

National Education Policy: Implications for schools

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The National Education Policy 2020 covers various aspects from early childhood care to higher education and focuses on skill development and multidisciplinary learning. The need for a skilled workforce, particularly involving mathematics, computer science, and data science, in conjunction with multidisciplinary abilities across the sciences, social sciences, and humanities, has been the underlying theme of the recommendations in NEP.

The NEP aims to reform the curriculum such that students learn how to learn, shift from rote learning to understanding and analysis as well as develop intellectual and social skills. To advance this agenda, the NEP suggests schools include experiential, holistic, integrated, inquiry-driven, and discovery-oriented learning, where students develop skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, adaptiveness, innovation, and creativity. Apart from cognitive capacities, the policy aims to develop social, ethical, and emotional capacities and dispositions. The emphasis on the holistic development of students from the foundation stage to higher education and preparing them for employment has led to promising policy suggestions.

Developing on the agenda of multidisciplinary learning, the suggestions for the curriculum include an emphasis on non-academics and subjects other than science and maths. NEP suggests the inclusion of basic arts, crafts, humanities, games, sports and fitness, languages, literature, culture, and values. The focus on Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) is also an important step as 85% of brain development occurs before age 6. However, it is important that the school focuses on flexible and play-based learning. Suggestions for mental health and inclusiveness along with a dedicated and qualified counsellor need to be considered and prioritised by schools. The NEP has also emphasised on connecting students with their cultural roots and studying subjects through an Indian perspective. Furthermore, the suggestions on one-on-one peer tutoring and the inclusion of teacher welfare policies can be profoundly beneficial for schools. The main policy suggestions summarising and covering school education are:

- The current 10+2 structure of school education will be redesigned into a 5-3-3-4 design comprising: (i) five years of foundational stage (for ages 3 to 8), (ii) three years of preparatory stage (for ages 8 to 11 or classes three to five), (iii) three years of middle stage (for ages 11 to 14 or classes six to eight), and (iv) four years of secondary stage (for ages 14 to 18 or classes 9 to 12).
- It recommends that every student should attain foundational literacy and numeracy by grade three.
- Students should be given more flexibility and choice in subjects of study, particularly in secondary school.

- The Medium of Instruction should be in the local language/mother tongue of the child at least till grade five, and preferably till grade eight.
- A 10-day bagless period sometime during Grades 6-8 to intern with local vocational experts such as carpenters, gardeners, potters, artists, etc.
- There will be no hard separation among 'curricular', 'extracurricular', or 'co-curricular', among 'arts', 'humanities', and 'sciences', or between 'vocational' or 'academic' streams.
- The National Testing Agency (NTA) will offer a high-quality common aptitude test, as well as specialized common subject exams in the sciences, humanities, languages, arts, and vocational subjects, at least twice every year for university entrance exams.
- Students will get a 360-degree holistic report card, which will not only inform them about the marks obtained by them in subjects but also their skills and other important points.
- In order to reduce the importance and stress of the board exam, the exam will be conducted in two parts: Objective and descriptive. Exams can be conducted twice a year.
- Students of class 6 and onwards will be taught coding in schools as a part of 21st-century skills.

Implementation

The University Grants Commission (UGC) aims to begin proper implementation of the NEP from July 2022. The Indian government has made some progress in designing the implementation strategies. Implementation strategies for the following have been listed by the National Institute of Education Planning and Administration:

- Early Childhood Care and Education
- Enrolment targets
- Efficient resourcing and effective governance
- Equity, diversity and inclusion in school and higher education
- Standard setting and accreditation for school and higher education
- Teacher management and development
- Vocational and skill development in school and higher education
- Operationalisation of National Educational Technology Forum
- Operationalisation of National Research Foundation

While the NEP lays out the principles for a better education system and the rationale behind those, it does not specify what it really means for schools. Many of the suggestions require the government to plan and produce appropriate material for the schools to implement the policy. The Ministry of Education and NCERT are in the process of modifying the curriculum and defining these policies with specifications on the structure, responsibilities, and implementation.

According to the [implementation achievements](#) listed by the Ministry of Education (MoE), the following have been achieved:

Theme	Progress
Curriculum for building competencies and holistic development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The implementation plan SARTHAQ has been designed for students' and teachers' holistic advancement. ● Test items for classes 1-5 in Maths, English and Hindi have been developed to include activity questions, subjective questions and logical reasoning. It is available in the DIKSHA portal. ● National Digital Education Architecture has been launched to create and open public digital education infrastructure that can be used by multiple platforms to address India's scale, diversity, complexity and device penetration. ● Introduced 30% competency-based questions in class 10 and 20% in class 12 examinations for the session 2021-22.
Inclusiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● An integrated scheme for providing quality and inclusive education, Samgra Shiksha has been launched. ● PM eVIDYA programme has been developed for visually and hearing-impaired students.
Foundational and Numerical Literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● MoE launched a National Initiative for Proficiency in Reading with Understanding in Numeracy (NIPUN Bharat) which aims to ensure every child attains foundational literacy and numeracy by grade 3 by 2026-27.
Teacher Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● National Mission to improve learning outcomes at the elementary level through an integrated teacher training programme called NISHTHA has been launched.
Vocational Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Exposure of vocational education for upper primary students has been approved for 6316 schools.
Quality Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In 2021, The Department of Education published School Safety and Security guidelines.

Guidelines for setting standards and assessment reforms and minimising regulatory compliance burden on citizens is being created. The following action items of the NEP are in progress:

- Redefining the curriculum in terms of competencies and learning standards outlined in the NEP for grade 9 and 11
- Reforming assessment practises to include competency-based test questions
- Initiated capacity building programmes for teachers to promote understanding

- appreciation, and skills for competency-based education
- Initiated development of curriculum-aligned essential concepts and lesson plans and lesson plans for teachers that would support them implementing active student-centric pedagogy
- Preparing standards in different areas of school functioning like curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, infrastructure, inclusive practises, human resources, management and governance and leadership.
- National Professional Standards for Teachers is being developed
- A 4-year dual major holistic BA/B.Ed. will be offered as a pilot programme
- Creating a large pool of mentors for students
- Designing a course on entrepreneurship to encourage innovation among students
- Guidelines for gifted students is being created
- In the process of making admission, affiliation, inspection, teacher recruitment, and teacher transfer transparent and time-bound. Currently the board has identified 59 burdensome compliances covering its autonomous bodies and 52 of these have been less burdensome.

Implications for Schools

The NEP proposes several changes to the current education system and schools would need to quickly adapt to meet the targets. The Indian government has published several resources and guidelines for the schools to begin working on improving their standards and incorporating suggestions such as multilingualism, vocational education, and teacher training among others. The school management and teachers need to be aware of the policy changes and have a strategy for implementation. Accountability at the school level would also be strengthened when implementing NEP. Schools are also being graded based on their educational stamina and visionary leadership to cherish the goals of modern India.

For the schools to adapt and evolve according to NEP, some of the changes the schools would need to make are as follows:

- Adopt the updated curriculum materials and guidelines
- Get approval for vocational training
- Train teachers according to NEP guidelines
- Build a strategy for ECCE to adopt the 5-3-3-4 strategy
- Ensure foundational and numerical literacy by grade 3
- Incorporate inclusiveness guidelines
- Adhere to government school safety, health and quality standards

- Build a strategy for flexibility and a greater role of teachers in designing lesson plans and determining pedagogies
- Build a strategy for reducing administrative tasks for teachers to enable them to focus on the course and ideation of innovative assessments
- Build a strategy for developing competencies of students
- Build a strategy for involving alumni and outsourcing mentors

Since 2020, the pandemic has compelled schools to incorporate different and innovative teaching methods. Along with these changing times, the NEP 2020 seeks to reform education in schools, making it crucial for schools to begin planning their advancement in quality standards according to the NEP. Schools have to adapt to the disruption caused by the pandemic but they also need to plan for the future as new models would be imperative for the future of learning. In this context, the NEP could help schools improve learning outcomes.
