

MAINS iMPACT 202512-07-2025

## NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY

### SYLLABUS:

GS 2 > Social Justice >> Education

### REFERENCE NEWS:

The Two-day Vice-Chancellors' Conference of Central Universities commenced at Kevadia, Gujarat, with the participation of more than 50 Vice Chancellors of leading higher education institutions to review, assess, and strategize the implementation of **NEP 2020** since its inception. Organised by the Ministry of Education in collaboration with the Central University of Gujarat, the meeting aims to consolidate and map the institutional progress of central universities in mapping up the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047.

### NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY:

The **NEP 2020** is the first education policy of the 21st century in India, replacing the National Policy on Education, 1986. It aims to overhaul the Indian educational system from pre-school to higher education with a **learner-centric, multidisciplinary, and holistic approach** rooted in Indian ethos and geared towards 21st-century global needs. It envisions:

- A **transformative education system** that ensures **equity, access, quality, and accountability**.
- An inclusive learning framework that fosters **critical thinking, creativity, and ethical values**.
- **Universal foundational literacy and numeracy (FLN)** by 2025.

### KEY HIGHLIGHTS OF NEP 2020:

- **Structural Reforms:** Replaces **10+2 system** with a new **5+3+3+4 structure**
  - 5 years: Foundational (3 years ECCE + Grades 1–2)
  - 3 years: Preparatory (Grades 3–5)

- 3 years: Middle (Grades 6–8)
- 4 years: Secondary (Grades 9–12)
- **Early Childhood Care & Education (ECCE):** Universal access to quality ECCE by 2030. Development of **National Curricular Framework for ECCE (NCFECCE)** by NCERT.
- **Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN): National Mission on FLN** to ensure basic skills by Grade 3 by 2025. Use of **DIKSHA platform**, teacher training, and community volunteers.
- **Multilingualism and Language Policy:** Emphasis on **mother tongue/local language as medium of instruction** till Grade 5 (preferably Grade 8). Promotion of Indian classical languages and inclusion of **Indian Sign Language (ISL)**.
- **Curriculum and Pedagogy:** Reduced content with emphasis on **critical thinking, experiential learning**, arts- and sports-integration. Introduction of **vocational education** from Grade 6 with 10-day bagless internships.
- **Assessment Reforms:** Shift from summative to **formative assessment**. Introduction of **holistic progress cards (360-degree evaluation)**. **PARAKH** (Performance Assessment, Review, and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development) as a national body.
- **Higher Education Reforms Target: 50% Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER)** in higher education by 2035 (currently ~27%). Introduction of **Multidisciplinary Education and Research Universities (MERUs)**. **Four-year undergraduate programs** with multiple exit options. Establishment of **National Research Foundation (NRF)**.
- **Teacher Education and Training:** Single **regulatory body (NCERT/NCTE)** to oversee teacher training. **4-year Integrated B.Ed. degree** to be mandatory by 2030. Focus on **continuous professional development (CPD)**.
- **Technology Integration:** Use of **AI, online platforms, and e-content**. Establishment of **National Educational Technology Forum (NETF)**.
- **Inclusive and Equitable Education:** Special focus on **Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs)**. Gender inclusion fund and support for children with disabilities.
- **Promotion of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS):** Integration of **traditional knowledge**, ethical values, and **cultural heritage**. Courses on **Indian Knowledge Systems**, yoga, and health included in curriculum.
- **Governance and Financing:** Creation of **Higher Education Commission of India (HECI)** with four verticals. Target of **6% of GDP expenditure** on education.

#### AGENDA OF NEP 2020:

- **Transform India into a knowledge superpower** by 2040.
- Provide **equitable and inclusive education** for all.
- Equip learners with **21st-century skills** like problem-solving, digital literacy, and creativity.
- **Foster global citizenship** while nurturing Indian ethos.
- Promote **sustainable development**, gender equality, and inclusive growth through education.
- **GER Target**: Increase from current ~27% to 50% in Higher Education by 2035.
- **Out-of-School Children**: 3.22 crore (NSSO 2017-18) to be brought back by 2030.

### SIGNIFICANCE OF NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY (NEP) 2020:

- **A Paradigm Shift in Educational Philosophy**: NEP 2020 marks a shift from **rote learning to conceptual understanding**, promoting **critical thinking, creativity, and holistic development**.
  - Introduction of **experiential and competency-based learning** from foundational stages as part of the **5+3+3+4 structure** replaces the outdated 10+2 model.
- **Strengthening Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN)**: Early-grade education is prioritized to ensure that no child falls behind in basic reading and arithmetic.
  - Launch of the **National Mission on FLN** targets achieving universal proficiency in reading and numeracy by **Grade 3 by 2025**.
  - The **DIKSHA portal** provides FLN content to teachers and students across 33 states in 35 languages.
- **Increased Gross Enrolment and Reduced Dropouts**: NEP aims to increase **Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER)** and make education more inclusive.
  - Target of **50% GER in higher education by 2035** (from ~27% in 2020, AISHE data).
  - Provision of **multiple exit-entry options** in undergraduate programs will prevent student dropouts and improve career flexibility.
- **Vocationalisation of School Education**: It bridges the gap between **academic and skill-based education**, increasing employability. Introduction of **vocational education from Grade 6**, with **10-day bagless internships**.
  - Partnerships with local artisans and industries are being implemented in pilot programs in states like **Rajasthan and Gujarat**.

- **Promotion of Multilingualism and Local Languages:** NEP promotes **learning in the mother tongue** up to Grade 5 (preferably Grade 8), improving comprehension and inclusion.
  - NEP aligns with UNESCO studies showing better outcomes when early education is delivered in the **child's home language**.
  - States like **Karnataka and Odisha** have adopted early-grade teaching in local languages based on this policy.
- **Digital Transformation in Education:** NEP strengthens **technology-enabled learning** to bridge urban-rural and gender divides.
  - Establishment of **National Educational Technology Forum (NETF)** and increased use of **DIKSHA, SWAYAM, and PM eVidya** platforms.
  - During COVID-19, over **1.44 crore teachers and students** accessed content through DIKSHA.
- **Focus on Teacher Quality and Training:** Recognizes teachers as the key to reform and mandates better pre-service and in-service training.
  - Introduction of a **4-year integrated B.Ed. degree** mandatory by **2030**.
  - **National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST)** is being developed to evaluate teacher performance and growth.
- **Research and Innovation Boost:** The policy aims to make India a **global knowledge superpower** by encouraging high-quality research.
  - Creation of the **National Research Foundation (NRF)** to fund and promote interdisciplinary, cutting-edge research. NRF will bridge gaps between **academia, industry, and government**, promoting applied research.
- **Inclusive and Equitable Education for All:** Targets **Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs)** including girls, SC/STs, and children with disabilities.
  - Creation of a **Gender Inclusion Fund** and support systems for differently-abled learners.
  - School infrastructure audits have begun to ensure **disabled-friendly access and inclusive materials**.
- **Revitalising Higher Education:** Pushes for **multidisciplinary institutions**, flexibility in course choices, and internationalisation of higher education.
  - Restructuring of HEIs into **research-intensive universities, teaching universities, and autonomous colleges**.
  - The **Academic Bank of Credits (ABC)** allows students to store and transfer credits across institutions.

#### CHALLENGES OF NEP 2020:

- **Implementation Gap across States:** Education is on the **Concurrent List**, and states have varying capacity and political will to implement NEP uniformly.
  - While states like **Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh** have initiated NEP rollouts, several others, including **West Bengal and Tamil Nadu**, have raised objections.
  - As of mid-2023, only **12–15 states** had begun full-scale NEP implementation in schools and higher education.
- **Shortage of Qualified Teachers and Faculty:** NEP mandates a **4-year integrated B.Ed.** and continuous professional development, but India faces an acute **teacher shortage and quality gap**.
  - Over **10 lakh teaching posts** are vacant in government schools (MHRD 2022 data).
  - A 2019 Parliamentary Committee report found that **over 50% of secondary school teachers** were untrained in pedagogy or digital tools.
- **Financial Constraints:** NEP recommends **6% of GDP** be allocated to education, but current spending is **~2.9%** (Economic Survey 2022–23).
  - Despite ambitious targets, no significant rise in education budget was observed in Union Budgets of 2021–24.
  - UNESCO estimates that India would need to invest **\$173 billion annually** to achieve NEP goals by 2030.
- **Digital Divide and Infrastructure Gaps:** NEP emphasizes digital learning, but rural areas face poor internet connectivity and device access.
  - During the pandemic, **only 24% of rural Indian households** had internet access (NSO, 2021).
  - The **National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5)** shows that **only 16% of females in rural areas** use the internet regularly.
- **Language and Multilingual Challenges:** While promoting **mother tongue education** is culturally rooted, implementation is difficult in **linguistically diverse classrooms**.
  - In urban private schools or central institutions like **Kendriya Vidyalayas**, enforcing regional language as the medium is impractical.
  - India has **22 scheduled languages and hundreds of dialects**, complicating curriculum standardisation.
- **Resistance from Higher Education Institutions (HEIs):** The shift to **multidisciplinary education, four-year UG programs**, and **ABC (Academic Bank of Credits)** requires drastic changes in curriculum and mindset.

- Several universities, including **Delhi University**, faced student and faculty protests over the **Four-Year Undergraduate Program (FYUP)** rollout.
- As of 2023, **only 300+ colleges** were ready for ABC implementation, out of over **45,000 HEIs** in India.
- **Exclusion of Marginalised Groups:** Despite inclusive intent, practical mechanisms to support **SC/ST/OBC, tribal, and disabled students** remain weak.
  - **Only 19% of disabled children** aged 5–19 are enrolled in educational institutions (UNICEF, 2022).
- **Assessment and Accreditation Challenges:** Shifting from **rote-based summative exams to formative assessments** requires systemic overhaul in evaluation systems.
  - Boards like **CBSE and State Boards** are still adapting to **360-degree report cards and competency-based testing**.
  - The **Performance Assessment, Review, and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development (PARAKH)** body is still under operationalisation as of 2024.
- **Lack of Awareness and Capacity Building:** Many teachers, parents, and administrators are **unaware or unclear** about the NEP's structure and vision.
  - In a 2022 survey, **47% of schoolteachers** across four states admitted they had **not received any NEP orientation**.
  - A national capacity-building initiative (NISHTHA) is ongoing, but coverage remains inconsistent.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanism Still Evolving:** NEP lacks a robust, transparent **accountability and monitoring framework** to track progress and correct course.
  - As of 2024, **no centralised NEP implementation dashboard** exists publicly to monitor state-wise progress.

### WAY FORWARD:

#### **Enhance Public Investment in Education**

- Gradually raise education spending to **6% of GDP**, as recommended by NEP and the **Kothari Commission (1966)**.
- **Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan 2.0** supports school infrastructure, digital learning, and teacher training in one integrated scheme.
- **Finland**, which consistently ranks at the top of global education indexes, allocates **over 6.2% of GDP** to education.

#### **Bridge the Digital Divide**

- **Government Initiatives: PM eVidya, DIKSHA, BharatNet** for digital content and rural internet access. **One Class One TV Channel** under PM eVidya extended to 200 channels.
- **Rajasthan's DigiLEP model** used mobile phones and WhatsApp for rural students during COVID-19 with localized content in Rajasthani dialects.

### **Strengthen Teacher Capacity and Professional Development**

- **NISHTHA (National Initiative for School Heads' and Teachers' Holistic Advancement)** for in-service teacher training.
- **Singapore** provides structured CPD and career progression paths for teachers, making teaching a top-choice profession.

### **Promote Mother Tongue with Flexibility and Sensitivity**

- Encourage early-grade teaching in **home language/mother tongue**, while ensuring support for **transitional bilingualism** in urban schools.
- **Odisha's Multilingual Education (MLE)** program incorporates tribal languages into early education, improving retention.
- **Ethiopia** successfully used mother tongue instruction in primary years to reduce dropout rates.

### **Encourage Flexibility & Vocational Integration in Curriculum**

- Implement **multiple entry-exit points**, interdisciplinary learning, and **vocational training from Grade 6**.
- **Skill India Mission, PMKVY, and SANKALP** (for district-level skilling).
- **Germany's Dual System of Vocational Education** integrates classroom learning with industrial apprenticeships.

### **Develop Holistic Assessment Mechanisms**

- Roll out **PARAKH** (Performance Assessment, Review, and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development) with state-level implementation support.
- **Delhi's Happiness Curriculum** assesses emotional well-being and experiential learning instead of rote scores.

### **Build Inclusive and Equitable Classrooms**

- Allocate resources for **gender inclusion, disability access**, and SEDG-specific interventions.
- **Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV), Samagra Shiksha's Gender Inclusion Fund, Scholarship for Students with Disabilities**.
- **Kerala's barrier-free inclusive education program** ensures disability-friendly infrastructure and Braille textbooks in government schools.

**Promote Research and Global Competitiveness**

- Operationalise the **National Research Foundation (NRF)** to fund research in HEIs and incentivize research careers.
- **United States’ National Science Foundation** provides decentralized, discipline-based funding to universities and labs.

**State-Level NEP Implementation Units**

- Each state should set up **NEP Implementation Cells** with real-time dashboards and community participation.
- **Karnataka** was the first to roll out NEP in higher education and has created a dedicated task force for school-level implementation.

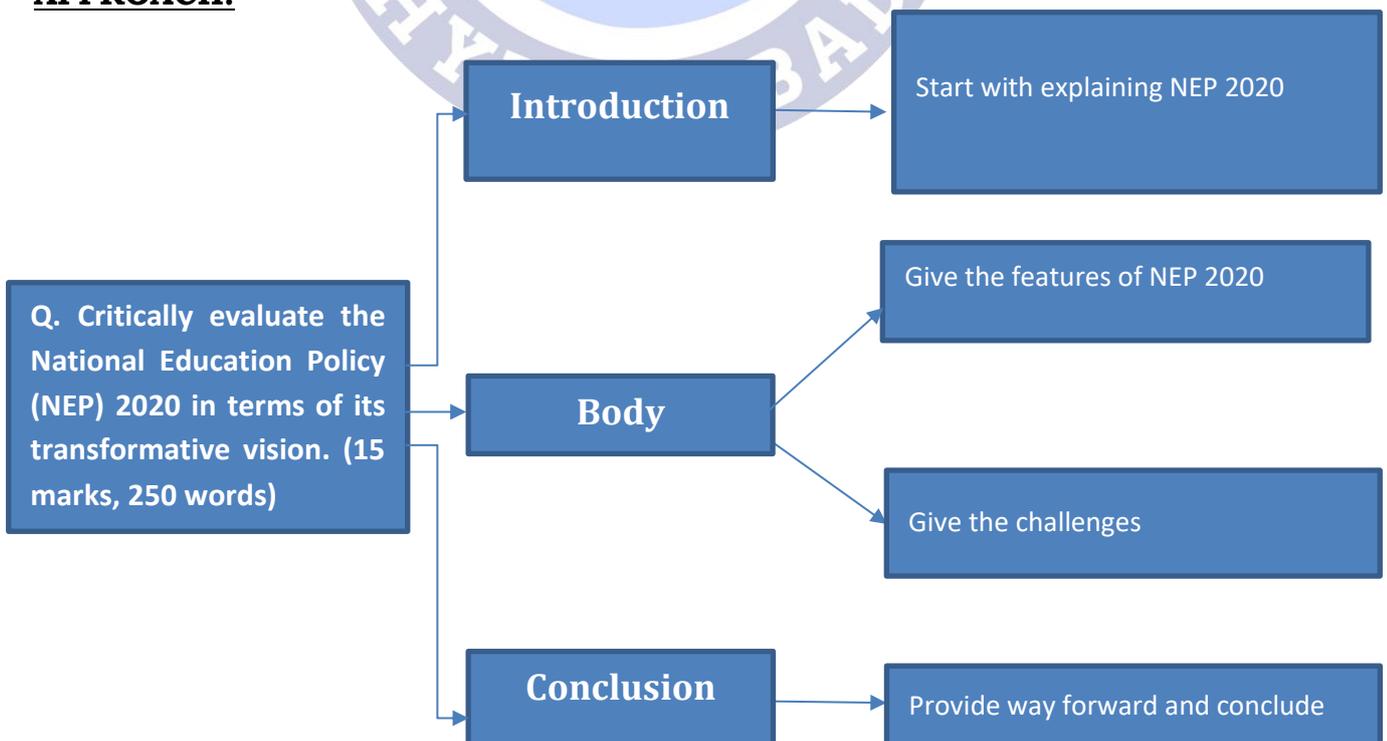
**Foster Public-Private and International Partnerships**

- Collaborate with EdTech companies, NGOs, and international bodies for content development, teacher training, and monitoring.
- **MoU with UNESCO MGIEP** to train educators in social and emotional learning
- **Tata Trusts, Pratham, and Azim Premji Foundation** actively contribute to curriculum and pedagogy innovation.

**PRACTICE QUESTION:**

**Q. Critically evaluate the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 in terms of its transformative vision. (15 marks, 250 words)**

**APPROACH:**



**MODEL ANSWER:**

The **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020** marks a historic overhaul of India's educational system, replacing the 1986 policy. With a focus on **holistic, multidisciplinary, flexible learning**, NEP 2020 aims to make India a **global knowledge superpower** while ensuring **equity, access, and quality** from early childhood to higher education.

**Transformative Vision and Key Features**

- **Structural Reform:** Replaces 10+2 system with **5+3+3+4** to align pedagogy with child development.
- **Foundational Literacy & Numeracy (FLN):** Mission to achieve universal literacy and numeracy by **Grade 3 by 2025**.
- **Higher Education:** Aims to raise **Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER)** to **50% by 2035**; promotes **multidisciplinary HEIs, MERUs, and Academic Bank of Credits**.
- **Vocational & Skill Education:** Vocational education from **Grade 6** with **10-day internships**; linked to **Skill India Mission**.
- **Digital Push:** Platforms like **DIKSHA, SWAYAM, and PM eVidya** bridge the urban-rural learning gap.
- **Inclusion:** Targets **Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs)** with **Gender Inclusion Fund** and disability-friendly policies.
- **Promotion of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS):** Focus on Indian languages, heritage, and ethical learning.

**Challenges in Implementation**

- **Implementation Gap:** Education being a **Concurrent List** subject causes uneven rollout; only **12–15 states** initiated full implementation by mid-2023.
- **Funding Shortfall:** Policy recommends **6% of GDP** allocation, but current spending remains around **2.9%** (Economic Survey 2022–23).
- **Teacher Shortage:** Over **10 lakh vacancies**; training gaps in pedagogy and digital tools.
- **Digital Divide:** Only **24% rural homes** have internet access (NSO 2021); NFHS-5 shows **only 16% of rural women** use the internet.

- **Language Dilemmas:** Multilingual policy faces hurdles in urban schools and diverse classrooms.
- **Resistance from HEIs:** Reluctance to shift to **4-year UG programs** and **credit mobility**; only **300+ HEIs** ready for ABC out of 45,000+.

### Way Forward

- **Increase Public Spending:** Implement NEP-Kothari Commission's **6% of GDP** target through enhanced budgetary allocation and PPP models.
- **State-level NEP Cells:** Create **real-time dashboards** for monitoring and feedback; replicate **Karnataka's model** of task force-led NEP rollout.
- **Capacity Building:** Expand teacher training through **NISHTHA**; adopt **Singapore's CPD models**.
- **Digital Inclusion:** Scale up **PM eVidya, BharatNet**; adopt **Rajasthan's DigiLEP** model using WhatsApp/local dialects.
- **Vocational Best Practices:** Emulate **Germany's Dual Education System** through local industry partnerships.
- **Inclusive Infrastructure:** Leverage schemes like **Samagra Shiksha, KGBV, and Scholarships for Disabled**; emulate **Kerala's barrier-free schools**.
- **Operationalise NRF:** Ensure timely funding and autonomy to drive **interdisciplinary research** and global collaborations.

NEP 2020 is a **visionary roadmap** for India's educational renaissance, rooted in inclusivity and modernity. However, to translate intent into impact, India must bridge the **implementation gap** through **collaborative governance, adequate financing, capacity-building, and innovation**, making education a true enabler of **Viksit Bharat@2047**.