy and 'higher - order' cognitive capacities, such as critical thinking and problem solving -

but also social, ethical, and emotional capacities and dispositions. The policy has been framed through consultative process expert opinions, field experiences; stakeholder feedbacks as well as lessons learned from best practices were taken into consideration. Policy envisages separation of regulatory, administrative and policy making functions to eliminate conflicts of interest and setting up of a State School Standards Authority. There is also a greater emphasis on technology to improve multiple aspects of education including learning, assessment, planning and administration.

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