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RESEARCH ARTICLE

NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY 2020: PRACTICAL IMPEDIMENTS AND CHALLENGES

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Abstract

Quality education has been crucial and in demand in a rapidly changing global scenario. With the advent of new theories like constructivism in education, the academicians and the theorists believe that learners develop their understanding through experience rather than by stimulus and response which were the core concepts in the traditional behaviorist theories. National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) is a document that seeks to make education equitable, inclusive and sustainable. The Policy advocates 'flexibility' for the learners, to opt for the learning trajectories and programs, 'no hard separation' between different domains of studies and 'multidisciplinary' education. The policy has proposed to bring structural changes to the education system. The present paper is an attempt to foreground the challenges and hindrances to implementing and practicing a few of the structural changes and aspects. NEP 2020 states that the students will be able to choose many of the subjects and the level in which they take the Board examination- Medium level and Advanced level. The student will select different subjects for study in class 9th. This may invite more challenges relating to infrastructure, conducting examinations, recruiting teachers, etc. Emphasis on the mother tongue as a medium of instruction may be a problem for the children of people in transferable jobs, this means the private English Medium Schools will keep on flourishing. As per the guidelines the Foreign Colleges will be permitted to open campuses in India, however, there is less possibility to get admission in these colleges for the students whose medium of instruction will be regional language. This may again lead to widening the rift between the economically poor and the rich and may invite unequal learning patterns.

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Introduction:-

Quality education has been crucial and in demand in a rapidly changing global scenario. With the advent of new theories like constructivism in education, the academicians and the theorists believe that learners develop their understanding through experience rather than by stimulus and response which were the core concepts in the traditional behaviorist theories. In the twentieth century, the term "education" was used in phrases such as "spread of education", and "need of education" in India but nowadays to meet the complex global challenges, in an information-based society; the term "education" is accompanied by the word "quality" and the emphasis is on "quality education" "A quality education has the power to transform societies in a single generation, provide

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children with the protection they need from the hazards... gives them the knowledge, skills and confidence to reach their full potential” (Burns, A. 2010). To develop an equitable and just society and to promote national development, the opening line of NEP 2020 states, “Providing universal access to quality education is the key to economic growth, social justice and equality, scientific advancement, national integration, and cultural preservation; and for India’s continued ascent, progress, and leadership on the global stage.” (P.3: NEP 2020) The earlier guidelines or policy documents on education in India envisioned certain core ideas- *Nayi Talim* states that knowledge and work are not different, it focused on education of free India, Education Policy 1968 advocated education for national development, whereas, National Policy on Education 1986 proposed educational transformation. National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) is a document that seeks to make education equitable, inclusive and sustainable. It has become “increasingly important that children not only learn but learn how to learn.” The Policy advocates ‘flexibility’ for the learners, to opt for the learning trajectories and programmes, ‘no hard separation’ between different domains of studies, and ‘multidisciplinary’ education. The policy has proposed to bring structural changes to the education system.

The present paper is an attempt to foreground the challenges and hindrances to implementing and practicing a few of the structural changes and aspects. NEP 2020 states that the students will be able to choose any of the subjects and the level in which they take the Board examination- Medium level and Advanced level. The student will select different subjects for study in class 9th. This may invite more challenges relating to infrastructure, conducting examinations, recruiting teachers, etc.

It is undoubtedly accepted that it is a vision document and it will take time to create infrastructure, however, academic administrative activities such as setting timetables, conducting examinations, and providing actual choice of subject in certain secondary schools may be a great trouble. According to the 8th survey of All India School Education Survey (AISES), only 5% of the total schools have a Higher Secondary school status. Post Graduate Teachers (PGT) are appointed to teach Advanced Level in any of the subjects selected by the students in the 11th and 12th classes (Higher Secondary). This means the eligible teachers to teach advanced level are only in the 5% schools. When the students shall opt for medium and advanced levels, the examination board will have to schedule two examinations for the same subject. This will not only prolong the examination period but also will call for doubling the work of setting the question paper for the same subject and class and ultimately will ask to increase the human resources which is one of the major requirements in the present situation as well. It has been observed that although the choice of selecting different subjects for studies is available at present on paper most of the Junior Colleges in Maharashtra offer only the fixed set of subjects that has been decided by the management. Hence the dream to select subjects at two levels in class 9th seems hardly possible.

To cite the example at the micro level, in the Yanam district (Region) of Puducherry there are two clusters- GGPS Yanam cluster and GPS Kanakalpet cluster. A total of 35 government schools are run in these two clusters, however, only 4 schools have the status of Higher Secondary level. Three of them are only for classes 11th and 12th. It seems out of 35 schools only 4 schools have teachers who can teach the advanced level. So the administrative challenge will be to merge these schools with others or extend the infrastructure of these 4 schools so that the 9th and 10th class students shall be accommodated. This is the situation in most of the territories in India. This will be a real challenge to meet the required infrastructure.

Assessment reviews by peers and teachers may be a good practice, however, it may not bring authentic results in all the situations and places so it may influence the result of the student who has been assessed. Having worked as the PGT in one of the CBSE schools, the researcher has noticed that most of the project works given under Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) remain formalities that deviate from the core objective of learning by experience.

Emphasis on the mother tongue as a medium of instruction may be a problem for the children of people in transferable jobs, this means the private English Medium Schools will keep on flourishing. As per the guidelines the Foreign Colleges will be permitted to open campuses in India, however, there is less possibility to get admission in these colleges for the students whose medium of instruction will be regional language. This may again lead to widening the rift between the economically poor and the rich and may invite unequal learning patterns. “The opening up of the Indian Economy in the 1990s has coincided with an explosion in the demand for English in our schools because English is perceived to open up opportunities.” (Das 2005 quoted in Position Paper NCF 2005) Keeping this in view, instead of transforming the status of present schools to at least semi-English medium

schools, emphasizing the mother tongue medium schools, may be again a hurdle in opening up the global doors for employment.

The last two decades of the twentieth century and the first two of the present century saw a great demand for the introduction of English at the initial stages. The spirit and the recommendations to introduce English at a relatively later stage in the previous policy documents were criticized and dissatisfaction was evident in "... mushrooming of private English medium schools and the early introduction of English in state school systems." (NCF 2005) It is widely accepted that children learn and comprehend the concept more quickly in their mother tongue, hence NEP 2020 affirms, "Wherever possible, medium of instruction until at least grade 5, but preferably till Grade 8 and beyond, will be the home language/mother-tongue/local language." However research shows that children pick up languages quickly between the ages of 2 and 8, in addition to this research brought forth that multilingualism has great cognitive benefits for young students, therefore students should be exposed to different languages early on.

According to NEP 2020, the Gross Enrollment Ratio in higher education shall increase from 26.3 % (2018) to 50 % by 2030. The students enrolled in higher education in the year 2020 were more than 40 million across India. In the next twelve years the expected estimated number of students to be enrolled in higher education in 2035 is around 92 million. These figures may be important for official records but the quality should not be measured by the statistics. The article in The Economic Times on August 30, 2018, 02:09 PM IST reports 3700 Ph. D. holders, 50,000 graduates, and 28000 PGs applied for peon jobs. This indicates that quality education is lacking or the degree holders are not confident about their skills and knowledge. Hence, more steps should be taken to upgrade the quality rather than focusing on increasing the numbers.

Constituting the Higher Education Commission of India looks like a welcome step but the target of establishing multi-disciplinary universities and colleges by 2040 may be the toughest challenge to be faced. Meanwhile, certain institutes may lose their individual characteristics for which they are known. Many institutes in India are specifically known for offering particular courses and are known for their excellence. This will also invite the challenges of meeting the infrastructural needs and the recruitment of the faculty. In order to achieve the objective of NEP 2020 the government has to invest at least 6 % of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the country, however, India's expenditure on education hovers around 3% of GDP, falling short of the recommended 6% by a significant margin, as in the earlier policies, to meet the objective it should be invested.

Overall, the policy looks ideal but it may be the toughest task to implement with the allotted funds, infrastructural, and other challenges.

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