Development and Implementation of National Education Policy- 2020 in India: Charting Roadmap of Inclusion for 2030.

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ABSTRACT

The National Education Policy-2020 (NEP) is a comprehensive and an inclusive framework that directs and drives development of education in India. The NEP- 2020 aims to enhance the Indian education system by providing complete access to quality education for all, promoting inclusivity, and developing holistic education as per international norms. This paper provides an overview of NEP in India and discusses its key features, including an emphasis on early childhood education, use of modern technology in education, and importance of experiential learning. Yet, execution of NEP- 2020 faces some challenges, such as need for adequate funding, availability, capacity and willingness   of trained teachers, expert in Indian Sign Language (ISL), and the need for effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. To overcome these potential challenges and achieve expressed goals of NEP until 2030, this paper recommends stakeholder engagement, effective communication, and strong leadership and governance structures. The NEP-2020 presents a framework for reformation of education in India. However, realising its potential for improvement demands active involvement, cooperation and unwavering, sustained commitment of all stakeholders across verticals engaged in upgrading and sustaining an evolving education system.

Key words- NEP, Quality education, ISL, Stakeholders and engagement.

INTRODUCTION

India has a history of education policies aimed at improving the education system and ensuring provision of quality education for all students of India and abroad. After the independence, several policies have been introduced at National and state levels to address various challenges faced by education sector. Several researchers have emphasised the importance of education policy in promoting educational reform, social justice, and individual and social development. Heneveld and Craig (1996) stress the crucial role of education policy in shaping growth of education systems, while Mundy and Murphy (2001) argue that policy always plays a critical role in promoting social justice and individual development. Bajpai and Goyal (2015) also noted that education policy is essential for improving access to education and promoting inclusive education that caters to diverse needs of students.

Other researchers too have emphasised significance of education policy in promoting equitable access to quality education. For example, Lall and Vijayaratnam (2017) emphasise the need for education policies to address issues of equity and access within education systems. They argue that education policies

must be designed to ensure that learners have equal opportunities to succeed in education. Similarly, Kalu (2019) stresses importance of education policy in promoting education with inclusion and providing educational opportunities for marginalised groups; suggesting that good policy always plays a crucial role in shaping development of education systems and promoting social justice and individual and social development. While education policies set the direction for education systems, promote equitable access to quality education, encourage innovative teaching approaches for teaching and learning process to ensure accountability and quality, and address needs of society, Rawat (2023) made an interesting observation that teachers are leaders too and need to take ownership of their leadership status rather than perceive themselves to be just providers of knowledge.

REVIEW OF NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY FROM 1968 TO 2020

The first National Education Policy (NEP) was introduced in 1968, which aimed to render free and compulsory education to all children up to the age of 14 years, and to promote vocational education. National Policy on Education (NPE) in 1986 was a pioneering comprehensive National education policy in India which aimed at providing education for all Learners, with an emphasis on quality of education, promoting science and technology education, and relate with vocation.

The Programme of Action in 1992 focused on achieving stated goals outlined in the NPE 1986, emphasising the need to fortify education system at all educational levels, from primary to tertiary, and to increases access to education for disadvantaged or marginalised communities. The National Policy on Education (NPE) 2005 aimed to reform the education system in India and promote a more equitable and inclusive system of education. It emphasised the importance of providing universal access to education, quality education, and advocating adaptive and responsive education system.

The latest NEP 2020 aims to transform the education system in India by promoting a more holistic, multidisciplinary, and flexible approach to education. It stresses the focus of promoting vocational education, experiential learning, and the use of modern technology in education. The NEP 2020 represents a significant shift towards a more innovative and flexible education system in India. It is hoped that NEP 2020 will help India to achieve its goal of becoming a knowledge-based society and a global leader in the 21st century. The educational policies in India since the 1980s have been the subject of numerous studies and research. These research studies have focused on improving access to education, promoting quality education, and increasing relevance of education to needs of society (Jena & Mohanty, 2017; Kumar & Parveen, 2018; Reddy & Prasad, 2016). The NEP 2020 represents a significant paradigm shift towards a more innovative and flexible education system in India and has been analysed by various researchers from different perspectives (Bhattacharya, 2021; Kumari, 2020; Sharma & Saini, 2021).

NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY (2020)

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The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 in India has been under review by various stakeholders including educators, policymakers, and the general public. Basic features of NEP-2020 are-

- Holistic Education: The NEP 2020 aims to provide a more comprehensive and interdisciplinary education system in India, promoting development of students' cognitive, social, emotional, and creative abilities. According to Kaur (2021), the policy emphasises holistic development of learners, including their physical well-being. Sahai (2021) highlights significance of multidisciplinary education and necessity of breaking down barriers between different fields for a more holistic learning experience.

- Multilingualism: The NEP 2020 recognises the importance of multilingualism in education and to promote mother tongue as a medium of educational instruction up to the fifth grade.

- Flexibility: The policy emphasises importance of flexibility in the education system, including a shift towards vocational education, experiential learning, and multiple entry and exit options in higher education.

- Technology: The NEP 2020 highlights importance of modern technology in education, including use of online and digital resources, e-learning platforms, and virtual classrooms.

- Inclusivity: It promotes inclusivity in education, including provision of education to disadvantaged and marginalised communities.

- Teacher Training: The NEP-2020 emphasises the significance of teacher training and professional development, including development of National mission on teacher education (Dhanalakshmi, 2021) The National Education Policy 2020 has potential to bring about significant changes in teacher education by emphasising the need for professional development and continuous learning.

- Governance: The New policy aims to form single regulatory body for higher education in India and also develop a new model of governance for universities and colleges.

The NEP 2020 has been positively received by many stakeholders, as it advocates a holistic, inclusive, and flexible education system in India. It will be important for policymakers and educators to work together to ensure the fruitful implementation of the NEP 2020 and its goals for the future of education in India

CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING NEP

The fortunate implementation of a national education policy requires careful consideration of various domains that may impede the policy's effectiveness. One critical factor is resource allocation. The National Education Policy - 2020 in India emphasises the need for increased investment in education. However, inadequate allotment of resources such as funding, infrastructure, and trained personnel may hinder implementation and sustainability of the policy. This was highlighted by Saxena in (2021), who emphasised need for increased investment in education to achieve the policy's objectives. Another significant factor is political will; support of government is crucial in creating an enabling environment, allocating resources,

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and prioritising education. However, political interests and priorities may not always align with education, which may hinder implementation of National education policies.

Capacity building is another vital factor for quality education. Prosperous implementation of a national education policy requires a well-trained and competent workforce, including teachers, administrators, and education officials. Several studies have highlighted shortage of skilled personnel in education sector, particularly in geographically remote and economically disadvantaged areas in India. A review by Borkotoky and Singh (2020) found that acute shortage of trained teachers is a significant challenge in implementing education policies in India. The study emphasised the need for policies to prioritise capacity building and teacher training to address this issue. Additionally, a review by Singh and Sharma (2020) identified shortage of trained administrators as another key challenge in implementing education policies in India; these researchers called for policies to focus on building the capacity of administrators and education officials to ensure an efficient implementation of policies at all levels.

India has diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, which may stance challenges for implementing a national education policy that is inclusive and responsive to the needs of all communities. This requires careful consideration of cultural and linguistic diversity in policy development and implementation.

Importantly, education systems may be resistant to change, and implementing a new National education policy requires significant changes in existing structures, systems, and practices. This may lead to resistance from stakeholders, including teachers, administrators, and parents, which may impede the fulfilment of the policy. Therefore, strategies to address resistance, alterations must be devised and put into action to guarantee the successful execution of the policy

SPECIAL EDUCATION AND NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY

Special education is important aspect of National education policy, ensuring that "divyang" students have access to quality education. Heneveld and Craig (1996) highlight the importance of education policy in shaping development of education systems, including provisions of special education and services. Mundy and Murphy (2001) emphasise the role of education policy in ensuring equity and inclusiveness in education, which is a key component of special education. Bajpai and Goyal (2015) discuss importance of early identification and intervention for children with disabilities, which is a crucial component of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 in India. The NEP 2020 also stresses need for teacher training and professional development for special education teachers and the use of assistive technologies and inclusive learning materials, as noted by Mundy and Murphy (2001). The policy also elaborates the need of collaboration between schools, families, and community organisations, which is in line with recommendations of Heneveld and Craig (1996) for effective education policy implementation. Overall, the NEP 2020 provides a comprehensive framework for development of special education and services that align with needs of children with disabilities and stated goals of education system in India.

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ROADMAP FOR 2030

The National Education Policy - 2020 foresees transforming India's education system to meet the needs of 21st century education. The aims of NEP-2020 to attain universalisation of education from beginning to higher education, with a main target on quality education and promoting holistic development of learners. It also aims to direct issues of equity and inclusion, providing equal opportunities to all learners, regardless of their background or socio-economic status. Over the next 20 years, the policy envisions a future where learners have access to high-quality education, delivered through a flexible, multidisciplinary, and learner-centric curriculum. It promotes use of assistive technology in education, with a focus on developing digital infrastructure and leveraging technology to enhance learning outcomes. The NEP-2020 main objectives are to promote research and innovation in education, creating an ecosystem that supports development and dissemination of knowledge. The NEP 2020 also visualises a future where teachers are well-trained and supported, and where education is imparted through multiple pathways, including vocational education, arts, and sports. It also promotes the internationalisation of education, encouraging collaborations and partnerships with international institutions and prepare learners for a globalised world through a flipped learning environment.

Overall, the vision of NEP 2020 is to create a system that promotes holistic development of learners, fosters creativity and innovation, and prepares them for future challenges and opportunities.

Some important features of NEP 2020 that are expected to shape education system in India by 2030 are:

- Universalisation of education: Ensure that every child has access to quality education from early education to higher education.
- Emphasis on foundational learning: NEP 2020 focuses on improving foundational learning of children in early years, which is critical for their lifelong learning and development.
- Multiple pathways to learning: The policy recognises that learners have diverse interests and abilities, and provides for multiple pathways to learning, including vocational education, arts, and sports.
- Flexibility in curriculum: NEP 2020 promotes a flexible, multidisciplinary, and learner-centric curriculum that allows students to choose their subjects of interest and learn at their own pace.
- Use of technology: The policy recognises importance of technology in learning outcomes and promotes use of assistive technology in education.
- Professional development of teachers: The policy also emphasises importance of professional & quality development of teachers and provide them with the necessary training and support.

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- Emphasis on research: Policy also promotes research and innovation in education / inclusive education and create an ecosystem that supports development and dissemination of knowledge.

The National Education Policy 2020 in India envisions a transformative education system that is more inclusive, more flexible, and contemporary, imbibing best practices in transfer of learning from across the globe. The policy provides a roadmap for substantial development of education system in India by 2030, and its successful implementation is expected to result in improved learning outcomes, increased access to education, and development of a skilled workforce that meets increasing demands of a rapidly changing world (Munda, 2021) The National Education Policy (2020) has ambitious goals, yet timely and effective implementation strategies are needed for the policy to be successful.

CONCLUSION -

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 aims to provide education for all round development like learners' cognitive, emotional, social and skills abilities. This policy also emphasises education in regional language / mother tongue of the child up to the primary level. It also encourages learning through direct experience and multiple exit and entry option in higher education which was not available. The use of technology emphasises for education of learners with disabilities. Flexibility is embedded in the core of the policy which increases its range and adaptability. Yet, some challenges like funding, capacity building of teachers and stakeholders and cultural diversity exist. Inclusive education also addressed in the policy by highlighting the need of early identification and intervention, special educator training and assistive technology and collaboration. For the roadmap for 2030 in order to make education universal, it is necessary to make qualitative improvement in the education system of India. The overall emphasis is to curate a holistic and innovative education system and prepare smart learners.

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