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## REVIEW ARTICLE

# NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL POLICIES 1968, 1986 AND 2020 OF INDIA: CRITICAL ANALYSIS AND REVIEW

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### ABSTRACT

Education is a fundamental pillar of any nation's progress and development. In a diverse and populous country like India, crafting effective educational policies becomes an imperative task to ensure equitable access to quality education for all citizens. Over the years, India has witnessed the formulation and implementation of several National Education Policies (NEPs), each designed to address the evolving needs, challenges, and aspirations of the society. With India's hard-fought independence in 1947, the country embarked on a journey of rebuilding and rejuvenating its socio-economic and cultural landscape. Education emerged as a central tool in this process of nation building. Visionaries like Jawaharlal Nehru recognized that a well-educated citizenry was critical for the growth of a democratic, self-reliant, and progressive nation. Post-independence, various policy initiatives aimed to redefine education in India. The establishment of the University Grants Commission (UGC) in 1953, for instance, marked a step towards regulating and coordinating higher education. However, it was the National Education Policy of 1968 that laid the foundation for a comprehensive framework for educational development. In the intricate tapestry of a nation's development, education emerges as a warp and weft, intertwining the aspirations of generations with the fabric of progress. National Education Policies (NEPs) stand as monumental signposts in this journey, guiding the course of education and shaping the intellectual landscape of a nation. NEP encapsulate the collective vision and aspirations of a society, providing a roadmap for educational growth and transformation. By outlining strategic goals, objectives, and actionable measures, ensure that the educational journey is purposeful and aligned with the nation's developmental goals and are meticulously crafted frameworks that encompass every facet of education, from early childhood learning to higher education and beyond. The present study addressing curriculum design, teacher training, infrastructure development, pedagogical approaches, and inclusion policies, in which NEPs create a holistic environment where 21<sup>st</sup> century education can flourish.

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## INTRODUCTION

Societies are dynamic, ever-evolving entities and NEPs serve as adaptable instruments that can pivot to address the changing needs of a society. Whether it's the demand for technological literacy, the fostering of critical thinking skills, or the promotion of cultural heritage, NEPs ensure that education remains relevant and responsive to societal shifts. An education system isn't just about imparting knowledge; it's about shaping the minds of the next generation. NEPs define the philosophy that underpins education and they determine whether education is viewed as a means to individual success, a catalyst for social transformation, or a combination of both. This philosophical foundation influences teaching methodologies, curriculum choices, and the very ethos of education institutions. Education systems, like any intricate mechanism, require periodic calibration. NEPs act as catalysts for reform, sparking discussions and igniting actions that lead to systemic improvements. They bring together stakeholders from government, academia, industry, and civil society to collaborate on reshaping education for the better.

A society's progress hinges on its ability to provide equal opportunities for all. NEPs underscore the importance of inclusivity, striving to ensure that education reaches marginalized communities, rural areas, and disadvantaged groups. By promoting equitable access and NEPs foster a level playing field and contribute to social harmony and NEPs serve as the compass that guides a nation's educational odyssey and synthesize the past, present, and future aspirations, steering education towards holistic growth and societal advancement. As we delve into the specific NEPs covered in this book, and witness how each policy played a pivotal role in shaping India's education landscape, leaving an indelible mark on the minds and futures of its citizens.

### Objectives of the Study

- ❖ Overview the national education policies
- ❖ Study the outcomes of National Education Policy 1968
- ❖ Learn the outcomes of National Education Policy 1986
- ❖ Verify the outcomes of National Education Policy 2020

## METHODOLOGY

The study has been conducted based on the method of document review in accordance with the qualitative approach of research and has been done on the basis of the secondary sources of data like books, research journals, etc. towards “National Educational Policies 1968, 1986 and 2020 of India: Critical Analysis and Review”

### NEP1968: Foundation of Modern Education

Formulated against the backdrop of India's nascent post-independence era, NEP 1968 is a milestone in the nation's educational history. With a firm focus on higher education, research, and nurturing a scientific temperament, it laid the groundwork for institutions that would not just educate but also drive socio-economic progress. By fostering linkages between education and development, it aimed to harness knowledge for the betterment of the nation. The period preceding the NEP of 1968 was marked by significant socio-political changes in India. The country had gained independence in 1947 and was striving to build a new identity and uplift its population from the shadows of colonial rule. Education was seen as a crucial tool for social transformation, economic growth, and nation-building. The first major education policy in post-independence India was formulated in 1968, building upon earlier initiatives and addressing the changing needs of the country. The years following India's independence in 1947 were characterized by a complex blend of optimism, challenges, and a determined effort to shape the nation's destiny. The NEP of 1968 set forth several ambitious objectives that aimed to revolutionize the Indian education system by expansion of access, promotion of science and technology, equity and social justice, quality enhancement, national integration, professionalization of education and acknowledged the crucial role that higher education and scientific research play in the progress of a nation and by recognizing universities as centers of intellectual growth, innovation, and economic advancement, NEP 1968 laid the groundwork for enhancing the quality and relevance of higher education in India. It demonstrated a forward-looking approach by placing significant emphasis on the development of higher education and scientific research and by establishing new universities, promoting research, fostering interdisciplinary collaborations, and aligning education with vocational needs, the policy laid the foundation for a more robust and relevant higher education system in India and it left a lasting impact on India's education system, with positive outcomes such as increased access to education, a scientific outlook, and cultural preservation. However, the policy also faced shortcomings related to quality disparities, vocational focus, implementation challenges, and gender disparities. Despite these limitations, and played a crucial role in shaping the direction of education in India and laid the foundation for subsequent educational reforms.

### NEP1986: Quality, Access, and Equity

NEP 1986 marked a paradigm shift, emphasizing the principles of quality, access, and equity in education. Introducing the 10+2+3 structure, it reshaped the school and college education landscape. By recognizing the importance of vocational education and skill development, NEP 1986 acknowledged the diverse needs of learners and the need to align education with the demands of the job market. It set the stage for a more inclusive and comprehensive approach to education. The period leading up to the formulation of the NEP in 1986 was marked by significant socio-economic and political changes in India. The nation was grappling with the aftermath of the Green Revolution, economic liberalization, and the challenges posed by rapid population growth and these factors necessitated a comprehensive overhaul of the education system to align it with the changing needs of society and the emerging global landscape. The socioeconomic disparities were glaring, with access to quality education predominantly favouring urban areas and privileged sections of society. The prevalent education structure failed to address the diverse needs of students, and the curriculum was often criticized for being

outdated and rote-based. Additionally, the mismatch between education and employment opportunities had become increasingly evident. The years leading up to the formulation of the NEP in 1986 were marked by a confluence of socio-economic and political changes that deeply influenced India's education landscape. These changes were driven by a combination of internal factors, such as the Green Revolution, economic liberalization, and population growth, as well as external factors, including globalization and shifts in the global economy. As these forces intersected, they underscored the urgent need for a comprehensive reevaluation of India's education system. It marked a watershed moment in Indian education, heralding a paradigm shift in its philosophy and structure. One of the most transformative changes was the introduction of the 10+2+3 structure. This structure redefined the schooling system into ten years of elementary education (Class 1 to Class 10), followed by two years of higher secondary education like class 11 and class 12, and then three years of university education. This structure aimed to provide a seamless and continuous flow of education, allowing students to choose different pathways based on their interests and aspirations. The policy also emphasized the integration of vocational education and skill development into the mainstream curriculum and was a response to the growing need for practical skills and employability, aligning education with the demands of the job market. Vocational courses were designed to equip students with hands-on skills, making them job-ready upon graduation. It marked a turning point in the history of Indian education, bringing forth a comprehensive set of reforms that aimed to revamp the entire education system and introduced several transformative changes that sought to address the existing challenges and align education with the evolving needs of society and the economy. Among these changes, the most significant was the introduction of the 10+2+3 structure, which revolutionized the educational journey of students. In essence, it recognized that education should be a means of holistic development, personal growth, and employability. The introduction of the 10+2+3 structure and the integration of vocational education were integral to realizing this vision, facilitating a transition from a rigid, theory-centric education system to a more flexible, inclusive, and skills-oriented approach. These changes formed the bedrock of the policy's efforts to transform the educational landscape of India and set it on a path of progress and innovation and sought to ensure that education in India was not only accessible to all but also of high quality, fostering holistic development and meaningful learning experiences. By emphasizing equity, shifting to a learner-centered approach, and enhancing teacher training, the policy aimed to transform education into a powerful tool for individual growth and societal progress. These principles continue to shape the foundation of education policies in India and are integral to the ongoing evolution of the education system. NEP 1986's successes were evident in its restructuring of the education system, emphasis on vocational education, and focus on quality teaching and learning. However, challenges related to infrastructure, resource allocation, pedagogical transition, equity, and monitoring highlighted the complexities of implementing such a comprehensive policy. The lessons learned from these successes and challenges continue to inform subsequent education policies in India, emphasizing the need for balanced approaches, adequate resources, and sustained efforts to ensure that education remains a catalyst for individual and societal progress.

### NEP2020: Shaping the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learner

NEP 2020, the most recent and forward-looking policy, reflects the changing contours of education in the digital age. With a focus on holistic development, critical thinking, and multidisciplinary learning, NEP 2020 aspires to cultivate learners who are equipped to thrive in an ever-evolving world. By addressing early childhood education, integrating technology, and emphasizing teacher training, it aims to transform India's education system to one that is responsive, innovative, and globally competitive. The National Education Policy (NEP) of 2020 represents a watershed moment in India's educational landscape. Crafted to align with the demands of the 21st century, and it endeavors to redefine education as an enabler of holistic development, innovation, and global competitiveness. This chapter

delves into the intricacies of it, exploring the rationale behind its formulation, its multifaceted approach, key components, and the potential impact and challenges associated with its implementation. Itemphasis on holistic education and a multidisciplinary approach reflects a profound understanding of the changing demands of society and the workforce. By nurturing cognitive, emotional, and physical development while encouraging exploration and integration of diverse subjects, and it aims to equip students with the skills and mindset needed to excel in a rapidly evolving world. It encompasses several key components that are integral to its transformative vision. This section elaborates on the importance of Early Childhood Education, Teacher Training and Professional Development, and Digital Learning and Technology Integration in NEP 2020. NEP 2020's emphasis on Early Childhood Education, Teacher Training and Professional Development, and Digital Learning and Technology Integration reflects its forward-looking approach to education. By addressing these components, NEP 2020 strives to create a robust educational ecosystem that nurtures holistic development, empowers educators, and leverages technology to enhance learning outcomes for all students. It emphasis on a learner-centric approach, innovation and research, and global competitiveness represents a paradigm shift in Indian education. This section explores how these aspects align with NEP 2020's goals and contribute to the transformation of the education system. NEP 2020's emphasis on learner-centric education, innovation and research, and global competitiveness reflects its ambition to transform India's education system. By nurturing independent thinkers, fostering innovation, and preparing students to excel on a global platform, NEP 2020 strives to equip the younger generation with the skills and mindset necessary to succeed in a rapidly changing world. It represents a visionary blueprint to reinvigorate India's education system. Its holistic, multidisciplinary approach aims to equip learners with the skills, values, and knowledge required to thrive in an interconnected world. While the policy's potential impact is promising, the journey toward successful implementation demands collaborative efforts from policymakers, educators, parents, and students. Through careful navigation of challenges and strategic alignment of resources, holds the potential to reshape India's 21<sup>st</sup> century educational landscape for generations to come. Education is an instrument for national development and social change, FRN(2013). It is also a vital tool for the promotion and improvement of the individual and the society at large. Ughamadu (2006) asserts that education is a systematic process by which individuals are developed physically, emotionally, spiritually, socially and mentally for their well-beings and that of their society. It is equally a vital transformational tool and a formidable instrument for socio-economic empowerment. The FRN (2013) stated that education is compulsory and the right of every Nigerian irrespective of gender, social status, religion, ethnic background and any peculiar individual challenges. This implies that every Nigerian child must attend school to equip him/herself for life in the society.

## Literature Review

Biswas and Satpathy (2013) in the book "Vistas of Education" observed that National policy on Education 1986 visualize a national system for education which would take strong-minded stride for the universalization of primary education and the increase of adult literacy, so that enhancing a device for the devaluation of inequality and the modified policy contemplates a National System of Education to bear about consistency and evenness in education, making adult education programs a mass movement, providing universal quality, retention and access in elementary education, special emphasis on education of girls, formation of pace-setting school like opening of more. Sharma (2016) Narendra Modi and the new education policy retentiveness, reform and authenticity basis of NEP, as a policy up-gradation or hardly an idea associated to Modi's governance, inclusive aspect of the NEP and its link with Indian prime minster idea of inclusion, compare and examine are Indian PM idea of inclusion through different policy initiatives and the global perception of sustainability that is 21<sup>st</sup> century sustainable development goals.

## A Comparative Analysis and Review of the NEPs

The evolution of India's National Education Policies (NEPs) over the years reflects the nation's commitment to improving its educational landscape and delve into a comparative analysis of NEP 1968, 1986, and NEP 2020, we uncover common threads, shifts in approach, and lessons that have shaped the latest policy iteration. This chapter examines the overarching themes, evaluates the successes and failures of each policy, and highlights the lessons learned from the past that have influenced the formulation of NEP 2020. Additionally, insights into how the changing priorities and persistent challenges in Indian education have influenced policy decisions. NEP 1968 recognized the importance of democratizing education and expanding access to higher education, seeking to bridge the education gap between urban and rural areas. NEP 1986 further solidified this commitment by introducing the 10+2+3 structure and promoting universal access to education up to the secondary level and NEP 2020 builds upon these foundations by emphasizing inclusive education for all learners, regardless of their abilities or backgrounds, through measures such as early childhood education and the use of technology for access. Access, in conjunction with equity, has been a driving force across these policies. Recognizing that education is a means of empowerment and socio-economic mobility, the policies have sought to create an environment where quality education is accessible to every individual. NEP 1968 aimed to ensure that no deserving student was denied an opportunity due to financial constraints. NEP 1986, with its focus on universalizing elementary education, aimed to eliminate the barriers that hindered children from attending school. NEP 2020 takes a step further by utilizing digital platforms to provide education to remote areas and underserved communities. The development of human capital, which involves nurturing the potential of individuals to contribute meaningfully to society, has been a consistent theme in each policy's objectives. NEP 1968 highlighted the importance of fostering scientific temper and the spirit of inquiry among students. NEP 1986 aimed to produce individuals equipped with the skills needed to thrive in the rapidly changing world. NEP 2020 envisions an education system that nurtures not just academic excellence, but also essential life skills, critical thinking, and creativity and in particular, reinforces the idea of an inclusive and learner-centric education system that acknowledges the diverse learning needs of individuals. This learner-centric approach aligns with the broader vision of human capital development, recognizing that each individual possesses unique talents and potentials that should be nurtured. The continuity in vision across NEP 1968, 1986, and NEP 2020 underscores the unwavering commitment of India's education policies to providing quality education that is equitable, accessible, and focused on the development of human capital. While the policies have evolved to meet changing societal needs and global trends, their core objectives remain rooted in these principles, demonstrating a shared aspiration to build a stronger and more prosperous nation through education. The evolution of India's NEPs over the decades reflects a profound shift in paradigms, moving from an industrial-focused approach to an acknowledgment of the imperative of a knowledge-based economy and highlights the responsive nature of educational policies in adapting to changing societal needs and global trends, aligning education with the evolving demands of the world. The shift in paradigms across NEP 1968, 1986, and NEP 2020 mirrors the broader transformations in India's socio-economic landscape and the global economy. From an industrial-focused approach to a knowledge-based economy orientation, these policies reflect the nation's responsiveness to changing times and the imperative to prepare its citizens for the challenges and opportunities of the modern world and the evolution of all paradigms underscores the dynamic nature of educational policies and their essential role in shaping the future of a 21<sup>st</sup> century nation.

## CONCLUSION

NEP 1968 achieved significant milestones in expanding higher education, promoting scientific research, and focusing on technical education. However, it also faced challenges related to unequal access, insufficient funding, and the limited integration of vocational

education. These successes and failures of NEP 1968 contributed to shaping subsequent educational policies by highlighting the need for a more comprehensive and inclusive approach to education that addresses both academic and practical dimensions. NEP 1986 achieved significant milestones through the introduction of the 10+2+3 system, emphasis on science and technology education, and the expansion of adult education programs. However, the policy faced challenges in maintaining consistent quality across diverse institutions, providing comprehensive teacher training, and fully integrating vocational education into secondary education and these successes and failures of NEP 1986 provided valuable insights for subsequent educational policies, emphasizing the need for a balanced approach that addresses both curriculum reform and quality assurance measures. NEP 2020 has achieved notable successes by promoting holistic education, emphasizing early childhood education, introducing curriculum flexibility, and integrating technology however, the policy's implementation faces challenges related to infrastructural limitations, resistance to change, concerns about standardization, and the need for comprehensive teacher training. These successes and challenges of NEP 2020 underscore the importance of a coordinated and gradual approach to policy implementation, addressing barriers to change while harnessing the potential of innovative educational strategies. NEP 2020's response to globalization, its emphasis on technology, the inclusivity-quality balance, and the challenges of implementation collectively shape its trajectory and by addressing these challenges, the policy can harness its potential to prepare learners for the globalized, technologically advanced, and inclusive world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The review and comparative analysis of NEP 1968, 1986 and NEP 2020 reveals the progression of India's educational policies, guided by a commitment to providing holistic, accessible education. While past policies have yielded valuable lessons, NEP 2020 aims to create a more flexible, inclusive, and technologically enriched educational ecosystem and the ongoing journey to enhance India's education system showcases the importance of continuous evaluation, adaptation, and collaboration among stakeholders in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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