## A COMPARATIVE EVALUATION OF INDIA'S HIGHER EDUCATION REFORMS: NPE 1986 VS. NEP 2020

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ABSTRACT :

Education is a powerful instrument for national development. Over time, India has seen major shifts in its educational policy. This paper presents a comparative evaluation of the National Policy on Education (NPE) 1986 and the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 with specific reference to higher education. NEP 2020, the first comprehensive education policy of the 21st century, addresses the structural shortcomings of the past while promoting a more inclusive, flexible, and research-driven educational ecosystem. Through qualitative analysis of policy documents and secondary data, this study highlights key reforms and innovations in higher education as proposed in both policies.
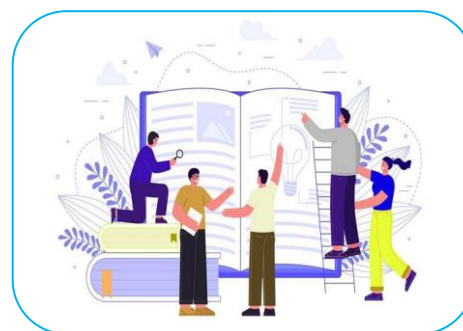
KEYWORDS : Education policy, Higher education, NEP 2020, NPE 1986, Policy comparison, Academic reforms.

INTRODUCTION:

India's education system has historically played a critical role in shaping societal development. With the first National Education Policy introduced in 1968, subsequent reforms in 1986 and 1992 reflected changing national priorities. After more than three decades, the NEP 2020 emerged as a visionary document aimed at transforming the entire education landscape, especially higher education. This paper examines how NEP 2020 differs from its predecessor in intent, structure, and outcomes for higher learning institutions.

PRINCIPLES OF POLICY

The following are the essential concepts that will guide both the education system as whole and particular institutions within it.

- Recognizing, identifying, and fostering the unique capabilities of each student.
- Flexibility.
- There are no definite divisions.
- Multidisciplinary and a holistic approach to learning.
- A focus on conceptual comprehension
- creativity and critical thinking
- The centre of the learning process is teachers and faculty.

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NEED FOR THE STUDY
1. To comprehend the NEP 2020 concept.
2. To know the benefits of the policy.
3. Must be aware of the concerns and challenges that the government faces in implementing the policy.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM
The present education system orients the students towards the concept of the subject. It does not give skill based learning concept to the students there by creating the gap industry between academic.

The employability of the students may be hampered due to the above fact. In present education system there is no multiple entries and multiple exits for the course. This may not help the students to get certificate diploma or degree to the students. Under NEP 2020 the above factors are overcome hence in the regard the study is undertaken.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY
– To outline the major recommendations of NPE 1986 regarding higher education.
– To highlight the innovations introduced in NEP 2020 for higher education.
– To study the issues and challenges of NEP 2020 in higher education.
– To study how best NEP 2020 can help the students in higher education.
– To present a comparative analysis of the two policies in terms of their approach, structure, and implementation.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS
– What were the key recommendations of NPE 1986 on higher education?
– How does NEP 2020 propose to reform higher education?
– In what ways do the two policies differ in addressing the needs of higher education in India?

METHODOLOGY
This research is qualitative in nature and relies on secondary sources including official policy documents, journal articles, and academic commentaries. A comparative framework is used to analyze the policy directives of NPE 1986 and NEP 2020.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE
Previous studies have recognized the NPE 1986 for its focus on equal educational opportunities and literacy. However, critiques point out its limited adaptability to evolving global education trends. NEP 2020, by contrast, has been praised for its holistic, multidisciplinary vision, though challenges regarding implementation remain.

NPE 1968: We have a revered or respected place for education in Indian society and our leaders and freedom fighters have fought for this right in the past. In past independence so many reforms have done so much for the education for the national development. Kothai commission 1964- 1966 was set at end of the third five year plan. So that it could have reviewed the educational system in all aspects. The NPE 1968 based on the recommendation of Kothai commission. NPE 1968 launched by Prime minister Indira Gandhi. This was aimed at "Radical Restructuring".

NPE 1986: National policy on education 1986 was started after review of NPE 1968 after every 5 years NPE 1968 was reviewed, as a result of the review in NPE 1986 was formed during Rajiv Gandhi government. The NPE 1986 aimed promoting and equal educational opportunity for all, to promote literacy rate, to remove wastage and stagnation.

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POA 1992: NEP 1986 was reviewed by Acharya Rammurti committee in 1990 and submitted its report in 1992 called as Programme of Action 1992. POA was formed during Prime Minister P.V Narasimha Rao. POA mainly focused on consolidation and expansion of institutions, redesign of course.

TOOL FOR DATA COLLECTION
SECONDARY DATA
Keeping in mind the various objectives of the studies the secondary data collected from the following sources.
*   Research papers.
*   Newspapers.
*   Websites.
*   Journals.
*   Magazines
*   Articles.

SWOC ANALYSIS OF NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY 2020:-
The Ministry of Human Resource and Development (MHRD) issued The New Education Policy on July 31, 2020, after years of deliberation and two committees. Although the strategy has many beneficial aspects, the government's major problem is widespread implementation and achieving the desired learning results. Because accessibility, affordability, and quality are three major concerns in the education industry, this article seeks to do a SWOT analysis of the National Education Policy 2020.

1. STRENGTHS
*   The policy has improved the basis of education by re-imagining the school curriculum from a 10+2 model to a 5+3+3+4 model for a child's holistic development; this stage accounts for 80% of cognitive growth.
*   Multiple entry and exits from any course is a flexible move that will enable students to receive a 'basic certificate' if they finish a year, two 'diploma certificates' if they complete two years, and a 'degree' once the course is completed, resulting in no loss of years. They will get honours degree once they complete the course on 4th year.
*   Greater subject choice flexibility, as well as the removal of boundaries between arts and sciences, curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular activities, sports, and vocational crafts, would allow students to study and grow at their own speed.
*   The increase in GDP allocation to the education sector from 4.43 percent to 6% is a positive move. The policy aims to raise the Gross Enrolment Ratio in higher education to 50% (now 26.3%) by 2035, and to achieve universal literacy in primary schools by 2025.
*   Gender sensitivity is also part of the curriculum, which will help pupils become more aware of gender issues.
*   Assessment will transition to a formative style that promotes higher-order thinking skills, critical thinking, and conceptual clarity, which is a huge step away from the rote learning that is currently used in our classrooms.
*   An emphasis on proper infrastructure development at schools to make access simpler for children with disabilities, as well as inclusive classrooms, is an appropriate measure to create an overall favourable environment.
*   Teaching in the mother tongue at the elementary level, and if possible, up to class 8, has been a welcome step, since educationists all over the world agree that teaching in the mother tongue in the early years facilitates learning, comprehension, and increased learning skills.
*   Adding 'Classical Language' as an option will help students improve their language skills.

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- Teaching of contemporary subjects at the middle and secondary levels, including Artificial Intelligence, Design Thinking, Holistic Health, Organic Living, Environmental Education, and Global Citizenship Education (GCED).

2. WEAKNESSES

- Aside from echoing previous philanthropic clichés, the policy's unwillingness to address the role of the private sector in school education logically is quite disappointing.
- Extending compulsory education to preschool and high school will necessitate a significant financial commitment; however, the programme makes no particular provisions for raising funds for this purpose
- In addition, combining three years of preschool with the first two grades of primary school may make the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act more difficult to implement (RTE).
- The current global pandemic has posed numerous obstacles to the educational system. However, the NEP either ignores it or expresses concern about potential pandemic-related difficulties.
- The beneficial domain of learning, as well as the ongoing Happiness Curriculum currently being implemented in Delhi government schools, should have been incorporated in order to engage children and connect them with mindfulness.
- In addition to time, energy, and resources, the cost of training in-service teachers will need the government allocating adequate resources and infrastructure.
- According to the India Internet 2019 Report, 99 percent of internet users in the country utilise mobile phones rather than laptops or PCs to access the internet. In rural areas, laptops and desktops are used by just 2% and 1% of the population, respectively, whereas in urban areas, laptops and desktops are used by 6% and 4% of the population, respectively. Furthermore, internet penetration in rural India is still extremely low, at only 27%. More than 40% of villages have yet to be connected to the internet grid as part of the Bharat Net programme, putting rural children at a disadvantage.

3. OPPORTUNITES

- The NEP 2020 envisions a holistic report card in which a student's performance is assessed by taking into account all three domains of learning: cognitive, psychomotor, and affective, which will aid them in comprehending the world from all perspectives.
- It is a positive step for both students and authorities to allow international universities to establish campuses in the country, which will not only provide additional research-based options for students, but also boost competency and, in the long run, prevent brain drain.
- Academic credit kept in a digital locker will function similarly to bank credit, allowing a student to return to school after a break, as determined by the higher education commission later.
- The National Educational Technology Forum (NETF), an autonomous body, will be established to provide a forum for the free exchange of ideas on the use of technology
- to improve learning, assessment, planning, and administration in both school and higher education.
- The policy's best idea is 'Pairing Schools,' or 'twinning,' of one government school with one private school, which allows students to observe different parts of learning by doing, infrastructure, teaching technique, and the entire educational set up from different perspectives.
- Keeping an educator's interest, adaptability, and individuality in mind is one such approach that has given educators optimism by allowing them more liberty in selecting components of pedagogy in the classroom, rather than chalk and talk, lecture, or audio-visual aids. Teachers should be encouraged to conduct self-reflection, review, and self-assessment study into their own practises.
- This policy was released at an ideal time, when it has a significant demographic dividend. If this policy is followed to the letter, it will have a profound impact on the youth's future.

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4. CHALLENGES

- Many states, such as West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu, dislike the three-language model since making Hindi a compulsory language will appear to be an imposition on people living south of Vindhya
- Given India's size, population, variety, and constitutional federalism, the NEP 2020 is an exercise in establishing uniformity and standardisation along a single axis of control and authority. Many states may object because education is on the concurrent list.
- The planned free breakfast programme, while a nice idea, will increase the fiscal load and add to an already bloated and corrupt mid-day meal programme.
- The COVID-19 epidemic has demonstrated the necessity for a massive digital infrastructure to deliver digital education.
- The majority of experts believe that while policy encourages reason and critical thinking in campus activities, actual actions on the ground differ, as evidenced by recent attacks on students and critical thinkers.
- With unemployment and job losses, employers can keep salaries low and fire educators in the knowledge sector, knowing that there will be plenty of substandard and inexperienced teachers to take their place.
- According to the 2016 All India Survey on Higher Education, approximately 22 million students (65%) are enrolled in private colleges, studying a variety of subjects. The evidence of India's education system moving in the direction of privatisation and cost increases is therefore apparent and unmistakable.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

NPE 1986 - Key Highlights for Higher Education

- Emphasis on expansion and consolidation of higher education institutions.
- Establishment of autonomous colleges and standardized teacher recruitment.
- Enhancement of teacher training through orientation and refresher programs.
- Limited scope for research development and interdisciplinary learning.
- UGC as the primary regulatory body.

NEP 2020 - Innovations in Higher Education

- Introduction of flexible undergraduate programs with multiple entry and exit options.
- Formation of Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) to replace UGC.
- Emphasis on multidisciplinary universities and holistic curriculum design.
- Establishment of the National Research Foundation (NRF).
- Promotion of digital learning platforms like SWAYAM and MOOCs.
- Discontinuation of M.Phil programs.

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COMPARATIVE SUMMARY

A tabular comparison is presented in the original manuscript to showcase side-by-side differences.

NEP 2020	NPE 1986
For higher education UG degree will be either 3 or 4 year duration after completing one year provided certificate it's called certificate course, diploma after 2 year of study, bachelor's degree after 3 year of study and after 4th year provided bachelor with research degree.	The two options for higher education are a three-year honors bachelor's degree or a three-year pass bachelor's degree.
After graduation 2 options are given. 1 year master degree for those who have completed 4 year graduation and 2 year master's degree for those who have completed 3 year Graduation course.	In this policy masters is 2year degree course.
This policy introduced a flexible UG program with multiple entry and exit points so that students could earn credit for the entire course and return later to complete their degree. Credit will be transferred there through the Academic Bank of Credit	No such policy
Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) as new regulatory body for higher education.	As per NEP 1986 UGC is the regulatory body for higher education.
More emphasis on the development of cognitive skills and lifelong learning. NEP 2020 advocates for a multidisciplinary approach, allowing students to explore various subjects and domains, which can enhance their cognitive abilities. The policy also aims to shift from rote learning to a more experiential and application based learning, with a focus on understanding concepts deeply.	NPE 1986 also emphasis on the development of cognitive skills and learning outcome by promoting a learner-centric and holistic approach to education. It aimed to foster critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity among students, moving away from rote memorization, flexible curriculum, interdisciplinary studies.
. NEP 2020 propose to setting an Indian institute of translation and interpretation(IITS) for all language department in HEIs and use local/ home language as the medium of instruction in HEIs.	As per NPE 1986 with few HEIs that teach in local language.
Alternative modes like MOOC, SWAYAM etc. for more open access to HIE provide quality education whenever and wherever traditional methods of education are not possible.	Limited access particularly in socioeconomically disadvantage area.
M.Phil. degree is discontinued.	M.Phil. was mandatory before doing Ph.D

CONCLUSION

The NEP 2020 signifies a transformative leap from the foundational goals of NPE 1986. While both policies aimed at equity and access, NEP 2020 expands the vision to include quality, flexibility, research, and global competitiveness. Implementation will be key to realizing the full potential of these reforms, but the intent and design suggest a bold step forward for India's higher education system.

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