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Positioning of English at Higher Education Level with Reference to Nep 1986 and Nep 2020

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ABSTRACT: English Education is also the backbone of a nation. To improve the entire education system, a strong, well planned and systematic education policy is very much required. The first educational policy was made in 1968 which was modified in 1986 and 1992, and thereafter there was no any educational policy made in three decades. Formulation of NEP 2020 the first education policy of the 21st century has brought revolutionary changes to Indian educational system especially in Higher education. NEP 1968 mainly focused on issues of access and equity as the quality of education is poor in many areas. The NEP 2020 not only focuses on access and equity of education, but also focuses on quality of education and educational research. In this context researchers intend to focus on higher education as recommended by the National Policy of Education 2020 and 1986. The researchers try to distinguish between the higher education recommendations of NPE, 1986 and NEP, 2020.

KEYWORDS- English, NEP, 2020, 1986, higher education, position

I. INTRODUCTION

English Education plays a crucial role in unlocking one's complete human potential, promoting equality and justice within society, and fostering national advancement. As stated in the Directive Principles of State Policy and Fundamental Duties, providing universal access to quality education is critical to India's continued ascent and leadership on the global stage in terms of economic growth, social justice and equality, scientific advancement, national integration, and cultural preservation. The previous Education Policy of India was passed and implemented in 1986. The National Education Policy (NEP) for India was updated, reviewed, and approved on July 29, 2020, after 34 years. [1] The initiative is a significant milestone for India's education system, and it will undoubtedly make India an appealing destination for higher education around the world. The policy is founded on the concepts of "Access, Equity, Quality, Affordability & Accountability" and will transform India into a flourishing knowledge powerhouse. NEP 2020 emphasizes systematic and institutional improvements in Indian HEIs to control, govern, and foster transdisciplinary academic and research. Surprisingly, the new education policy's main focus is to create an educational system well-resourced and multifunctional through the unification of multiple educational institutions and disciplines that are always striving to meet the needs. [2] Brief of Policies on Education: National Education Policy 1986: Rajiv Gandhian government introduced a new National Education Policy in 1986. The new strategy called for a "special emphasis on eliminating disparities and equalizing educational opportunities," Particularly for women in India, as well as for Scheduled Tribes (ST) and Scheduled Castes (SC), the aim is to achieve socioeconomic inclusivity. [1] To achieve this, the suggestion involves enlarging opportunities for scholarships and adult education. After gaining independence in 1947, the Indian government has funded several initiatives to combat illiteracy in both rural and urban areas of the country. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, the inaugural Minister of Education in India, envisioned a comprehensive centralized control of education across the nation, aiming for a uniform educational framework. The federal government created the University Education Commission (1948-1949) and the Secondary Education Commission (1952-1953) to devise strategies for modernizing the education system in India. Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, endorsed the Science Policy Resolution. The Nehru government financed the creation of high-quality scientific education institutions such as the Indian Institutes of Technology. In 1961, the Indian government established the National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) as an autonomous body. Its purpose is to guide both the central and state governments regarding the formulation and execution of education policies. [14] Drawing from the recommendations of the Education Commission (1964-1966), the government led by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi introduced the initial National Education Policy in 1968. This policy aimed at achieving 'radical reform' and equal access to education, to promote national unity and foster cultural and economic advancement. The effort supported the idea of mandatory education for all youngsters up to the age of 14, in accordance with the Indian Constitution, along with an emphasis on enhanced teacher training and credentials. The strategy highlighted the importance of learning regional languages and

introduced the 'three-language formula' for secondary education. This formula consisted of English instruction, the official language of the state in which the school was located, and Hindi, the national language. Language education has been seen as essential for bridging the divide between the general population and the educated class. Although the decision to designate Hindi as the national language sparked controversy, the objective of the strategy was to extensively encourage the adoption and study of Hindi, to establish a common language for all people in India. The policy also encouraged the teaching of Sanskrit, an ancient language that was seen as an important component of India's history and legacy. The 1968 NPE proposed increasing education spending to 6% of national revenue. [15] The National Policy on Education (1986) envisaged a national education system that would take determined efforts toward universalizing primary education and broadening the exposure and scope of adult literacy, thereby becoming an instrument for disparity reduction. Figure 2 depicts the eleven important features of the national policy on education (1986). [17]

Challenges of National Policy of Education 1986: The education policies do not address the status of commercially administered schools across the country, operated by certain individuals or organizations. So yet, no education programs have proposed strategies to reduce the disparities in educational standards between poor and rich students. [3] The education policy of 1986 advocated for the establishment of an All-India Educational Service. If this recommendation is implemented, the already-existing chasm between teachers and bureaucracy will grow even wider. During the British occupation of India, the All-India Educational Service was discontinued. The propriety of restarting it does not make sense. [4] Admission to university classes is based on aptitude, according to numerous education policies. Many young people will be denied a university education as a result of these traits. Some detractors argue that the Open University can never be a good substitute for a normal university education. The education policy of 1986 Education policy suggested the imposition of capitation fees for students admitted to technical institutes. This policy might not be regarded as a sustainable approach since it could potentially deprive deserving students of technical education if they cannot afford the charges. Graduates who obtained their technical education through capitation fees might face challenges in their chosen fields, leading to concerns about their competence and reliability as workers. [5]

II.DISCUSSION

Highlights of Policies NEP 2020 for Higher Education System : Policy changes: 1. The Gross Enrolment Ratio in HE including Vocational education will increase from current 26.3% (2018) to 50% by 2035. 2. HEIs which deliver the highest quality will get more incentives from the Government. 3. Reputed international universities to be encouraged to setup campuses in India. 4. Higher education institutions will promote multidisciplinary education and flexible curriculum structure that will offer multiple entry and exit points to create new possibilities for lifelong learning. 5. Greater focus on online education and open distance learning (ODL) as a key means to improve access equity and inclusion 6. Integration of vocational education within higher education. At least 50% of learners to have exposure to vocational education by 2025. 7. HE quality will be improved to global quality level to attract more international students and the credits acquired in foreign will be counted for the award Healthcare education system must be integrated in such a way that all students of allopathic medical education must have a basic understanding of Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, and Homeopathy (AYUSH), and vice versa. Greater emphasis should be given in all forms of healthcare education to preventive healthcare and community medicine. Technical education should be offered within multidisciplinary education institutions and should focus on opportunities to engage deeply with other disciplines. The focus should be on offering English Language learning skills, Artificial Intelligence (AI), 3-D machining, big data analysis, and machine learning, in addition to genomic studies, biotechnology, nanotechnology, neuroscience, with applications to health, environment, and sustainable living. Governing body: • HE monitoring and controlling institutions like UGC, AICTE, MCI, DCI, INC, etc will be merged with the Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) as a single regulator for HEI. • The current Accreditation Institutions like NAAC and NAB will be replaced by a robust National Accreditation Council (NAC). • An Academic Bank of Credit (ABC) will be established which would digitally store the academic credits of all registered candidates earned from various recognized HEIs (SWAYAM & ODL mode) that can be taken into account while awarding degrees by the college or university. • The various nomenclatures used currently such as deemed to be university, affiliating university, central university, affiliating technical university, unitary university, etc will be replaced by 'University' after fulfilling the required criteria as per norms. • National Scholarship Portal will be strengthened and expanded to universities help the financial needs of merit-based students. Private HEIs will be encouraged to offer larger numbers of free ships and scholarships to their students. University level: 1. Consolidation of existing fragmented HEIs into two types of Multidisciplinary



Universities (MU) and Multidisciplinary Autonomous Colleges (AC). 2. Multidisciplinary Universities will be of two types as (1) Research-intensive Universities, and (2) Teaching-intensive Universities. 3. Establishment of a National Research Foundation (NRF) to fund research in universities and colleges. 4. Research will be included in UG, PG, level and have a holistic and multidisciplinary education approach. 5. All HEIs will focus on research and innovation by setting up (1) Start-up incubation centres, (2) Technology development centres, (3) Centres in frontier areas of research, (4) Centre for Industry-academic linkage, and (5) Interdisciplinary Research Centres including humanities and social sciences research. 6. All HEIs will have professional academic and career counselling centres with counsellors available to all students to ensure physical, psychological and emotional well-being. 7. All HEIs will develop, support, and fund for topic-centred clubs and activities organized by students with the help of faculty and other experts as needed, in the area of science, mathematics, poetry, language, literature, debate, music, sports, etc. 8. The Degree programmes may contain in-class teaching, Online teaching components, and ODL components with 40:30:30 ratio model to achieve a global standard of quality. 9. All private universities are eligible for graded autonomy based on their accreditation status. 10. All private universities / autonomous colleges have to maintain an openness in their financial dealings and the Bog is responsible for any irregularities in the accounting system. BoG should contain eminent people well reputed in their professional area to guide the speedy development of the HEIs. 11. Universities/institutions offering law education must prefer to offer bilingual education for future lawyers and judges - in English and State language. IV Institution Level: 1. Multi disciplinary Autonomous colleges campus will have more than 3,000 students. The Timeline to become multi-disciplinary is by 2030 and to have 3,000 and more students by 2040. 2. Every existing College will develop into either degree granting autonomous College or migrated into a Constituent College of University and becomes fully a part of the University. 3. All existing affiliated Colleges will eventually grow autonomous degree-granting colleges with the mentoring support of affiliated University by improving and securing the prescribed accreditation level. 4. Four years Bachelor degree with multiple exit options, one to two years Master's degree based on the number of years spent in Bachelor degree as four or three respectively, and option to do Ph.D. for four years Bachelor degree with research are possible. 5. Two years Master degree with full research in the second year, One year Master degree for four years Bachelor degree holders, and Five years integrated Bachelor/Master degree. 6. HEIs will be encouraged to prepare professionals in agriculture and veterinary sciences through programmes integrated with general education. HEIs offering English Language learning skills and agricultural education must focus on the local community and involvement in setting up Agricultural Technology Parks in the region to promote technology incubation and dissemination. 7. All HEIs have autonomy in deciding their fees structure and surplus if any should be reinvested in the expansion projects with a transparent accounting system. 8. All private HEIs should offer 20% free-ship and 30% scholarship in the course fee for meritorious students in every course which they offer during a given academic year and this should be checked and confirmed by the accreditation process. V Student Level 1. Student Centred teaching & learning process instead of Teacher centred teaching model. 2. Choice Based Credit System is revised by an innovative and flexible Competency Based Credit System. 3. Examination system will change from high-stakes examinations (Semester End system) towards a more continuous and comprehensive evaluation examination system. 4. Pedagogy in HEIs will focus on communication, presentation, discussion, debate, research, analysis, and interdisciplinary thinking.

III.RESULTS

Over the past several years, India has slipped down on the global ranking of the United Nations Human Development Index. In 2020, the report prepared by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) put India in 131st position out of 189 countries, a two-position slip from the previous year. HDI measures average achievement on three fundamental aspects of human development, life expectancy, education, and per capita income (LiveMint, 2020). Economic growth, human development, GDP strength - all depend on one crucial factor of access to education and skill development among the citizens of a country.

With the second-largest population, India struggles with the former, even though aspiring to become the knowledge hub of the world. Furthermore, the country's education sector has been the worst affected since the pandemic began in February 2020. The Union Education Minister of India, Dharmendra Pradhan, during a parliament session in August 2021 informed that around 15 crore children had dropped out of the education system (India Today, 2021). The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) said the duration of school closures in India had been among the longest in the world (DW, 2021). The gap in continuing education and the digital divide has furthered the disproportionate access in the past two years.[2] However, amidst a raging pandemic, the government of India announced its plans to revamp the education policy, the third time since its independence in 1947 and 34 years after the first education policy was

implemented in the country in 1986. The National Education Policy (NEP), 2020, has been touted as 'revolutionary' by academicians and policy advisers.

It is indeed an aspirational policy aimed at changing the course of the Indian education system to meet the needs of the 21st century. However, to meet the goals mentioned effectively, the policy recommendations of this brief will propose short-term policies to meet the 2040 implementation target effectively while also considering the issues and inequalities aggravated by the pandemic.

This brief will suggest short-term policy recommendations on various targets including English Language learning skills of the NEP 2020 by analysing the existing education policies of the states of India and other countries.

Analysis of policy options

This section will analyse critical proposals of the National Education Policy 2020 and suggest alternative policy recommendations or short term policy goals for effective final implementation.

Proposal 1: Increasing Gross Enrolment Ratio for Higher education to 50% by 2035

One of the most ambitious goals of the NEP 2020 is to increase the gross enrolment ratio of GER by 50%. According to the Ministry of Education's annual report All India Survey for Higher Education (AISHE) 2019-20, the current GER for higher education stands at 27.1 per cent, as against 26.3 per cent in 2018-19 for the 18-23 years of age group, a marginal increase since the previous year.

To meet the target of a 50 per cent gross enrollment ratio by 2035, the government of India has proposed opening 35 million seats in higher education institutes by 2035. The limitation here seems to be of the accurate data in numbers. Dr Arun C. Mehta (no date), head of EMIS department, NIEPA explains this in his assessment - "With 50 per cent GER at the higher education level, the quantum increase of enrolment in absolute terms cannot be known unless the reliable estimate of the population between the age-group 18 to 23 years is known in the year 2035".

The most reliable source of an age-based population estimate is the Census of a country. The Census of the Indian population took place in 2011, whereas the Census of 2021 was delayed due to the pandemic. The latest census report is necessary to reveal the actual situation of the adult population from 18 to 23 years of age engaged in higher education programmes, which could potentially show a declining trend due to the pandemic. Therefore, reliable GER for 2020 and projection for 2035 is possible after the census exercise gets completed in the country.[3]

Meanwhile, a centre-state government partnership could realise the 50% GER goal. The northeastern state of Sikkim has, over the years, maintained the top position in the higher education GER, with 67.6% GER in 2020. A partnership on developing a pilot policy of the state on a national level could be a potential success.

However, a challenge remains in converting enrollment rates to adequate human capital. Studies have shown that over 50 per cent of students in grade 5 cannot read at the grade 2 level in India, despite primary school enrollment rates of over 95 per cent (Pratham, 2017). Meanwhile, this is not a one-off case - the rapid expansion of education in most developing countries has led to the enrollment of millions of first-generation learners who lack instructional support when they fall behind the curriculum (Muralidharan et al., 2017). The government should ensure that progress is measured not only by increasing the gross enrollment ratio but also by evaluating it in terms of human development. Vietnam education policy for schooling has been able to achieve superior learning outcomes by focusing attention on ensuring that even the weakest students reach minimum learning standards (Singh, 2020a). This example of education policy could help the implementation of the NEP goals effective.

Proposal 2: 6 per cent of GDP allocation to the education sector

The NEP 2020 has reiterated the need to allocate six per cent of GDP to education, a proposal also made in the first education policy in 1968. However, the pandemic has forced the government to slash the education budget by several points in the previous financial year. In the 2021-22 Union Budget, the government cut the allocation for education by about 6 per cent, calling it rationalisation on COVID-19 exigencies (Economic Times, 2021).

With the uncertainty that the pandemic and recovery has brought, it is not advisable to keep a long-term load only on public spending. A more realistic solution to this will be strengthening FDI norms to boost the education sector to meet the long term goals.



Another policy option could be for the union government to cut back on some redevelopment and beautification projects and reallocate funds into strengthening education steadily every year.

Furthermore, the Delhi government that is lauded for its efforts to strengthen the education sector in the union territory, has also recommended making 6% of GDP on education by all state governments mandatory to ensure accountability. The union finance ministry and stakeholders of the education sector and states can hold consultations to implement budget allocations with the NEP 2020 proposals effectively.

Proposal 3: Teacher training and recruitment programmes

The NEP 2020's aim to open 35 million seats in higher education institutions by 2035 for 50 per cent GER also requires a considerable number of teachers. Furthermore, the impetus of the policy on the promotion of vernacular, national languages and foreign language skills will need specially trained teachers. A change in pedagogy will require skilled tutors with enhanced knowledge of the new curriculum and assessment.

This can be adopted from Finland's National Agency for Education, the national development agency responsible for early childhood care and education, pre-primary, primary, general and vocational upper secondary education, and adult education and training. This Finnish model helps develop and shaping of future education leadership. The same agency can take the responsibility of re-training continuing teachers in the new system. The implementation of this programme should encourage public-private partnership (PPP), especially when the private e-learning industry has been booming since the pandemic in India.

The government is also advised to entrust the agency's operations with experienced academics and education industry leaders.[4]

Proposal 4: The 5+3+3+4 school structure and multilingual education

Another significant overhaul in the NEP 2020 is revamping the school structure from the existing 10+2+3 system to an internationally recognised method of 5+3+3+4, corresponding to ages 3-8, 8-11, 11-14, and 14-18 years, respectively. The aim is to bring the uncovered age group of 3-6 years under the school curriculum, which has been recognised globally as the crucial stage for the development of the mental faculties of a child (NEP 2020).

However, the proposal to use mother tongue as a medium of instruction until Class 5 has received significant criticism. While studies have shown that children at an early age learn effectively in their mother tongue, the obscurity from English, India's official language during the growing years of children, could hamper their ability to learn a new language at a later stage in their academic journey. The English language is arguably the most common language for communication worldwide. To achieve the vision of the country competing at a global level, familiarity with an official language is essential for a child's overall development in the 21st century.

Furthermore, it isn't easy to define what mother tongue is in a country of varied languages and several dialects in each state. In a country where languages and dialects among populations overlap, especially at state border areas, it is unrealistic to implement the medium of instruction in the mother tongue.

The final challenge to this proposal is the funding required to build a multilingual pedagogical system. Because when the primary source of learning is school books at that level, a multilingual education will incur additional costs to develop learning material. Most of these dialects and languages used as mother tongue in several parts, like the tribal areas of the country, don't have a script. Due to the pandemic, most of the teaching has shifted online. To build a database for multilingual education, the government should work with education leaders and language experts from different communities in the country to create a new pedagogical system. A timeline for the same should be set for the next five years to progress in this direction effectively.

Proposal 5: Evaluation of progress

A distortion of data could lead to a potential failure of the ambitious policy overhauling the education system in India. Evidence has shown the past misreporting of administrative data in the education system, thereby affecting policy formulation. In a student assessment study conducted in Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh, results suggested that while the data showed a positive correlation, it had been manipulated due to instances of cheating by students in the assessment tests (Singh, 2020b).

With the creation of separate board systems and testing bodies to boost the standard of education, the government should also work on a policy to establish a body similar to Finland's National Agency of Education to carry out regular auditing to ensure correct and proper implementation of the policy. A regular intensive



reporting of student performance and development by the teachers could be a way to work the system from the bottom-up.

IV. CONCLUSION

The National Education Policy 2020 envisages a robust education system focusing on the overall development of children. The challenges, however, lie in its implementation plan of over 15 years. To ensure effective implementation, the education ministry should work in tandem with all system stakeholders, including policymakers, industry experts, teachers, researchers and parents. Working in partnership with the state governments to ensure a deadlock doesn't take place is also an essential part of the process.

To reach its goals between 2035 and 2040, the government should draft a short term plan to implement the policies in a timebound manner. Keeping in mind the additional challenges COVID-19 has posed over the past two years in education, making changes to the policy wherever required to suit the current and developing conditions better should be a priority.[5]

When there is uncertainty over the dwindling economy due to the pandemic, the government should work on plans to involve private and foreign investment in the system to ensure that the education sector does not starve. Taking cues from the partner states and other countries with successful education policies will help better implement the new policy.

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