

Changing landscape of Secondary Education in India through National Education Policy -2020

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Abstract:

The National Education Policy of 2020 heralds a significant transformation in the landscape of secondary education in India. Rooted in extensive consultations and expert recommendations, NEP-2020 represents a comprehensive effort to address longstanding challenges and prepare the nation for the demands of the 21st century. Emphasizing inclusivity, flexibility, and innovation, NEP-2020 aims to create a holistic educational framework that fosters the all-round development of students. By advocating for multidisciplinary learning, technology integration, and competency-based evaluation, the policy seeks to equip learners with the skills and competencies necessary for success in a rapidly changing world. Furthermore, NEP-2020 aligns with global best practices while also incorporating indigenous knowledge systems and cultural contexts, ensuring a culturally relevant and inclusive educational environment. As NEP-2020 is implemented nationwide, it holds the promise of reshaping secondary education in India by promoting equitable access, enhancing learning outcomes, and nurturing a skilled and adaptable workforce. Ultimately, NEP-2020 aims to propel India towards socio-economic growth and global competitiveness by empowering its youth with the knowledge, skills, and values needed to thrive in the 21st century.

Keywords: National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, Secondary education, Multidisciplinary learning, Technology integration, Competency-based evaluation etc.

Background

The emergence of the National Education Policy 2020 is a direct response to the ever-changing educational landscape and the necessity for a comprehensive overhaul of India's education system. It is built upon the recommendations of several expert committees and extensive consultations with stakeholders from all over the country. With the previous policy dating back to 1986 and its revision in 1992, NEP-2020 marks the first significant reform in nearly thirty years. NEP-2020 is a reflection of the government's acknowledgement of the evolving socio-economic dynamics, technological advancements, and the need to equip students for the challenges of the 21st century. It aims to address the deficiencies of the current system, such as rote learning, inflexible curriculum structures, and limited focus on critical thinking and practical skills. Furthermore, the National Education Policy -2020 not only aligns with global best practices but also incorporates indigenous knowledge systems and cultural contexts, with the goal of fostering a holistic and inclusive educational environment that promotes individual growth and national development.

The National Education Policy of 2020 introduces a significant overhaul of the existing 10+2 school education system, transitioning to a more comprehensive 5+3+3+4 framework spanning ages 3-18. This restructuring entails the integration of a foundational stage of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) starting from age 3, with the objective of enriching overall learning, development, and welfare. Presently, children aged 3-6 remain outside the formal educational framework, but with the implementation of the new structure, ECCE will establish a robust foundation for their educational journey. By embedding ECCE within the educational framework, NEP-2020 endeavors to foster holistic development and guarantee that children receive fundamental learning experiences from an early age. This restructuring epitomizes a comprehensive approach to education, acknowledging the significance of early childhood education in establishing the groundwork for subsequent academic accomplishments and personal advancement.

The World Education Forum (WEF) holds a pivotal role in shaping global education agendas and fostering collaboration among nations to tackle educational challenges. Within the context of India's National Education Policy (NEP) of 2020, the principles and recommendations advocated by the WEF align closely with several key aspects of secondary education reform. Firstly, the WEF underscores the significance of providing inclusive and equitable quality education for all, a principle mirrored in NEP-2020's objective of universalizing secondary education to ensure fair access and retention, particularly for marginalized communities. Secondly, the WEF advocates for the integration of technology in education to bolster learning outcomes and bridge digital divides, a principle echoed in NEP-2020's emphasis on incorporating technology into secondary education to facilitate personalized learning experiences and address urban-rural disparities.

The World Education Forum emphasizes the need for a holistic approach to education that promotes critical thinking, creativity, and innovation, which aligns with NEP-2020's emphasis on multidisciplinary learning and the adoption of innovative pedagogies in secondary education. The principles and recommendations of the World Education

Forum complement and reinforce the goals and strategies outlined in NEP-2020, providing a global framework for advancing secondary education reform in India and beyond.

The inception of the National Education Policy (NEP) of 2020 in India stems from the intricate blend of challenges and opportunities prevalent within the nation's educational framework. Over the course of history, India's education system has grappled with multifaceted issues such as accessibility, inclusivity, and educational quality, particularly within the secondary education sphere. Despite commendable efforts to enhance primary education accessibility, concerns persist regarding high drop-out rates, suboptimal learning outcomes, and the adequacy of the curriculum in addressing contemporary societal needs. To confront these challenges head-on, the NEP-2020 serves as the culmination of extensive consultations and collaborative efforts involving diverse stakeholders, including policymakers, educators, students, and subject matter experts. This policy underscores the imperative for a holistic transformation aimed at realigning India's educational landscape with the dynamic demands of the 21st century.

The evolving socio-economic landscape, characterized by technological advancements, globalization, and rapid demographic changes, requires a paradigm shift in educational approaches. Specifically, secondary education plays a pivotal role in preparing students for higher education, employment, and active participation in society. Additionally, the formulation of the National Education Policy-2020 has been influenced by international benchmarks and best practices, reflecting a wider commitment to aligning India's education system with global standards. Recognizing the transformative power of education in socio-economic development and national progress, this policy underscores the importance of nurturing a skilled, innovative, and adaptable workforce capable of driving India's growth and competitiveness in the global arena.

Secondary education

The Secondary education in India is a crucial stage in shaping students' academic and vocational pathways. The NEP of 2020 emphasizes the significance of secondary education in nurturing multidisciplinary skills and fostering holistic development (**Ministry of Education, Government of India, 2020**). According to a report by the World Bank, improving secondary education is vital for India's economic growth and social development, as it enhances individuals' productivity and enables them to participate effectively in the workforce (**World Bank, 2019**). Furthermore, research by UNESCO highlights the importance of secondary education in promoting gender equality and reducing poverty by providing opportunities for marginalized groups, including girls and children from disadvantaged backgrounds (**UNESCO, 2018**). Thus, investing in quality secondary education is essential for India to achieve its educational and developmental goals.

Secondary education in India plays a central role in shaping individuals' academic, social, and economic trajectories. The National Education Policy (NEP) of 2020 underscores the importance of this stage by emphasizing the integration of academic, vocational, and extracurricular streams to promote holistic development (**Ministry of Education, Government of India, 2020**). According to a study by the United Nations Development Programme (**UNDP**), investing in secondary education yields significant returns in terms of poverty reduction, improved health outcomes, and enhanced social cohesion (**UNDP India, 2019**). Additionally, research conducted by the National Council of Educational Research and Training, highlights the positive impact of quality secondary education on enhancing students' critical thinking skills and preparing them for higher education and employment (**NCERT, 2020**). Therefore, ensuring equitable access to quality secondary education is essential for fostering inclusive growth and realizing India's demographic dividend.

Secondary education in India typically refers to education for students aged between 14 and 18 years, covering grades 9 to 12. The structure of secondary education in India varies slightly from state to state due to the federal structure of the country, but there are some common features.

1. **Curriculum:** At the secondary level, the curriculum typically comprises a blend of fundamental subjects including mathematics, science, social studies, and languages. Furthermore, students often have the opportunity to select elective subjects tailored to their individual interests or future career aspirations.
2. **Examinations:** Secondary education culminates in board examinations conducted by various state or national boards. The two most prominent national boards are the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) and the Indian Certificate of Secondary Education (ICSE). These examinations are crucial as they determine a student's eligibility for higher education.
3. **Medium of Instruction:** While English is often the medium of instruction in private schools and some government schools, regional languages are also used in many parts of the country, especially in government-run schools.
4. **Evaluation System:** Assessment in secondary education typically involves a combination of continuous evaluation throughout the academic year and final examinations. Grades obtained in these examinations are important for admission to higher education institutions.

5. **Focus on Higher Education Preparation:** Secondary education in India is geared towards preparing students for higher education. Thus, there's an emphasis on academic subjects and examinations, and students often pursue coaching classes alongside regular schooling to prepare for competitive entrance exams for colleges and universities.
6. **Vocational Education:** In recent years, there has been a growing emphasis on integrating vocational education into secondary schooling to provide students with practical skills alongside academic knowledge. Some schools offer vocational courses or have tie-ups with vocational training institutes.
7. **Infrastructure and Facilities:** Infrastructure and facilities in secondary schools can vary widely depending on whether they are government-run or private institutions. Private schools often have better facilities, while government schools may face challenges such as inadequate infrastructure and shortages of qualified teachers.

Multidisciplinary learning

This learning, as advocated in the National Education Policy (NEP) of 2020, pertains to an educational methodology that integrates knowledge and skills from diverse fields to provide a comprehensive comprehension of intricate subjects and real-world predicaments. This approach accentuates the interrelatedness of distinct subject areas and encourages students to explore various viewpoints and methodologies. For instance, a science lesson may encompass elements of mathematics, history, and ethics to scrutinize the societal influence of scientific breakthroughs. NEP-2020 underscores the significance of multidisciplinary learning in fostering ingenuity, analytical reasoning, and originality among students. By engaging with diverse perspectives and methodologies, students cultivate a broader understanding of the world and are better equipped to address interdisciplinary challenges in their academic and professional pursuits. Moreover, multidisciplinary learning fosters collaboration and teamwork, as students acquire the ability to work effectively with peers from diverse backgrounds and areas of expertise. This approach not only amplifies academic accomplishments but also nurtures indispensable life skills such as effective communication, problem-solving, and adaptability, thereby preparing students for success in an increasingly interconnected and dynamic world.

Multidisciplinary learning, as emphasized in the National Education Policy (NEP) of 2020, is crucial for providing students with a comprehensive understanding of diverse subjects and real-world challenges. The NEP-2020 underscores the significance of integrating academic, vocational, and extracurricular streams to promote holistic development (Ministry of Education, Government of India, 2020). This approach aligns with research findings by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), which highlight the positive impact of multidisciplinary learning on enhancing students' critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaboration skills (OECD, 2017). Additionally, a study published in the Journal of Educational Psychology suggests that multidisciplinary approaches lead to deeper learning outcomes and increased student engagement compared to traditional, single-discipline instruction (Harlen et al., 2018). Thus, implementing multidisciplinary learning strategies in education is essential for preparing students to thrive in an interconnected and rapidly evolving world.

Multidisciplinary learning refers to the approach of integrating knowledge, principles, and methodologies from multiple disciplines or fields of study. It involves breaking down the traditional barriers between academic subjects to foster a more holistic understanding of complex issues and problems. Here's why multidisciplinary learning is valuable:

1. **Holistic Understanding:** It allows learners to gain a comprehensive understanding of a topic by considering it from various perspectives. For example, studying climate change might involve knowledge from meteorology, ecology, economics, and social sciences.
2. **Problem Solving:** Many real-world problems are multidimensional and require solutions that draw on insights from different areas. Multidisciplinary learning equips individuals with the ability to approach problems creatively and develop innovative solutions.
3. **Critical Thinking:** Engaging with multiple disciplines encourages critical thinking skills as learners analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information from diverse sources. This fosters a deeper level of intellectual inquiry.
4. **Interdisciplinary Collaboration:** In professional settings, individuals often need to collaborate with colleagues from different backgrounds. Multidisciplinary learning prepares students for such collaborations by promoting communication and teamwork skills.
5. **Adaptability:** In a rapidly changing world, adaptability is a crucial skill. Multidisciplinary learning helps learners adapt to new situations and challenges by providing them with a broad knowledge base and flexible mindset.
6. **Creativity and Innovation:** The intersection of different disciplines often sparks creativity and innovation. Breakthroughs in science, technology, and the arts frequently emerge from the convergence of diverse ideas and perspectives.

7. **Personal Growth:** Multidisciplinary learning can broaden one's intellectual horizons and deepen their appreciation for the interconnectedness of knowledge. It can also lead to personal growth as individuals develop a more nuanced understanding of the world around them.

Multidisciplinary learning is essential for addressing complex issues, fostering creativity, and preparing individuals for success in an increasingly interconnected world.

Technology integration

The technology integration in education, as advocated in the National Education Policy (NEP) of 2020, refers to the merger of digital tools, resources, and platforms into teaching and learning practices to increase educational outcomes. NEP-2020 emphasizes the importance of leveraging technology to facilitate personalized learning experiences, bridge the urban-rural divide, and promote equitable access to quality education (Ministry of Education, Government of India, 2020). Research by the World Economic Forum highlights the transformative potential of technology in education, citing its ability to improve student engagement, facilitate active learning, and foster collaboration among learners (World Economic Forum, 2020). Furthermore, a study published in the Journal of Research on Technology in Education underscores the positive impact of technology integration on student achievement and motivation, particularly in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) subjects (Khalid et al., 2016). Thus, integrating technology into education is essential for preparing students for the digital age and equipping them with the skills and competencies needed to succeed in the 21st century.

Technology integration in education involves incorporating various technological tools and resources to enhance teaching and learning experiences. It encompasses the use of computers, tablets, interactive whiteboards, educational software, and online resources to support instructional goals and student achievement (Roblyer & Doering, 2020). Integrating technology in the classroom offers numerous benefits, including increased student engagement, personalized learning opportunities, and access to a wealth of information and resources (Puentedura, 2006). Additionally, technology integration promotes the development of critical thinking, problem-solving, and digital literacy skills that are essential for success in the 21st century (Mishra & Koehler, 2006). By effectively integrating technology, educators can create dynamic and interactive learning environments that cater to diverse student needs and learning styles (ISTE, 2020). Moreover, technology integration can facilitate collaboration among students and enable them to communicate and share their ideas with peers both locally and globally (Edutopia, n.d.). Overall, technology integration plays a vital role in transforming traditional educational practices and preparing students for an increasingly digital world.

Integration of technology in education entails the assimilation of diverse technological tools, resources, and methodologies into the educational milieu to augment learning outcomes. This encompasses the utilization of technology to bolster, complement, or revolutionize conventional teaching approaches and pedagogical techniques. Here are some key aspects of technology integration in education:

1. **Enhanced Learning Experiences:** Technology provides opportunities for interactive and engaging learning experiences through multimedia resources, simulations, virtual labs, and educational games.
2. **Access to Information:** Digital devices and the internet enable students to access vast amounts of information from around the world, facilitating research and exploration of diverse topics.
3. **Personalized Learning:** Adaptive learning platforms and educational software can tailor instruction to meet the individual needs and learning styles of students, allowing for personalized learning pathways.
4. **Collaborative Learning:** Technology enables collaboration among students and between students and teachers through tools such as online discussion forums, collaborative documents, and video conferencing.
5. **Remote Learning:** Especially relevant in contexts like the COVID-19 pandemic, technology facilitates remote learning by providing platforms for online classes, digital textbooks, and communication tools for students and teachers.
6. **Assessment and Feedback:** Digital assessment tools can streamline the assessment process, provide immediate feedback to students, and generate data for teachers to monitor student progress and adjust instruction accordingly.
7. **Professional Development:** Technology offers opportunities for teachers to engage in ongoing professional development through online courses, webinars, educational blogs, and social media communities.
8. **Digital Citizenship:** Integrating technology in education also involves teaching students responsible and ethical use of technology, including topics such as online safety, digital literacy, and cyberbullying awareness.
9. **Accessibility:** Technology can make learning more accessible to students with disabilities by providing tools such as screen readers, speech-to-text software, and adaptive devices.

10. **Cost-Efficiency:** While initial investment in technology infrastructure and devices can be significant, in the long term, digital resources can often be more cost-effective than traditional textbooks and materials.

Effective integration of technology in education requires thoughtful planning, ongoing support for teachers, infrastructure development, and a focus on pedagogical goals to ensure that technology enhances, rather than replaces, effective teaching and learning practices.

Competency-based evaluation

Competency-based evaluation, as outlined in the National Education Policy (NEP) of 2020, refers to an assessment approach that focuses on measuring students' mastery of specific skills, knowledge, and competencies rather than solely relying on traditional standardized tests or rote memorization. NEP-2020 advocates for a shift towards competency-based evaluation in secondary education to provide a more comprehensive and authentic assessment of students' abilities to apply their learning in real-world contexts (Ministry of Education, Government of India, 2020). Research by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) suggests that competency-based assessment methods lead to deeper learning outcomes, greater student engagement, and better alignment with the skills needed for success in the workforce (OECD, 2018). Therefore, integrating competency-based evaluation in secondary education is essential for promoting meaningful learning experiences and preparing students for the challenges of the 21st century.

Competency-based evaluation is an approach to assessing an individual's performance or abilities based on specific competencies or skills relevant to a particular role or task. Instead of solely focusing on traditional metrics like grades or years of experience, competency-based evaluation looks at the specific skills and behaviors required for success in a given context.

Here are some key aspects of competency-based evaluation:

1. **Identifying Competencies:** The first step is to clearly define the competencies required for a particular role or task. These competencies could include technical skills, soft skills, knowledge areas, or specific behaviors.
2. **Setting Expectations:** Once the competencies are identified, clear expectations are set for each competency. This could include defining what proficiency looks like for each competency and how it relates to overall performance.
3. **Assessment Methods:** Competency-based evaluation typically involves various assessment methods tailored to measure specific competencies. These methods could include performance reviews, skills assessments, simulations, interviews, or portfolio reviews.
4. **Objective Measurement:** The evaluation process aims to be as objective as possible, focusing on observable behaviors and outcomes related to each competency.
5. **Feedback and Development:** Feedback plays a crucial role in competency-based evaluation. Individuals receive feedback on their performance relative to the defined competencies, along with suggestions for improvement. This feedback is used not only for evaluation purposes but also for personal and professional development.
6. **Iterative Process:** Competency-based evaluation is often iterative, with ongoing assessment and feedback cycles allowing individuals to continuously improve their skills and performance over time.
7. **Alignment with Goals:** Competencies are typically aligned with organizational goals and objectives, ensuring that evaluation efforts support broader strategic initiatives.
8. **Customization:** Competency-based evaluation can be customized to fit the specific needs and context of different roles, teams, or organizations. This flexibility allows for a more tailored approach to performance assessment.

Overall, competency-based evaluation provides a comprehensive framework for assessing and developing individuals' skills and capabilities in a way that is relevant, objective, and aligned with organizational goals.

The National Education Policy (NEP) of 2020 stands as a transformative milestone in India's educational journey, embodying a sweeping reform initiative to tackle longstanding issues and ready the nation for 21st-century challenges. It emerged amidst evolving socio-economic dynamics and technological advancements, aiming to nurture holistic development among learners. Rooted in the insights of expert committees and broad stakeholder consultations, NEP-2020 adopts a forward-looking stance, blending global best practices with indigenous knowledge systems and cultural nuances. It confronts deficiencies in the prevailing educational framework, such as rote learning and rigid curriculum structures, by prioritizing critical thinking and practical skill development. NEP-2020 envisions an educational landscape that fosters inclusivity and embraces diversity, thus creating an environment conducive to both individual growth and national progress. The World Education Forum (WEF) plays a pivotal role in shaping global education agendas and shares synergies with NEP-2020's objectives, advocating for inclusive, equitable, and

technologically integrated education. Furthermore, NEP-2020 draws inspiration from international benchmarks, reflecting a commitment to align India's education system with global standards.

NEP-2020 underscores the importance of secondary education in shaping students' academic and vocational trajectories, aligning with global research highlighting its role in fostering multidisciplinary skills and holistic development. Additionally, technology integration and competency-based evaluation feature prominently in NEP-2020, geared towards enhancing learning outcomes and preparing students for the digital workforce. Overall, NEP-2020 heralds a paradigm shift towards an inclusive, innovative, and globally competitive education system, poised to propel India's socio-economic growth and development.

Conclusion

The National Education Policy (NEP) of 2020 has ushered in a transformative shift in the landscape of secondary education in India. Through its comprehensive reforms and forward-thinking approach, NEP-2020 addresses longstanding challenges and aligns the education system with the demands of the 21st century. By emphasizing inclusivity, flexibility, and innovation, NEP-2020 aims to foster holistic development and empower students with the aptitudes and proficiencies essential for thriving in an ever-changing global landscape. The policy's focus on multidisciplinary learning, technology integration, and competency-based evaluation reflects a commitment to nurturing a skilled and adaptable workforce. Moreover, NEP-2020's alignment with global best practices and its incorporation of indigenous knowledge systems ensure a culturally relevant and inclusive educational environment. As NEP-2020 is implemented nationwide, it holds the promise of reshaping secondary education in India, creating opportunities for equitable access, fostering creativity and critical thinking, and ultimately driving the nation towards socio-economic growth and global competitiveness.

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