

AN IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS OF NEP 2020 AND ITS ROLE IN VIKSIT BHARAT-2047 THROUGH INDIAN EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, approved by the Union Cabinet of India on 29 July 2020, represents the most comprehensive restructuring of the Indian education system in over three decades, replacing the National Policy on Education of 1986. This research paper undertakes a detailed, multi-dimensional analysis of NEP 2020, examining its historical antecedents, its foundational philosophy, and the specific structural, curricular, and institutional reforms it proposes across school and higher education. The paper explores the policy's ambitious targets, including universalisation of foundational literacy and numeracy, a shift from the 10+2 to a 5+3+3+4 structure, the introduction of multidisciplinary and flexible higher education through the Academic Bank of Credits, the establishment of the Higher Education Commission of India, and an increase in public investment in education to six percent of GDP. It further evaluates the policy's implications for equity, vocational education, teacher development, digital learning, and internationalization of Indian higher education. Drawing on government documents, academic commentary, and comparative international frameworks, the paper critically assesses both the transformative potential and the practical challenges of implementation, including questions of federalism, resource allocation, language politics, and institutional capacity. The analysis concludes that while NEP 2020 articulates a genuinely paradigm-shifting vision for Indian education, its ultimate success will depend on sustained political will, adequate financing, decentralised capacity-building, and continuous monitoring over the two-decade implementation horizon the policy itself envisions.

Keywords: higher education, foundational literacy, multidisciplinary education, vocational education, education policy implementation.

INTRODUCTION

Education has long been recognised as the single most powerful instrument for individual empowerment and national development, and nowhere is this more consequential than in India, a country of over 1.4 billion people with one of the largest and most diverse education systems in the world. For nearly thirty-four years, India's education system was governed by the National

Policy on Education of 1986, as modified in 1992. While that policy served the country through a period of significant expansion in access to schooling, the intervening decades brought profound transformations in the global economy, in technology, in the nature of work, and in the aspirations of Indian citizens themselves. By the second decade of the twenty-first century, there was a broad consensus among educators, policymakers, employers, and parents that the

Indian education system, despite its scale and its successes in expanding enrolment, was struggling to deliver the quality of learning, the flexibility, and the relevance that a rapidly changing world demanded.

It was against this backdrop that the Government of India, after an extensive and unusually participatory consultation process spanning nearly five years, approved the National Education Policy 2020 on 29 July 2020. The policy was the product of a committee chaired initially by the eminent scientist Dr K. Kasturirangan, building on an earlier draft prepared under the chairmanship of Dr T.S.R. Subramanian. The consultation process reportedly reached more than two lakh gram panchayats, over six thousand blocks, six hundred and seventy-six districts, and all states and union territories, making it, by the government's own account, one of the most widely consulted policy documents in independent India's history.

NEP 2020 is not merely a technical or administrative document; it is explicitly framed as a philosophical and civilisational statement about the purpose of education. The policy opens by asserting that education must develop not only cognitive capacities, both foundational and higher-order, but also social, ethical, and emotional capacities and dispositions. It draws, at least rhetorically, on ancient Indian educational traditions associated with institutions such as Nalanda, Takshashila, and Vikramshila, while simultaneously seeking to align Indian education with contemporary global best practices in pedagogy, curriculum design, and institutional governance. This dual orientation, backward toward a reimagined civilisational heritage and forward toward the demands of a knowledge economy and an interconnected world, is one of the defining and most debated features of the policy.

This paper undertakes an in-depth, structured analysis of NEP 2020, with the aim of understanding it not simply as a list of reforms but as a coherent, if ambitious, paradigm shift in how

India conceives of, delivers, and governs education from the pre-school years through doctoral study and lifelong learning. The paper is organised into distinct sections addressing the historical context that produced the policy; its guiding vision and foundational principles; the specific architecture of reform in school education; the corresponding architecture of reform in higher education; the policy's treatment of equity and inclusion; its approach to teacher education and professional development; its vision for vocational and skill-based education; its embrace of technology and digital learning; its provisions for regulatory and governance restructuring; its financial implications; the challenges likely to attend its implementation; and, finally, a considered assessment of its probable long-term significance for the future of Indian education.

The central argument advanced in this paper is that NEP 2020 constitutes a genuine attempt at paradigmatic transformation rather than incremental adjustment. It reconceives the purpose of education from an instrument of credentialing and narrow specialisation toward a broader project of holistic human development; it reconceives the structure of schooling from a rigid, examination-driven pipeline toward a more flexible, competency-based continuum; and it reconceives higher education from a fragmented, siloed system toward a more integrated, multidisciplinary, and internationally connected ecosystem. At the same time, the paper argues that the distance between the articulation of this paradigm and its realisation on the ground remains considerable, and that the ultimate verdict on NEP 2020 will be written not in the text of the policy itself but in the classrooms, colleges, and communities where it is, or is not, faithfully implemented over the coming two decades.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT: THE EVOLUTION OF EDUCATION POLICY IN INDIA

To appreciate the significance of NEP 2020, it is necessary to situate it within the longer arc of Indian education policy since independence. The Constitution of India, adopted in 1950, initially placed education in the State List, reflecting a federal design in which the responsibility for schooling rested primarily with state governments. This arrangement changed in 1976, when the 42nd Constitutional Amendment moved education to the Concurrent List, thereby establishing a shared responsibility between the Union and the states, a structural feature that continues to shape the politics of education policy in India, including the reception of NEP 2020 itself, to this day.

India's first National Policy on Education was formulated in 1968, following the recommendations of the Kothari Commission (1964-66), which had called for a common school structure across the country, the promotion of Indian languages, and a target of allocating six percent of national income to education, a target that, notably, still had not been achieved when NEP 2020 was drafted more than five decades later. The 1968 policy sought to promote national integration, scientific temper, and a reasonably uniform structure of education across the country, but its implementation was uneven, constrained by limited resources and administrative capacity.

The second National Policy on Education was adopted in 1986, under the government of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, and was subsequently revised through a Programme of Action in 1992 under Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao. The 1986 policy, often referred to simply as NPE 1986, placed considerable emphasis on removing disparities in access to education, particularly for girls, Scheduled Castes, and Scheduled Tribes, and it led to important institutional innovations such as the

establishment of Navodaya Vidyalayas, residential schools intended to identify and nurture talented children from rural areas irrespective of their family's socio-economic condition. NPE 1986 also gave impetus to the expansion of open and distance learning through institutions such as the Indira Gandhi National Open University, established in 1985.

Between 1986 and 2020, India's education landscape was reshaped by several major legislative and programmatic interventions that operated alongside, and sometimes in place of, a fully revised national policy. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009, commonly known as the RTE Act, gave every child between the ages of six and fourteen a justiciable right to free and compulsory education, marking a significant expansion of the state's constitutional obligations following the 86th Constitutional Amendment of 2002, which had inserted Article 21-A into the Constitution. Centrally sponsored schemes such as Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, launched in 2001 to universalise elementary education, and later the Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan for secondary education, and their eventual convergence under the unified Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan in 2018, substantially expanded physical access to schooling across the country, dramatically improving enrolment ratios, particularly at the primary level. Despite these gains in access, by the early 2010s, a large and growing body of evidence, including successive rounds of the Annual Status of Education Report produced by the non-governmental organisation Pratham, pointed to a severe and persistent learning crisis. These surveys repeatedly found that a substantial proportion of children in the upper primary grades in rural India could not read a simple text at the level expected of much younger children, nor perform basic arithmetic operations appropriate to their grade. This gap between access and actual learning outcomes became a central preoccupation of Indian education policy discourse in the decade preceding NEP 2020, and

it decisively shaped the new policy's emphasis on foundational literacy and numeracy as a non-negotiable national priority.

It was in this context that the Ministry of Human Resource Development, as the Ministry of Education was then known, constituted a Committee for Evolution of the New Education Policy in 2015, chaired by T.S.R. Subramanian, a former Cabinet Secretary. This committee submitted its report in 2016, which formed an initial input into the policy process. Subsequently, in 2017, a Committee for the Draft National Education Policy was constituted under the chairmanship of Dr K. Kasturirangan, former Chairman of the Indian Space Research Organisation. This committee released its draft report for public comment in May 2019, generating extensive public debate, particularly around its provisions on language and the three-language formula. After incorporating feedback and further deliberation, the final policy document was approved by the Union Cabinet on 29 July 2020, and the Ministry of Human Resource Development was simultaneously renamed the Ministry of Education, itself a symbolic signal of the policy's ambitions.

VISION AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF NEP 2020

NEP 2020 articulates its overarching vision in explicitly civilisational and developmental terms. It states that the purpose of the education system is to develop good human beings capable of rational thought and action, possessing compassion and empathy, courage and resilience, scientific temper and creative imagination, and sound ethical moorings and values. This is a notably expansive conception of educational purpose, one that goes well beyond the acquisition of literacy, numeracy, and employable skills, though it explicitly includes these as necessary components. The policy envisions an education system rooted in Indian ethos that contributes directly to transforming India, sustainably, into an equitable and vibrant

knowledge society, by providing high-quality education to all. Several guiding principles recur throughout the policy document and inform virtually every specific reform it proposes. The first is the principle of flexibility, understood both as flexibility for learners, who should be able to choose their own paths through the education system according to their talents and interests, and flexibility for institutions, which should be empowered to innovate rather than conform to rigid, uniform templates imposed from above. The second is the principle of multidisciplinary and a holistic education, which rejects the historically entrenched separation of the arts, humanities, sciences, and vocational streams in favour of an integrated approach that allows students to combine subjects across these traditional boundaries.

A third guiding principle is the primacy of foundational literacy and numeracy, which the policy describes, in language that has been widely quoted, as an urgent and necessary prerequisite to learning, without which the rest of the education system will simply fail to deliver its promise. This framing positions the National Initiative for Proficiency in Reading with Understanding and Numeracy, generally known by its acronym NIPUN Bharat, launched by the Ministry of Education in July 2021 as a direct operational follow-through of NEP 2020, at the very centre of the policy's implementation priorities, with the goal that every child achieve foundational literacy and numeracy by the end of Grade.

A fourth principle is equity and inclusion, expressed through the policy's stated aspiration that no child should be denied the opportunity to learn and excel in the education system on the basis of circumstances of birth or background. The policy identifies what it terms Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups, encompassing gender, socio-cultural, and geographical identities and disabilities, and commits to a range of targeted interventions for these groups, discussed in greater detail in a later section of this paper. A

fifth principle is respect for diversity and the local context, reflected most visibly in the policy's emphasis on mother-tongue or local-language instruction in the early years and its promotion of Indian languages, arts, and culture at every level of the system.

A sixth and cross-cutting principle is the use of technology in education, not as an end in itself but as a means to improve access, equity, and the quality of teaching, learning, and educational planning and administration. Finally, the policy repeatedly invokes the principle of teacher and faculty as the heart of the learning process, insisting that the respect, autonomy, professional development, and working conditions of teachers must be central to any meaningful reform, since no system of education can rise above the quality of its teachers. Taken together, these principles constitute the philosophical architecture upon which the more specific structural and institutional reforms discussed in the following sections are built.

RESTRUCTURING SCHOOL EDUCATION: FROM 10+2 TO 5+3+3+4

Perhaps the single most visible and widely reported structural change introduced by NEP 2020 is the replacement of the traditional 10+2 structure of school education, in place since the 1986 policy, with a new 5+3+3+4 curricular and pedagogical structure corresponding to age groups rather than rigid grade divisions alone. The Foundational Stage covers five years, comprising three years of pre-primary or anganwadi-based early childhood care and education for children aged three to six, followed by Grades 1 and 2, and is intended to focus on flexible, multi-level, play-based, activity-based, and discovery-based learning. The Preparatory Stage covers Grades 3 to 5, for children aged eight to eleven, and begins to introduce more formal but still interactive classroom learning, including reading, writing,

speaking, physical education, art, languages, and mathematics.

The Middle Stage covers Grades 6 to 8, for children aged eleven to fourteen, and introduces more abstract concepts in each subject, including the sciences, mathematics, arts, social sciences, and humanities, alongside experiential learning within and across subjects. The Secondary Stage covers Grades 9 to 12, for adolescents aged fourteen to eighteen, divided into two phases, and is designed around greater depth, critical thinking, flexibility, and student choice of subjects, including the possibility of combining subjects previously confined to separate streams, such as physics with history, or accountancy with fine arts. This restructuring is grounded explicitly in developmental and cognitive science research on how children learn at different ages, a departure from the largely administrative logic that had organised the previous 10+2 structure.

A second major reform in school education is the explicit inclusion, for the first time in a national policy document, of early childhood care and education, referred to by its acronym ECCE, as an integral part of the school education system rather than a separate or optional pre-school phase. The policy notes that over eighty-five percent of a child's cumulative brain development occurs prior to the age of six, and it therefore treats investment in ECCE as one of the best investments India can make for the future. To this end, the policy envisages a National Curricular and Pedagogical Framework for Early Childhood Care and Education, to be delivered through a significantly expanded and strengthened system of anganwadis, co-located pre-primary sections in existing schools, and stand-alone pre-schools, staffed by anganwadi workers and teachers who have received specialised training or upskilling in ECCE pedagogy.

Foundational literacy and numeracy, as noted above, is elevated in the policy to the status of an immediate national priority, with the policy

calling for a National Mission on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy to be set up by the Ministry of Education, subsequently operationalised as NIPUN Bharat. The mission's stated goal is that every child achieves foundational literacy and numeracy by Grade 3, with all state and union territory governments expected to prepare implementation plans in line with a national framework, involving the tracking of learning outcomes through a robust and transparent assessment system.

On curriculum and pedagogy more broadly, NEP 2020 calls for a substantial reduction in curriculum content in each subject to its core essentials, so as to make space for critical thinking, discussion, and analysis-based learning, and for a shift away from rote memorisation toward experiential learning, including hands-on learning, arts-integrated and sports-integrated education, and story-telling based pedagogy. The policy also calls for the introduction of vocational education starting from Grade 6, with internships offered by local artisans and professionals, reflecting a deliberate effort to break down the traditionally rigid separation between academic and vocational learning streams. A National Curriculum Framework for School Education was subsequently released in 2023 to operationalise many of these curricular directions in detail.

On assessment, the policy calls for a fundamental shift from the prevailing system of summative, high-stakes board examinations toward a system emphasising regular and formative assessment that is more competency-based, promotes learning and development, and

tests higher-order skills such as analysis, critical thinking, and conceptual clarity, rather than rote memorisation. Board examinations for Grades 10 and 12 are to be retained but redesigned to test core competencies, and students are to be given the option of taking board examinations on up to two occasions during a given school year, one main examination and one for improvement, if desired. The policy also proposes the establishment of a new National Assessment Centre, PARAKH, an acronym standing for Performance Assessment, Review, and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development, to set norms, standards, and guidelines for student assessment across all recognised school boards in the country, a body that was subsequently constituted in 2023.

On language policy, one of the more debated aspects of the school education reforms, NEP 2020 recommends that, wherever possible, the medium of instruction until at least Grade 5, and preferably until Grade 8 and beyond, should be the home language, mother tongue, local language, or regional language, on the grounds that children learn and grasp non-trivial concepts more quickly in their home language. The policy reaffirms the three-language formula first introduced in the 1968 policy, with the important clarification that the choice of languages will rest with states, regions, and, crucially, the students themselves, and that no language will be imposed on any state, a clarification inserted after the 2019 draft's proposed formula generated significant political controversy in non-Hindi-speaking states, particularly Tamil Nadu.

School Education Structure: Pre-NEP (10+2) vs NEP 2020 (5+3+3+4)



Figure 1. Comparison of the pre-NEP 10+2 school structure with the new 5+3+3+4 curricular structure introduced under NEP 2020.

REIMAGINING HIGHER EDUCATION: MULTIDISCIPLINARY, FLEXIBILITY, AND GOVERNANCE

If the school education reforms in NEP 2020 are organised around the developmental logic of the child, the higher education reforms are organised around the logic of multidisciplinary, flexibility, and institutional consolidation. The policy sets an ambitious target of raising the Gross Enrolment Ratio in higher education, including vocational education, from twenty-six-point three percent in 2018 to fifty percent by 2035, which would require the creation of an additional 3.5 crore seats in higher education institutions. This is among the most consequential quantitative targets in the entire policy, and its achievement, discussed further in the section on financing, will depend heavily on expanding both public and private capacity while maintaining quality.

A defining feature of the higher education vision in NEP 2020 is its rejection of narrow, single-discipline institutions in favour of large, well-

resourced, multidisciplinary institutions and clusters, referred to in the policy as Multidisciplinary Education and Research Universities, intended to be at least on par with the Indian Institutes of Technology and Indian Institutes of Management, spread throughout the country. The policy envisages that by 2040, all higher education institutions will become multidisciplinary institutions, each ideally housing more than three thousand students, and that over a period of time, the many thousands of small, single-stream affiliated colleges that currently characterise Indian higher education will be transformed into large multidisciplinary institutions or vibrant college clusters, with a gradual and time-bound transition away from the long-standing system of college affiliation to universities.

A second defining feature is curricular flexibility at the undergraduate level, to be achieved through the introduction of a four-year multidisciplinary undergraduate programme with multiple entry and exit options, under which a certificate is awarded after one year, a diploma after two years, a Bachelor's degree after three years, and a Bachelor's degree with Research after four years for students who complete a rigorous research

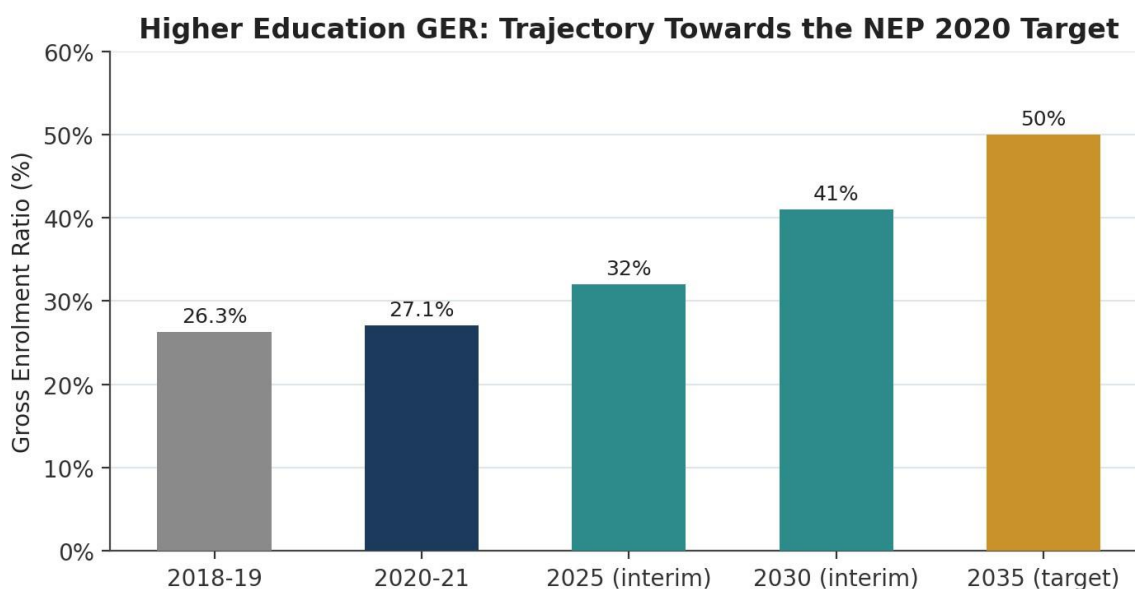
project alongside their coursework. This flexible-exit architecture is designed to reduce the sunk-cost pressure on students who, for whatever reason, are unable to complete a full degree programme, allowing them to exit with a meaningful credential rather than no credential at all, and to re-enter the system at a later point in their lives.

Underpinning this flexibility is the Academic Bank of Credits, commonly abbreviated as ABC, a digital infrastructure established to store academic credits earned by students from different recognised higher education institutions, so that these credits can be transferred, counted, and accumulated towards a final degree, irrespective of where or in what sequence they were earned. This mechanism, which the University Grants Commission notified through regulations in 2021, is explicitly designed to enable students to choose their own pathways through higher education, combining courses from different institutions, disciplines, and modes of learning, including online and open distance learning, in a manner that was largely impossible under the previous, more rigid regulatory framework.

On governance and regulation, NEP 2020 proposes what is arguably the most far-reaching institutional restructuring in the policy: the establishment of a single overarching umbrella body, the Higher Education Commission of India, or HECI, to govern all of higher education in the country except medical and legal education, replacing the existing multiplicity of regulators, including the University Grants Commission and the All-India Council for Technical Education. HECI is envisaged to have four independent verticals responsible, respectively, for regulation, referred to as the National Higher Education Regulatory Council; for

standard-setting, referred to as the General Education Council; for funding, referred to as the Higher Education Grants Council; and for accreditation, referred to as the National Accreditation Council, with the explicit design principle that these four functions be separated from one another to avoid the conflicts of interest that had characterised the previous, more fragmented regulatory landscape. Legislation to formally establish HECI had, as of the drafting of this analysis, not yet been enacted by Parliament, and this remains one of the more consequential pending items in the policy's implementation.

The policy also devotes considerable attention to research, calling for the establishment of a National Research Foundation to fund, mentor, and build the capacity for quality research across all disciplines, including the humanities and social sciences, which have historically received a small fraction of India's research funding relative to the sciences and engineering. Parliament subsequently passed the Anusandhan National Research Foundation Act in 2023, with an outlay envisaged at fifty thousand crore rupees over five years, though actual disbursements have, according to various reports, lagged behind the originally envisaged figures. Finally, the policy encourages the internationalisation of Indian higher education, both by facilitating the entry of high-performing foreign universities to set up campuses in India, a provision subsequently operationalised through University Grants Commission regulations issued in November 2023, and by encouraging Indian institutions to expand their own international presence, alongside expanded opportunities for credit transfer, student and faculty mobility, and research collaboration with institutions abroad.



Note: Figures for 2025/2030 are illustrative interim milestones towards the 2035 policy target, not official interpolations.

Figure 2. Trajectory of the Gross Enrolment Ratio in higher education towards the NEP 2020 target of 50% by 2035.

EQUITY AND INCLUSION IN NEP 2020

NEP 2020 dedicates a full chapter to what it terms Equitable and Inclusive Education, reflecting the drafters' acknowledgement that access to quality education in India has historically been, and in many respects remains, deeply unequal across lines of gender, caste, religion, disability, geography, and economic condition. The policy introduces the umbrella category of Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups, encompassing girls and transgender individuals, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes, minorities, children with disabilities, and children in geographically remote or economically disadvantaged regions, such as aspirational districts, and it commits to region-specific and gender-specific approaches to closing social-category gaps in education at every level.

For gender equity specifically, the policy proposes the establishment of a Gender Inclusion Fund, to be made available to states to implement priorities determined by the central government critical for the education of girls and transgender

students, including support for sanitation facilities such as functional toilets, and for other measures such as bicycles and conditional cash transfers where appropriate, so as to keep girls, particularly in secondary school, from dropping out. For children with disabilities, the policy reaffirms the entitlements available under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, and commits to ensuring that children with disabilities are able to participate fully and equally in the regular schooling process from the foundational stage onward, supported by resource centres, resource teachers, and appropriate technology and assistive devices, with the option, where necessary, of separate schooling in a limited number of specific circumstances.

The policy also introduces the concept of Special Education Zones, geographical areas with a significant proportion of students from disadvantaged groups, where special attention and additional resources are to be directed, alongside the strengthening of open and distance learning, particularly through institutions such as the National Institute of Open Schooling, to extend access to secondary and senior secondary education for adolescents outside the formal system, and

provisions for free boarding facilities for disadvantaged and underrepresented groups, particularly girls belonging to tribal communities. Alongside these targeted interventions, the policy commits to bringing more than two crore out-of-school children back into the education fold, primarily through a combination of the Foundational Literacy and Numeracy Mission, improved tracking of individual students through technology, and multiple pathways for learning, including accelerated learning programmes for older out-of-school children.

TEACHERS AT THE CENTRE: RECRUITMENT, TRAINING, AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

NEP 2020 repeatedly affirms that teachers are the single most important factor in the success of the school education system, and it devotes a dedicated chapter to the recruitment, preparation, deployment, and continuous professional development of teachers. On teacher preparation, the policy identifies the existing landscape of teacher education as dysfunctional in significant parts, citing the proliferation of a large number of low-quality, isolated teacher education institutions operating with little connection to universities or actual schools, and it therefore mandates that, by 2030, the minimum degree qualification for entry into the teaching profession will be a four-year integrated Bachelor of Education degree, offered by multidisciplinary institutions, that combines high-quality content, pedagogy, and practical training in tandem.

To progressively phase out sub-standard, stand-alone teacher education institutions, the policy calls for regular and rigorous inspection of these institutions, and it envisages that by 2030 all such stand-alone institutions will need to convert into multidisciplinary institutions offering the four-year integrated programme, or else be shut down. On recruitment, the policy calls for teacher recruitment processes and transfer mechanisms to

be substantially strengthened and made more transparent, with local recruitment and posting mechanisms designed to ensure that teachers are, as far as feasible, deployed within their local area, reducing the incidence of chronic teacher absenteeism associated with long-distance postings, while also proposing merit-based scholarships for outstanding students who wish to pursue a four-year integrated teacher preparation programme.

On career progression and working conditions, the policy proposes the development of a National Professional Standards for Teachers, to be developed by 2022 by a newly proposed National Council for Teacher Education in collaboration with the proposed National Council of Educational Research and Training bodies concerned, covering expectations of the teacher at different levels of expertise or stage, and the corresponding professional knowledge, skills, and dispositions required, and to be linked to a clear system of merit-based tenure, promotion, and salary structure, alongside multiple pathways for growth into positions of leadership, including school leadership and teacher educator roles. The policy also commits every teacher to a minimum of fifty hours of continuing professional development every year, to keep pace with innovations in pedagogy and content knowledge, and it explicitly commits to protecting teachers from being burdened with duties that are not directly related to teaching, such as non-academic administrative tasks and election duties unrelated to education, so that they can devote their energies fully to teaching and to the professional development activities that improve it.

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND SKILL DEVELOPMENT

One of the most striking data points cited in NEP 2020 is that, as of the time the policy was drafted, less than five percent of the Indian workforce in the 19 to 24 age group had received formal vocational education, compared to substantially higher proportions cited for developed economies such as the United States, at fifty-two percent, and

Germany, at seventy-five percent. The policy treats this gap as both an economic and a social justice problem, noting that vocational education has historically carried a certain social stigma in India and has consequently been relegated to the margins of the mainstream education system, offered largely in isolation, and mostly after the schooling years are already complete.

NEP 2020 responds to this challenge by mandating that vocational education be integrated into the mainstream of school and higher education, rather than treated as a separate, lower-status track. At the school level, the policy calls for at least ten days without bags, during which students in Grades 6 to 8 undertake internships with local vocational experts such as carpenters, gardeners, potters, artists, and other craftspeople, and it commits to exposing every student to vocational education at some point during Grades 6 to 8, followed by more structured vocational courses, including internship opportunities, in Grades 9 to 12. A target is set for at least fifty percent of learners through the school and higher education system to have exposure to vocational education by 2025, a target that reflects the scale of the ambition though its achievement by the stated timeline appears, on the available evidence, to remain a considerable distance away.

At the higher education level, the policy calls for vocational education to be integrated into all higher education institutions in a phased manner over the coming decade, both as stand-alone courses and as elements embedded within otherwise academic degree programmes, and it emphasises the importance of building strong linkages with industry, including through apprenticeships. The Skill India Mission and the National Skill Development Corporation, both of which pre-date NEP 2020, are treated in the policy as key implementation partners, with the intention of aligning existing skilling infrastructure more closely with the mainstream education system rather than allowing the two to continue operating as parallel and largely disconnected tracks.

TECHNOLOGY AND DIGITAL LEARNING

NEP 2020 was finalized only months after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, which had, by the time of the policy's release, already forced an abrupt and largely improvised shift to online and remote learning across the country, exposing both the potential and the very significant limitations of technology-enabled education in a country with sharp disparities in digital access. The policy treats technology neither as a panacea nor as a peripheral concern, but as an integral enabler that must be deployed thoughtfully to improve multiple aspects of education, including teaching and learning processes, assessment, teacher preparation and professional development, and educational planning, governance, and administration, including admissions, attendance, and other assessments.

To coordinate this effort, the policy calls for the creation of an autonomous body, the National Educational Technology Forum, to provide a platform for the free exchange of ideas on the use of technology to enhance learning, assessment, planning, and administration, both for school and higher education. This body has subsequently been operationalised, alongside a broader Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing initiative and the continued expansion of the DIKSHA platform, which serves as a national digital repository of curriculum-linked teaching and learning content in multiple Indian languages for school teachers and students.

The policy explicitly acknowledges the risk of technology exacerbating existing inequalities if access to digital devices, connectivity, and digital literacy is not addressed as a matter of priority, and it therefore commits to appropriate interventions, including the involvement of state governments in identifying solutions specific to their local contexts, to ensure equitable access to technology-enabled education for all sections of society, including students in rural areas and students with disabilities. The policy also calls for online education and digital

repositories to be developed with careful attention to pedagogical considerations, such as reducing screen time, and to concerns around online safety, data privacy, and cyber-security, particularly given the participation of minors, alongside a call for a dedicated unit to build digital infrastructure, digital content, and capacity building at the school and higher education levels to fulfil the policy's stated commitments to Digital India.

Early Implementation Evidence and State-Level Initiatives

Several years into the implementation of NEP 2020, it is possible to identify a preliminary, if still incomplete, body of evidence regarding how the policy's provisions are being translated into practice across the country. At the national level, the most visible early achievement is generally considered to be the launch and rapid scale-up of NIPUN Bharat, which by the mid-2020s had been adopted, in one form or another, by every state and union territory, with most states developing their own foundational literacy and numeracy action plans, state-specific learning outcome targets, and dedicated teacher training modules aligned with the national mission's goals. Independent assessments, including successive rounds of the Annual Status of Education Report, have suggested some improvement in foundational reading and arithmetic outcomes in the years following the mission's launch, though researchers have generally cautioned against attributing these gains solely to NEP 2020 or NIPUN Bharat, given the many other factors, including the gradual recovery of learning from pandemic-related disruptions, that plausibly contributed to the observed trends.

At the school level, the PM SHRI scheme, launched in September 2022 with the intention of developing more than fourteen thousand schools across the country as exemplar institutions embodying the various provisions of NEP 2020, including its curricular, pedagogical, and infrastructural dimensions, represents one of the more concrete central-government vehicles for translating the policy's vision into functioning

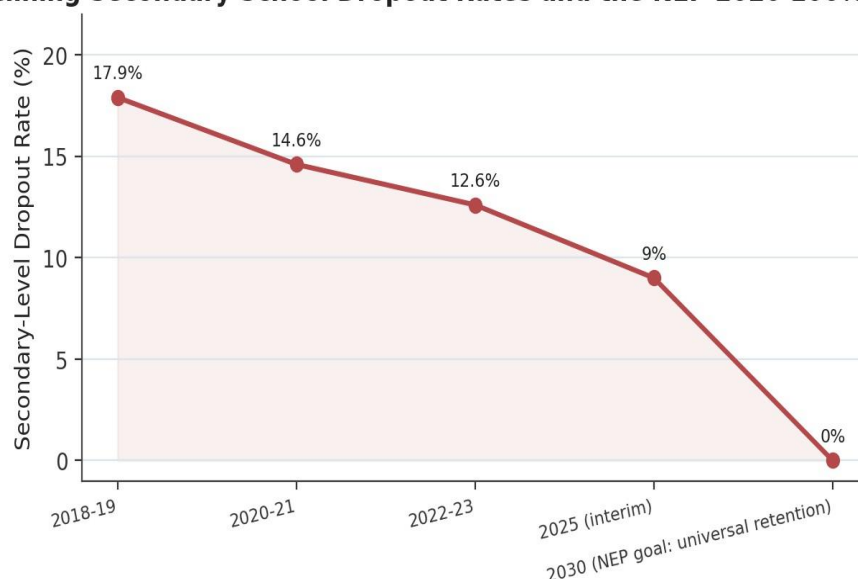
institutions, though the scheme's voluntary, opt-in structure for states, and the funding-sharing arrangements attached to it, have meant that adoption has been uneven across the country, with some states choosing not to participate in the scheme as designed. The National Curriculum Framework for School Education, released in 2023 following an extensive consultative process, has similarly begun to be translated into revised textbooks by the National Council of Educational Research and Training, with the process of aligning state-level textbooks, curricula, and assessment systems still very much underway across most states as of the time of this analysis.

In higher education, the Academic Bank of Credits had, within a few years of its establishment, been adopted by several thousand higher education institutions, with many students beginning to accumulate digitally recorded academic credits, though the practical use of these credits for genuine inter-institutional mobility, one of the central purposes of the mechanism, remains at a relatively early stage, constrained by continuing variation in how different institutions design and recognise credit-bearing courses. The four-year undergraduate programme with multiple entry and exit points has similarly been adopted by a large number of universities, particularly central and state public universities, though its implementation has generated debate among academics regarding matters such as the adequacy of institutional infrastructure to support the additional fourth year, the readiness of the teaching workforce for more flexible, choice-based curricular delivery, and the practical mechanics of the exit-and-re-entry provisions for students who leave the programme before completion. The regulations permitting the entry of foreign universities into India, notified in November 2023, had, within their first two years, led to a small number of foreign institutions, including certain deemed and top-ranked universities, announcing plans to establish campuses in India, though the scale of this internationalisation effort remains modest relative to the policy's broader ambitions.

Taken together, this early evidence suggests a pattern common to large-scale policy reforms in complex federal systems: the areas of the policy most directly under the administrative control of the central government and its national missions, such as NIPUN Bharat and the National Curriculum Framework, have generally progressed fastest, while areas requiring more fundamental institutional

restructuring, coordinated action across states, or new primary legislation, such as the establishment of the Higher Education Commission of India and the state-level State School Standards Authorities, have progressed more slowly, a pattern consistent with the concerns regarding implementation capacity and federal coordination discussed earlier in this paper.

Declining Secondary School Dropout Rates and the NEP 2020 100% GER Goal



Note: Figures broadly reflect UDISE+ trends; 2025/2030 values are illustrative projections towards NEP's universalisation goal, not official data.

Figure 3. Illustrative trend in secondary-level school dropout rates in relation to NEP 2020's universalisation goal.

GOVERNANCE AND REGULATORY RESTRUCTURING

Beyond the specific institutional bodies discussed in the context of higher education, NEP 2020 proposes a broader realignment of the governance architecture of Indian education. At the school level, the policy calls for a much sharper separation of functions among different bodies, so that the same authority does not simultaneously provide, regulate, and accredit schools, a conflation the policy identifies as a source of poor governance and weak accountability in the existing system. Under the

reformed architecture, policy-making is to remain with the Department of School Education, provision and operation of schools is to remain with a range of school-providing bodies including government departments and school boards, academic matters including curriculum are to be handled by an academic authority such as the National Council of Educational Research and Training, and regulation, in the sense of setting and enforcing basic uniform standards, is to be vested in an independent, state-level State School Standards Authority, a new body proposed for the first time in this policy, with accreditation of schools to be conducted through an

independent mechanism under the aegis of this Authority.

For higher education, as discussed earlier, the corresponding architecture is the four-vertical Higher Education Commission of India, intended to replace the University Grants Commission and the All-India Council for Technical Education as the single, overarching regulator for all higher education apart from medical and legal education, which continue to be governed by their own respective statutory bodies. The policy places particular emphasis on the principle of light but tight regulation, under which the regulatory apparatus focuses on a small number of critical matters, such as financial probity, good governance, and the disclosure of accurate information for public scrutiny and accountability, while granting institutions substantially greater autonomy over academic and other matters, including curriculum design, pedagogy, and admissions, within a broad regulatory framework.

A further significant governance reform concerns institutional autonomy itself. The policy calls for graded autonomy to be given to colleges on the basis of the status of their accreditation, and it envisages a system in which colleges are eventually either developed into full-fledged, autonomous, degree-granting institutions or clustered into or merged with existing universities, as part of the broader transition away from the long-standing system of college affiliation described earlier. The policy is careful to note that this transition is intended to occur over a period of fifteen years, in a phased and gradual manner, reflecting the drafters' apparent recognition that the scale of India's higher education system, comprising several tens of thousands of colleges affiliated to a few hundred universities, makes any more rapid restructuring administratively and politically impractical.

FINANCING THE VISION: PUBLIC INVESTMENT IN EDUCATION

No analysis of NEP 2020 would be complete without close attention to the question of financing, since the policy's ambitions, spanning the creation of 3.5 crore new higher education seats, the restructuring of teacher education, the universalisation of foundational literacy and numeracy, and the establishment of an entirely new regulatory architecture, carry substantial fiscal implications. The policy reiterates a target first articulated in the Kothari Commission report of 1966, and repeated in the 1968 and 1986 policies without ever being achieved, namely that public, that is, government, investment in education should be increased to reach six percent of Gross Domestic Product at the earliest possible date, to be achieved jointly by the central government and the state governments, given their shared, concurrent responsibility for education.

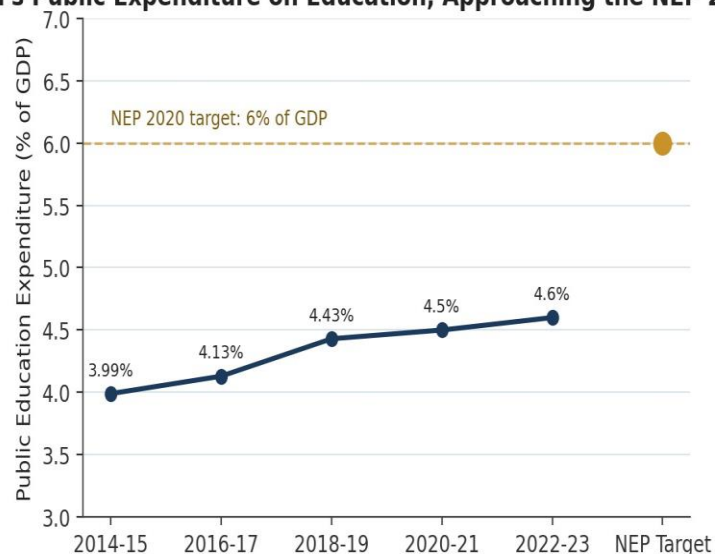
In practice, India's combined public expenditure on education by central and state governments has, according to successive editions of the Economic Survey of India and Ministry of Education budget documents, generally hovered in a range from just below four percent to a little over four and a half percent of GDP in the years surrounding the release of NEP 2020, a level that, while representing incremental improvement over previous decades, remains meaningfully below the policy's six percent target and also below the global average expenditure levels typically observed in countries that have achieved strong and equitable education outcomes. Achieving the six percent target would require a very substantial and sustained increase in the share of overall government spending, at both the central and state levels, allocated to education, a shift that competes with numerous other pressing claims on the public exchequer, including health, infrastructure, and defence.

The policy also calls for a significant increase in the proportion of overall government

spending directed toward education, from around ten percent to twenty percent over time, and it envisages that this increased public investment will be supplemented by philanthropic and private contributions, alongside a more efficient and transparent use of existing resources, better targeting of subsidies and scholarships toward genuinely disadvantaged students, and the creation of a dedicated fund for reaching the two crore out-of-school children the policy commits to bringing back into the education system. The 2023 legislation establishing the Anusandhan National Research Foundation, with its stated outlay of fifty thousand crore rupees over five years for research funding,

and the various centrally sponsored schemes such as Samagra Shiksha and PM SHRI, a scheme launched in 2022 to develop more than fourteen thousand model schools that exemplify the various provisions of NEP 2020, represent partial, incremental steps toward the policy's broader financing vision, though independent analysts and parliamentary standing committee reports have periodically noted that actual budgetary allocations for education continue to fall short of both the six percent of GDP target and, in some years, of the specific requirements articulated for individual NEP-linked schemes and institutions.

India's Public Expenditure on Education, Approaching the NEP 2020 Goal



Note: Figures are broadly representative of government budget documents and Economic Survey estimates; exact annual figures vary by source and revision.

Figure 4. India's public expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP, relative to the NEP 2020 target of 6% of GDP.

Illustrative Thematic Emphasis Across NEP 2020's Key Reform Areas

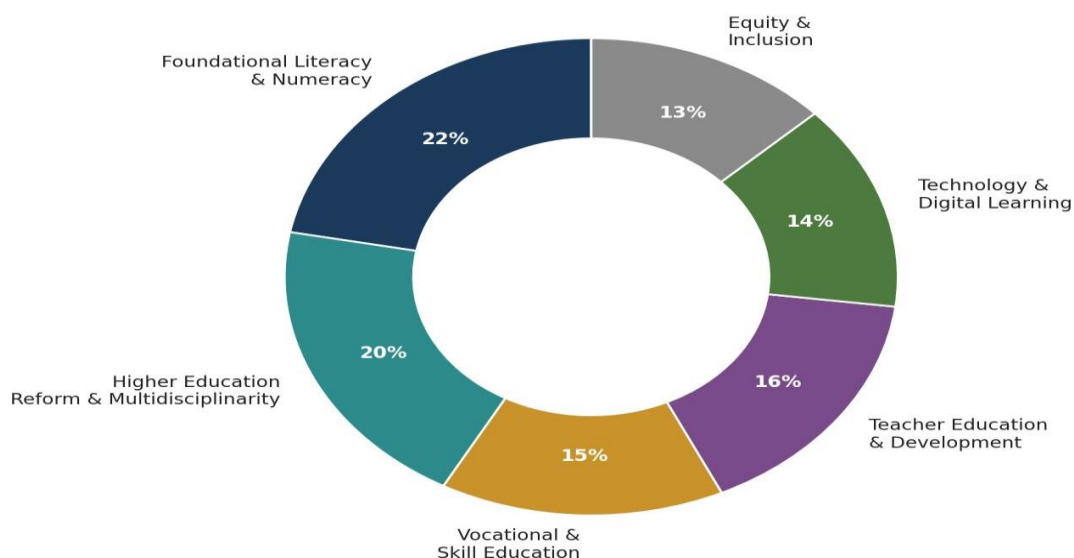


Figure 5. Illustrative distribution of thematic emphasis across NEP 2020's major reform areas.

IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES

The distance between the articulation of an ambitious policy vision and its faithful implementation on the ground is, in any large and complex federal democracy, often considerable, and NEP 2020 is no exception. A first and fundamental challenge concerns federalism itself. Because education sits on the Concurrent List, and because school education, in particular, is substantially administered by state governments, the practical implementation of NEP 2020 depends heavily on the willingness and capacity of individual states to align their own curricula, assessment systems, teacher recruitment practices, and budgetary priorities with the national policy. Several states, including some governed by parties not aligned with the central government, have expressed reservations about specific provisions of the policy, particularly around language and the perceived risk of central overreach into a domain of shared constitutional responsibility, and a small number of states have indicated an intention to develop their own state-specific

education policies rather than adopt the national framework wholesale.

A second challenge concerns institutional and administrative capacity. Reforms such as the transition of teacher education entirely to a four-year integrated model by 2030, the conversion or closure of thousands of stand-alone, sub-standard teacher education institutions, the transformation of the vast majority of India's affiliated colleges into larger multidisciplinary institutions over a fifteen-year period, and the establishment of a State School Standards Authority in every state, all require significant new administrative machinery, technical expertise, and sustained bureaucratic attention over many years, at a time when existing education departments and regulatory bodies are, in many states, already stretched thin. The formal establishment of the Higher Education Commission of India through parliamentary legislation, a foundational piece of the policy's institutional architecture, had, as of the drafting of this paper, still not been completed several years after the policy's approval, illustrating the practical difficulty

of translating even the policy's most structurally central proposals into functioning institutions.

A third challenge concerns resources, discussed in greater detail in the preceding section on financing, where the persistent gap between the policy's six percent of GDP target and actual public expenditure levels raises legitimate questions about whether the more resource-intensive elements of the policy, including universal early childhood care and education, a substantially expanded higher education system, and comprehensive digital infrastructure reaching every school in the country, can be realised on the ambitious timelines the policy itself sets out.

A fourth challenge concerns the readiness of the teaching workforce and existing institutions for the pedagogical shifts the policy demands. A move away from rote memorisation toward competency-based, experiential, and multidisciplinary learning requires not only curriculum redesign, itself a substantial undertaking being carried out through the National Curriculum Framework process, but also a fundamental reorientation in how millions of serving teachers, many trained under, and for decades comfortable with, an earlier pedagogical paradigm, are expected to teach, a transition that cannot be accomplished through policy directives alone and will require sustained, well-resourced professional development over many years.

A fifth and related challenge concerns equity in implementation itself: there is a recognised risk that better-resourced states, districts, and institutions will be able to move more quickly and effectively to adopt the reforms envisaged in NEP 2020, potentially widening, rather than narrowing, existing regional and social disparities in educational quality, unless implementation is accompanied by deliberately calibrated, differentiated support for the most disadvantaged regions and communities, a concern that echoes broader debates in Indian federalism about the uneven capacity of different states to absorb and act upon centrally articulated policy frameworks.

A Comparative and International Perspective

Placed alongside international trends in education policy over the past two decades, several elements of NEP 2020 reflect approaches that have gained currency in other major education systems, even as the Indian policy adapts them to the country's own scale and context. The emphasis on foundational literacy and numeracy as a distinct, measurable, and time-bound national priority echoes similar movements in countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States, where early-grade reading and numeracy interventions, supported by the science of learning, have become central planks of education reform. The shift toward competency-based, formative assessment and away from high-stakes, memorisation-oriented examinations reflects a broader international trend visible in the assessment frameworks of countries that perform strongly on international comparative assessments such as the Programme for International Student Assessment, administered by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, an assessment India had largely stepped back from participating in after a difficult experience in the 2009 cycle, though the country has since indicated an intention to re-engage with international benchmarking exercises.

The multiple entry and exit points, credit accumulation, and credit transfer mechanisms introduced for undergraduate education in India bear a structural resemblance to credit-based systems long in place in the United States and, more recently, formalised across the European Higher Education Area through the Bologna Process and the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System, both of which similarly sought to increase student mobility and flexibility across a historically fragmented set of national higher education systems. The consolidation of small, single-discipline institutions into larger, multidisciplinary universities parallels, in some respects, longer-term trends of institutional consolidation observed in a number of European and East Asian higher education systems over past decades, undertaken in those contexts, as in the case of NEP 2020, in pursuit of greater

efficiency, research capacity, and the interdisciplinary collaboration increasingly demanded by contemporary knowledge production.

At the same time, several elements of NEP 2020, including its treatment of language, its explicit engagement with Indian civilisational and philosophical traditions in framing educational purpose, and the sheer scale at which it must be implemented, across a system serving well over a quarter of a billion school-going children and tens of millions of higher education students, distinguish the Indian reform effort from comparable exercises in smaller, more homogeneous, or more centrally administered education systems elsewhere in the world, and they suggest that international comparison, while instructive, offers only limited guidance on the specific implementation pathways likely to prove most effective within the Indian federal and social context.

NEP 2020 and the Changing Nature of Work

A further dimension worth examining in any forward-looking analysis of NEP 2020 is the relationship between the policy's reforms and the broader transformation of work and the economy that India, along with the rest of the world, is expected to undergo over the coming decades, driven by automation, artificial intelligence, the growth of the digital and gig economy, and the increasing premium placed by employers on adaptability, interdisciplinary thinking, and continuous learning rather than narrow, static specialisation acquired once at the start of a career. NEP 2020's emphasis on multidisciplinary education, critical thinking, creativity, and the capacity for lifelong learning can be read as a direct, if implicit, response to this changing landscape, reflecting an underlying wager by the policy's drafters that an education system optimised for a more predictable, industrial-era labour market will leave graduates poorly prepared for an economy in which the specific technical skills demanded by employers may change substantially within the span of a single career.

The policy's provisions for vocational education integrated into mainstream schooling and higher education, discussed earlier, are similarly oriented toward this changing economic context, reflecting an explicit acknowledgement that a significant proportion of India's workforce, including the very large cohort of young people expected to enter the labour force over the coming two decades as the country's demographic dividend continues to unfold, will require practical, industry-relevant skills that a purely academic, examination-oriented education has historically failed to provide. The policy's emphasis on multiple entry and exit points in higher education, and on the accumulation and portability of academic credits through the Academic Bank of Credits, can likewise be understood as an attempt to build a more resilient and adaptable education system, one capable of accommodating individuals who need to pause, restart, or redirect their education and training at various points across a working life that is, for a growing share of the workforce, unlikely to follow the traditional linear pattern of education followed by a single, stable career.

At the same time, the paper's earlier discussion of implementation challenges applies with particular force to this dimension of the policy: the extent to which India's education system actually succeeds in producing graduates equipped for a rapidly changing labour market will depend not merely on the flexibility built into curricular structures on paper, but on the quality of teaching, the currency of vocational training content relative to actual industry needs, the depth and continuity of industry-education partnerships envisaged by the policy, and the pace at which the underlying infrastructure, including digital access and modern laboratories and workshops, can be built out across a system that still, in large parts of the country, lacks even basic physical infrastructure such as reliable electricity, functional toilets, and internet connectivity, disparities that a purely curricular or regulatory reform, however well designed, cannot by itself resolve.

CRITICAL ASSESSMENT: STRENGTHS, CONCERNS, AND OPEN QUESTIONS

A balanced assessment of NEP 2020 must weigh its genuine strengths against a set of legitimate concerns that have been raised by academics, civil society organisations, teachers' associations, and political actors since the policy's release. Among its clearest strengths is the policy's explicit prioritisation of foundational literacy and numeracy, a response directly grounded in more than a decade of empirical evidence on the Indian learning crisis, and one that enjoys unusually broad cross-partisan support, as reflected in the near-universal adoption of the NIPUN Bharat mission's goals across state governments regardless of their political affiliation. Similarly, the policy's emphasis on flexibility, multidisciplinary, and the reduction of the historically rigid separation between the arts, sciences, and vocational streams responds to a genuine and widely shared frustration with the narrowness and inflexibility of the pre-existing system, and it aligns Indian higher education more closely with the kind of interdisciplinary thinking increasingly demanded by contemporary research and employment.

Among the concerns most frequently raised, several deserve particular attention in a rigorous analysis. First, critics have questioned whether the policy adequately grapples with the sheer scale of resources required for its implementation, given that the six percent of GDP target has never been achieved by any Indian government since it was first proposed more than fifty years ago, raising doubts about whether this specific target will finally be met under NEP 2020 or will instead join its predecessors as an aspiration repeatedly deferred. Second, some state governments and language scholars have expressed continued unease about the three-language formula and the emphasis on mother-tongue instruction, particularly regarding the practical challenges of developing quality teaching-learning materials and trained teachers in every regional and local language across a country with hundreds of spoken languages,

and regarding the underlying political sensitivities around language that have periodically flared into open contestation in parts of the country.

Third, some commentators have raised concerns about the pace and manner of the proposed transition away from college affiliation and toward large multidisciplinary institutions, noting that many of India's affiliated colleges, particularly in rural and semi-urban areas, serve first-generation learners and disadvantaged communities who may find a distant, consolidated institution less accessible than the smaller, more local college they currently attend, unless the transition is managed with careful attention to preserving geographic access even as institutional scale increases. Fourth, questions have been raised about the entry of foreign universities into India, an implementation of one of the policy's internationalisation provisions, regarding the terms on which such entry occurs, including concerns about equitable access, affordability, and the risk that such institutions might primarily serve a narrow, already-privileged segment of Indian students rather than meaningfully expanding overall access and quality across the system.

Fifth, and perhaps most fundamentally, there remains an open question about the sequencing and pacing of implementation itself: NEP 2020 is, by its own design, a twenty-year policy horizon, intended to unfold gradually through the 2020s, 2030s, and into the 2040s, yet it operates within a political system characterised by electoral cycles of five years and periodic changes in government at both the central and state levels, raising a legitimate question about whether the sustained, cross-cutting political commitment the policy's long timeline requires can, in practice, be maintained across successive governments and administrations over the two decades the policy itself anticipates.

CONCLUSION: TOWARDS THE FUTURE OF INDIAN EDUCATION

The National Education Policy 2020 represents, in both its stated ambitions and its specific structural proposals, a genuine attempt to reimagine the purpose, structure, and governance of education in India for the twenty-first century. It moves decisively away from a system organised primarily around rigid streams, rote memorisation, and high-stakes, one-shot examinations, and toward a system organised around flexibility, multidisciplinary, foundational learning, and holistic human development. It reconceives the relationship between school and vocational education, between the disciplines within higher education, and between Indian and international systems of learning, and it proposes an entirely new regulatory architecture intended to separate functions that had, for decades, been dangerously conflated within single institutions.

At the same time, this paper's analysis has sought to demonstrate that the true significance of NEP 2020 cannot be assessed from the text of the policy document alone. The history of Indian education policy since the Kothari Commission of the 1960s is, in important respects, a history of ambitious targets articulated and only partially realised, most notably the six percent of GDP expenditure target that NEP 2020 itself inherits, unmet, from its two predecessor policies. The considerable implementation challenges examined in this paper, spanning federalism, institutional capacity, financing, teacher readiness, and the discipline required to sustain a twenty-year reform agenda across changing political administrations, mean that the paradigm shift NEP 2020 articulates will be realised only to the extent that it is matched by sustained political commitment, adequate and predictable financing, and patient, well-supported capacity-building at the level of individual states, districts, institutions, and classrooms.

What can be said with reasonable confidence is that NEP 2020 has already reshaped the terms of the national conversation about

education in India, placing foundational learning, flexibility, multidisciplinary, and equity at the centre of policy discourse in a way that its 1986 predecessor did not, and it has set in motion a series of institutional and curricular changes, from NIPUN Bharat and the National Curriculum Framework to the Academic Bank of Credits and the Anusandhan National Research Foundation, that are already, in incremental and uneven ways, altering the lived experience of students, teachers, and institutions across the country. Whether these early steps culminate, over the coming two decades, in the fully realised paradigm shift the policy envisions, or whether NEP 2020 ultimately joins its predecessors as a partially implemented statement of aspiration, will depend on choices yet to be made by governments, institutions, and citizens across India in the years ahead. What is not in doubt is that the stakes of this undertaking, for the future of over a quarter of a billion school-going children, tens of millions of students in higher education, and the country's broader social and economic trajectory in the decades to come, could scarcely be higher.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Building on the analysis presented in this paper, several broad recommendations emerge for policymakers, institutions, and other stakeholders seeking to strengthen the implementation of NEP 2020 over the remainder of its two-decade horizon. First, financing should be treated as a first-order implementation priority rather than a residual concern: state and central governments should work toward a credible, jointly agreed, and time-bound roadmap for progressively increasing public education expenditure toward the six percent of GDP target, with interim, publicly reported milestones that allow for meaningful accountability, rather than treating the target as an aspirational statement disconnected from annual budgetary processes.

Second, the pending legislative and institutional steps central to the policy's governance architecture, most notably the formal establishment

of the Higher Education Commission of India and its four constituent verticals, and the establishment of State School Standards Authorities in every state, should be expedited, since much of the coherence the policy promises depends on these bodies functioning as designed, with the specific separation of regulatory, standard-setting, funding, and accreditation functions that the policy identifies as essential to resolving the conflicts of interest that weakened the pre-existing system.

Third, implementation support should be deliberately differentiated and weighted toward less-resourced states, districts, and institutions, including additional technical assistance, dedicated capacity-building funding, and realistic, locally calibrated timelines, so that the transition to the new curricular structures, teacher education requirements, and institutional consolidation processes does not inadvertently widen existing regional and social disparities in educational quality, a risk identified explicitly in this paper's discussion of implementation challenges.

Fourth, sustained investment in teacher professional development should accompany, and indeed precede, curricular and pedagogical reforms at the classroom level, since the policy's vision of experiential, competency-based, multidisciplinary learning cannot be delivered by a teaching workforce that has not itself been adequately prepared and supported for this pedagogical shift, a process that will necessarily unfold over years rather than a single academic cycle.

Fifth, robust, transparent, and independent monitoring and evaluation mechanisms should be established and regularly published, covering both the specific quantitative targets articulated in the policy, such as the fifty percent higher education Gross Enrolment Ratio and universal foundational literacy and numeracy by Grade 3, and broader indicators of educational quality and equity, so that the policy's implementation can be tracked, course-corrected, and held accountable to the citizens whose children's futures it is ultimately designed to shape, across the multiple changes in political

administration the policy's twenty-year horizon will inevitably span.

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