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## EDUCATION FOR ALL

**Leads to Consumer Awareness**

**#NationalEducationPolicy2020**

### INTERVIEWS

**RESEARCH FEATURE**  
Unfolding of the  
New National Education  
Policy 2020

**OUT OF THE BOX**  
Digital Education:  
We Are Hardly  
There Yet!



Prof. Suresh Bhojraj Dr. Shakila Shamsu

**PLUS**

**ROUND UP • MY MARKET • THE PRESCRIPTION**



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# VIEWPOINT

MESSAGE FROM PUBLISHER & EDITOR

## Driving Paradigm Shifts in Consumer Awareness Through the Lens of the New Education Policy



**THE NEW NATIONAL** Education Policy, 2020 is a landmark move that finally places education at the forefront of the national agenda by seeking to reconfigure India's education system to support and foster universal access to quality education. This is aligned with Goal 4 of the United Nations' 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which aims to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all".

While the earlier policy was chiefly focused on academic improvement of the students, the current one considers cognitive skills imperative to foundational learning and skill development. Built on the principles of accessibility, accountability, quality, affordability and equity, it is bringing in novel paradigms of early childhood care, inclusive education, multilingualism, digital learning and employment-oriented education to build an empowered citizen-consumer.

Radical changes in the way children learn are on the cards over the next couple of years by making the pedagogy experiential, flexible, inquiry-driven, discovery-oriented and learner-centred. In fact, Prime Minister Modi, who personally drove this progressive and reformist approach, profoundly stated that the new education policy focuses on 'how to think' rather than 'what to think'!

The policy has definitely triggered a lot of thinking in the varied strata of the society. I have always believed that

educational institutions are a fertile ground for shaping the minds of future empowered consumers. This kind of holistic education will mould active and energetic students who are aware of their rights and responsibilities as a consumer, abreast with the current happenings and informed about the protection machinery at their disposal in case of sub-standard or spurious products and services. As I always say, "An informed consumer is a protected consumer".

In fact, the policy document begins with the statement, "Education is fundamental for achieving full human potential, developing an equitable and just society, and promoting national development!" Such an alert, efficient and aware consumer will be an asset to nation building, fair trade, consumer protection and quality life-style.

The future of the students, the citizen-consumer and the nation appears bright indeed!

Prof. Bejon Kumar Misra  
Publisher & Editor  
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# PRAFULL D. SHETH

Editorial Board Member



## CAPACITY FOR E-EDUCATION EXPOSED BY THE PANDEMIC

### THE NATIONAL EDUCATION

Policy, 2020 advocates the need to embrace technology to transform the education sector. It envisions an interplay of education and technology not just in learning but also in assessments, planning and administration by harnessing artificial intelligence, technology-based education platforms and online courses that blend with traditional teaching modules.

The policy document expressly states that, “one of the central principles steering the education system will be the extensive use of technology in teaching and learning, removing language barriers, increasing access as well as education planning and management”. Accordingly, it calls for investing in digital infrastructure, developing innovative online teaching tools, creating virtual labs and digital repositories and developing a rich resource of knowledge for the citizens.

Coincidentally, the new policy has arrived at a time when the existing education system is being sorely tested by the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic that shut down all educational institutions and abruptly shifted teaching-learning to online platforms for almost two years.

This precipitous move has brought the entire education system to its knees. There was no other alternative apart from the virtual format per se, but this has shined the light on the ugly reality that



India was completely unprepared for digital education.

Everything from access to content and training is proving to be a major hurdle in the path of imparting virtual education. However it provided an

opportunity to tackle the existing

challenges emerging from our ill-equipped digital infrastructure on all fronts. Government educational institutions lacked the requisite resources; the budget private institutions hardly fared any better. On the other side, most of the students did not have computers and smartphones let alone wi-fi or mobile connectivity. On the technology literacy front, a huge chunk of the teachers were unfamiliar with technology and floundered when asked to use digital tools. How can they be expected to design online teaching materials and lesson plans?

And the sharp digital divide has been laid bare for all to see! Online learning can merely be a stop-gap arrangement with most of India waiting to go back to the traditional face-to-face mode of classroom learning. We cannot expect to move ahead without revamping the existing state of digital education.

But the dream of digital India is facing several challenges, which brings new opportunities too. But it is not just about an internet connection, we also need access to uninterrupted electricity supply with open access to modern technology! ▶



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### RESEARCH FEATURE

#### UNFOLDING OF THE NEW NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY 2020



India has always promoted and regulated education across the country with policy instruments that cover elementary to higher education in both rural and urban settings.



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### HORIZON

#### APPOINTMENT OF INDUSTRY EXPERTS IN UNIVERSITIES ON THE CARDS



A revolutionary new development in the higher education sector in India is in the works.



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### INTERVIEW



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### MY MARKET

#### PAVING THE WAY FOR A MULTIDISCIPLINARY GLOBAL APPROACH TO EDUCATION



The NEP is promoting unity and integrity of knowledge through a multidisciplinary and trans-disciplinary approach that will equip students with crucial life skills while opening up new realms on the lines of the global system of education.



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### OUT OF THE BOX

#### DIGITAL EDUCATION: WE ARE HARDLY THERE YET!



India has never managed to rank high in the education and learning outcome levels in the world.



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### IN FOCUS



#### ONBOARDING STUDENTS AND PARENTS WITH THE MOORINGS OF NEP 2020



SHRI DHARMENDRA PRADHAN  
MINISTER OF EDUCATION AND MINISTER OF SKILL DEVELOPMENT AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP, GOI  
After 34 years, a new education policy has been introduced.  
NEP is the result of the promises our government made in 2014.  
Today our primary agenda is to take to the ground,  
many of which are already being rolled out.



# ROUNDUP



## Key Changes to Undergraduate and Ph.D. Courses

The University Grants Commission (UGC) is on the road to overhauling the higher education system with radical changes in the undergraduate degrees and Ph.D. programmes.

### DATA BRIEFING

India's higher education system is one of the world's biggest, with well over **850** different universities.



**MHRD**

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**TRANSFORMING INDIA**

**'NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY 2020'**

Contributing to an equitable and vibrant knowledge society, by providing high-quality education to all.



**“Teach to Transform, Educate to Empower, Learn to Lead”**

**— Shri Narendra Modi**

**COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES** will commence providing a four-year undergraduate programme (FYUP) with multiple exits and entry options. On completion, students will receive honours with a research undergraduate degree.

Following the discontinuation of the M.Phil. degree, the UGC is proposing that students completing the four-year degree with a Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) of 7.5 and above will be considered eligible to take admission in Ph.D. The draft UGC (Minimum Standards and Procedure for Award of Ph.D. Degree) Regulations, 2022 that were released in March state that students seeking admission in a Ph.D. course after a “4-year/8-semester Bachelor’s degree with research should have a minimum CGPA of 7.5 out of 10”.

Furthermore, the guidelines lay out that students in the four-year UG courses will have to study common introductory courses in Humanities, Social Sciences, etc. during their first three semesters, irrespective of their subject of specialisation. Meanwhile, the three-year undergraduate system will continue, and these students will be eligible for Ph.D. after finishing a year of their master’s course.

Jagadesh Kumar, chairman of UGC observed, “The four-year undergraduate programme is beneficial to students in several ways. Those who are interested in research can do either multidisciplinary research or focus on a single discipline in their final year. Those who do well

in the four-year undergraduate programme will be eligible to join in a Ph.D. programme. I believe that this will enhance the research ecosystem in our country.”

Along with this, the new draft amendments to the Regulation Act 2016 allow all higher education institutions to reserve at least 60% of the available seats for those who clear the National Eligibility Test (NET)/Junior Research Fellowship (JRF) selection process. The rest will be filled through the university common entrance test on the basis of interviews conducted by the concerned institute. There will be a 5% relaxation in eligibility for the economically weak and other sections. A status quo will be applicable for the procedure of admissions.

Ph.D. courses will be for a minimum duration of two years (against the earlier stipulation of three years) with the maximum limit remaining unchanged at six years. A two year relaxation will be extended to women candidates and persons with disabilities.

There are several amendments in the role and obligations of research supervisors and co-supervisors. Besides this, the quality assessment of Ph.D. degrees will be the responsibility of higher education institutions and they will be free to evolve guidelines accordingly.

The draft regulation has been published for public feedback with the proposed changes being made in line with the principles of the New Education Policy (NEP), 2020. ▶



# Affiliated Colleges to Become Multi-Disciplinary and Award Degrees by 2035

**ON 9TH MARCH, 2022,** the UGC issued draft guidelines for 'Transforming Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) into Multidisciplinary Institutions' in line with the NEP 2020. The guidelines were open for suggestions from different stakeholders for two weeks and the committee proposes to finalise the regulations by April-May 2022.

If approved, this move will lead to a major restructuring of higher education in India:

- The affiliated colleges will be allowed to become 'degree-awarding multidisciplinary autonomous institutions' by 2035. For this, the colleges can seek academic collaboration with other institutions; merge with other single-stream or multidisciplinary institutions; or strengthen their infrastructure by adding departments in subjects. This way they can form clusters or even a larger university.
- In the multi-disciplinary set up, colleges and universities will offer a wide diversity of subjects of study with new-age subject combinations while enabling students to understand how the different subjects correlate when it comes to real-life applications. The draft reads, "A multidisciplinary institution should not only have different departments, but also imaginative and flexible curricular structures to enable creative combinations of disciplines for study."
- Students will be able to pursue dual degrees from two

## PLAN FOR HIGHER EDU INSTITUTES


**HIGHLIGHTS**

**TYPES OF INSTITUTES ENVISAGED**

- Multidisciplinary research-intensive universities (RUs)
- Multidisciplinary teaching-intensive universities (TUs)
- Degree-awarding multidisciplinary autonomous colleges (smaller than a university)

**OBJECTIVES**

- Convert single-stream institutions into multidisciplinary large universities or autonomous degree-awarding HEIs
- Strengthening of institutions by adding departments such as languages, literature, music, philosophy, indology, art, dance, theatre, education, mathematics, statistics, pure and applied sciences, sociol-



ogy, economics, sports, translation and interpretation, among others

- By 2035 all affiliated colleges should become degree-awarding multidisciplinary autonomous institutions
- Merger of single-stream institutions with other multidisciplinary institutions under the same or different managements

different institutions simultaneously. For instance, a dual-degree from IIT Delhi and JNU becomes possible! After taking admission in one college to complete the first degree, the student can enroll for a second degree from a partnering institution without going through the admission process again. They will be allowed to earn 40% of credits from outside the parent university/college.

- There will be institutional collaboration - an undergraduate student who has completed a degree course can get

direct entry to a Master's programme of a partner institution without having to take another entrance examination.

UGC chairman, M. Jagadesh Kumar remarked, "Today most employers are looking for people with multiple skills. For too long our Indian educational system has worked in silos and within very tight disciplinary boundaries. And we want to remove those disciplinary boundaries. Idea is to facilitate the student's easy access to different disciplines in a given cluster or any large multi-disciplinary university,"

The UGC will identify potential colleges and universities that can be transformed into robust multidisciplinary institutions over the next few years. These will serve as a template for other such colleges and universities in the country. ▶

# AN EVOLVING ADULT LITERACY PROGRAMME



**IN FEBRUARY 2022**, the Ministry of Education (MoE) approved a 'New India Literacy Programme' to cover all aspects of adult education for the next five years in alignment with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.

In fact, the ministry has also decided to replace the term 'Adult Education' with 'Education For All' as the former does not appropriately represent all non-literates in the age group of 15 years and above.

A senior MoE official said, "The objective of the scheme is to impart not only foundational literacy and numeracy but also to cover other components which are necessary for a citizen of 21st century such as critical life skills including financial literacy, digital literacy,

commercial skills, health care and awareness, child care and education, and family welfare; vocational skills development with a view towards obtaining local employment; basic education including preparatory, middle and secondary stage equivalency".

This is to be implemented through volunteerism in online mode. All material and resources will be provided digitally for easy access to registered volunteers through digital modes like TV, radio, mobile phone-based free, open-source apps and portals. The training, orientation, workshops for volunteers maybe organised in face-to-face mode.

The scheme covers non-literates of 15 years of age and above in all states and union territories. While the states and union territories will have the flexibility to undertake innovative activities, the school will be a unit

for implementation of the scheme and will be used for conducting surveys of beneficiaries and voluntary teachers.

The target for Foundational Literacy and Numeracy for financial years 2022-27 is 5 crore learners using Online Teaching, Learning and Assessment System (OTLAS) in collaboration with National Informatics Centre, NCERT and NIOS in which a learner may register him/herself with essential information like name, date of birth, gender, Aadhaar number and mobile number.

The estimated total outlay for this program is Rs. 1037.90 crore which includes the central share of Rs. 700 crore and the state share of Rs. 337.90 crore for 2022-27. ▶





Ministry of Education  
Government of India



# New India Literacy Program

A new scheme on 'Education for All' - erstwhile termed as 'Adult Education'

## SALIENT FEATURES

- School will be Unit for implementation of the scheme.
- Online survey of beneficiaries and Voluntary Teachers (VTs).
- Online Teaching Learning Assessment System (OTLAS) for online teaching, learning and assessment for learners
- Different strategies are to be adopted for different age cohorts.
- Use of Technologies for wider coverage of the scheme.
- Performance Grading Index (PGI) for State/UTs to monitor the scheme
- Priority will be given in terms of categories to the Girls and women, SC/ST/OBC/Minorities, Persons with Special Needs (Divyangjans), Marginalized/ Nomadic/ construction workers/ laborers/etc. who can substantially and immediately benefit from the scheme.
- Convergence with different Ministries/Departments for effective implementation of NILP
- Central Portal to be developed by NIC for aggregated data capturing
- Assessment of Literacy will be conducted in local schools using scientific format to capture the real-life learnings and skills for functional literacy
- Annual Achievement Survey of Learning Outcomes from random samples of each state/UT and Outcome-Output Monitoring Framework (OOMF).
- Participation of about 3 crore students as volunteers
- Estimated 20 lakh students of Teacher Education and Higher Education Institutions will be actively involved
- Support will be garnered from PRIs, Anganwadi workers, ASHA workers and an estimated 50 lakhs NYSK, NSS and NCC volunteers.
- Philanthropic/CSR organizations participation through volunteerism & Vidyanjali portal
- It will utilize all types of media - from print to digital
- The term 'Adult Education' has been replaced by 'Education for All'.

# Education Ministry's Webinar on Education Budget Implementation 2022-23

#Budget4Education

**THE MINISTRY OF** Education conducted a webinar on implementation of the budget for the education and skill sector in February 2022. Seven sessions were organised on different themes of relevance witnessing participation by ministry officials, educationists and other experts. They discussed the various key aspects announced for the education sector - like Digital University, Digital Teacher, Fostering Stronger Industry-Skill Linkage, Developing Educational Institutions in GIFT City, Strengthening Industry-Skill Linkage in AVGC, etc - and their effective implementation.

While addressing the inaugural session, Prime Minister Narendra Modi appreciated how this budget will help in better implementation of NEP 2020. He highlighted the five key points of Universalisation of Quality Education, Skill Development, Urban Planning and Design, Internationalisation and Animation Visual Effects Gaming Comic (AVGC) that have been emphasised in this year's budget.

He said, "This budget will help in implementing National Education Policy. National Digital University is an unprecedented step. The problem of shortage of seats can be resolved. There will be unlimited seats. I urge all stakeholders to ensure digital university starts as soon as possible!"

The education budget was announced as part of the Union Budget 2022 with an outlay of



**To provide enhanced learning opportunities to 3.7 crore students in higher education and expand e-learning by liberalizing open, distance, and online education regulatory framework, top 100 universities will start online courses. Online components in conventional Universities and ODL programmes will also be raised from 20% to 40%.**

Rs. 1,04,278 crore - a rise of Rs. 11,054 crore or 11.86% over the previous year. Of the total outlay, Rs. 63,449.37 crore was allocated for schools and Rs. 40,828.35 crore for higher education.

The focus of the budget is on digital education, creation of a digital university, job creation, agricultural universities, skill development of programmers, etc. It also emphasises mental health of students along with skilling and training of teachers.

The highlight is the setting up of a digital university with ISTE standards - to be built on a 'hub-and-spoke' model - to provide access to students for world-class quality education. This will deliver personalised learning experiences that will be delivered in different Indian languages and ICT formats. "The best public universities and institutions in the country will collaborate as a network of hub-spokes," said Finance Minister, Nirmala Sitharaman.

The 'One Class, One TV Channel' programme of PM eVIDYA is to be expanded from 12 to 200 TV channels for all states. This will serve to provide supplementary education in regional languages for Classes 1 to 12 to make up for the loss of formal education due to COVID-19 pandemic, especially for students from rural areas, weaker sections and SC-ST communities.

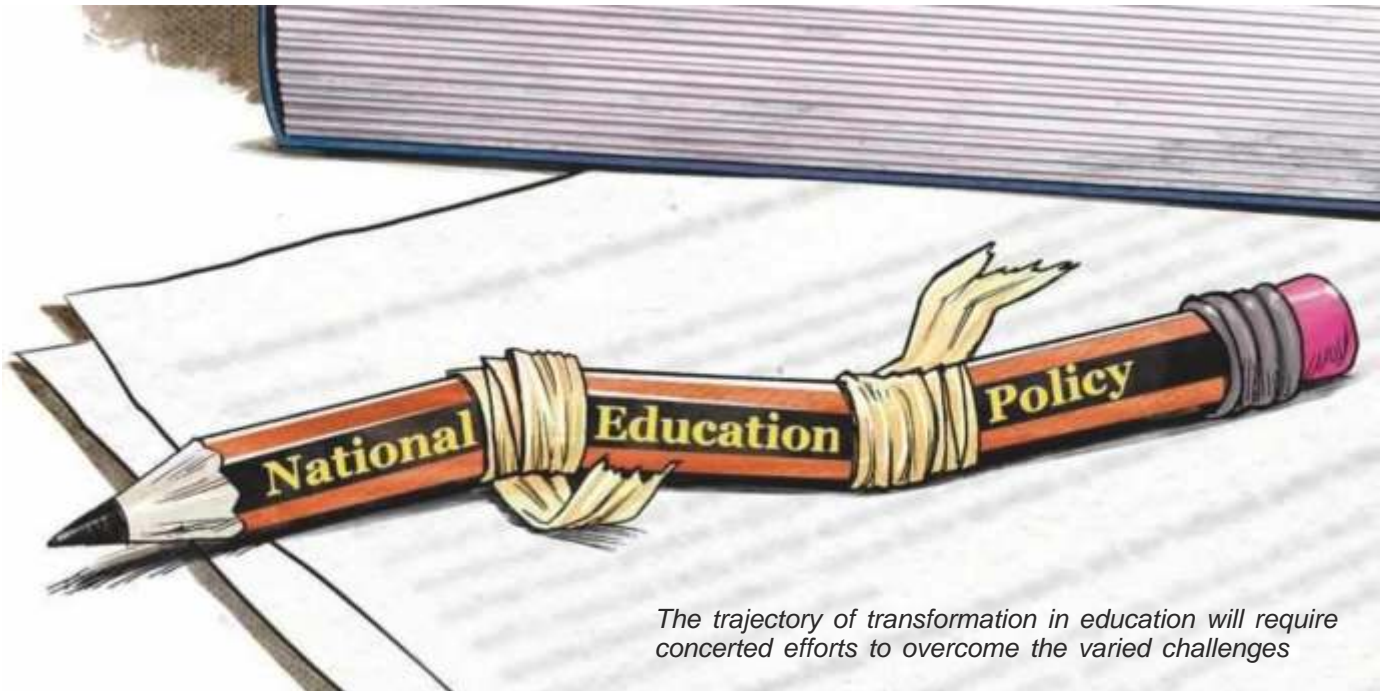
Therefore, the budget will widen access to education, deepen the higher education system and also upskill the students for a better future. ▶



## Consumers, Beware

# Dial C for Change – The New NEP 2020

It is not as if the new NEP 2020 just has to be launched and will sail smoothly from thereon in its journey of overhauling the education system. The path is strewn with challenges that have to be carefully maneuvered before the country can expect to reap the rewards of change!



*The trajectory of transformation in education will require concerted efforts to overcome the varied challenges*

**DELIVERY OF QUALITY** education is one of the most important responsibilities of the country. However, India's education system was in a precarious learning crisis even before the pandemic. The NCERT undertook a National Achievement Survey (NAS) in November 2017 to measure student learning in Classes 3, 5 and 8 in government and government-aided schools to gauge how effectively the school system is working in the country. This was the largest assessment survey conducted in India and also one of the largest in the world. The findings revealed that students across 12 states scored significantly below the national average in mathematical ability. Accordingly, it identified that learning is a big

challenge facing the Indian education system and India could lose 10 crore or more students because of learning losses over the next few years. Alas, the learning losses have only intensified during the pandemic and the shift to virtual learning.

It was in this background that the new National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 was released with an impetus on making both school and college education more holistic, flexible, multidisciplinary and suited to 21st century needs.

However, like any new change, the policy has also become the harbinger of discomfort, apprehensions and uncertainty. It has also been criticised for inadequate

collaborative policymaking with all the stakeholders along with overly optimistic expectations in terms of both cost and time for implementation. It can also fall prey to dispersed governance as it lacks customisation to varied constraints, not mention the vagaries of the political cycle.

Let us take a look at some of the challenges that can derail the ambitious NEP:

- NEP 2020 is defined by an inherent flexibility that can be realised only when many other legislations (both at the Centre and at the State levels) are modified accordingly. These include Acts governing different types of universities and professional councils (such as Pharmacy Council of India, Council of Architecture and Bar Council of India).
- Proper implementation of the NEP calls for effective and seamless collaboration between different government departments.
- The policy talks about big concepts like inclusion, ending rote learning, incorporating experiential learning, etc, but fails to detail how this will be achieved.
- There is an exhaustive list of pedagogies, values, skills and methods that sound good but can be difficult to translate into teacher practices or student behaviours. Teachers can also end up confused about the appropriate classroom practices in the face of a lengthy list of prescribed approaches.
- The minimum teacher education degree requirement of a four year B.Ed. undergraduate programme can backfire in more ways than one. The teachers could find the qualification too taxing or salary limitations too low and opt for other teaching options.
- The exclusive focus on foundational learning can keep students from mastering grade-level learning outcomes.
- There is still lingering confusion over the age of admission to Class 1 and the medium of instruction, especially when the mother tongue is different from the local language.
- The policy also opens the possibility of over-testing of the children and an unintentional pressure on them to perform, side-lining the holistic learning objectives.
- It talks about integrating Indian knowledge systems like yoga, Indian philosophy and Adivasi/indigenous ways of learning in the syllabus without providing for upskilling the educators accordingly.



- There is a focus on India-centred education by turning towards Indian knowledge to a large extent. This can possibly end up closing out the rest of the world.
- All higher education institutions will be granted autonomy over time. However, these colleges and universities will have to be certified at least once every five years which can get quite complex and slow. The accreditation framework has to be revamped to meet this implementation challenge.
- Private and unaided institutions should be given their due while implementing the NEP.
- Learning a new language has been made part of the Ph.D. But shouldn't a doctoral study be intensively focused on the topic of study itself?
- The higher education system even seems to disregard gender-related issues, not to mention the disabled community and the socially underprivileged classes.
- A strong commitment to improving support for special education is sorely lacking.
- Moreover, the NEP excludes medical and legal education from the proposed new regulatory architecture. These will have to be brought under the umbrella in the future to deliver the full benefits of multidisciplinary higher education institutions.

Therefore, to achieve smooth, uniform and successful implementation of the NEP 2020, the government has to first focus on formulating the necessary mechanisms, build reliable

information repositories, develop credibility and create sound principles of management. Exercising due caution is essential to ensure that education does not become centralised as this can end up strangling academic independence.

Also, the education policy should not work in isolation as it will directly impinge on economic growth and development.

## Conclusion

The NEP is signalling new opportunities and new hope for the nation. At its heart, it is primed to develop the unique potential of each learner in a safe and stimulating learning environment defined by adequate physical infrastructure and appropriate resources. Only when it is thoughtfully and carefully implemented at all levels, can it become the backbone of an educated, progressive, equitable and just society that is characterised by knowledgeable, empathetic, productive and contributing consumers. ▶



## Unfolding of the New **NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY** 2020

India has always promoted and regulated education across the country with policy instruments that cover elementary to higher education in both rural and urban settings. The new education policy released in 2020 lays down a new template for the next few decades that will enhance essential learning, critical thinking and overall cognitive development of the children.



Online conclave for discussing NEP 2020 with educational institutions across the country



**EDUCATION EMPOWERS AND** redefines an individual. It liberates us from the clutches of ignorance and destitution and leads us to empowering knowledge and prosperity. Education is also considered a key component of measuring development, equality and economic growth over time.

Since India gained independence, every government has been striving to address the widespread ills of illiteracy infesting the country. Various commissions were appointed to develop proposals to modernise the education system. The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) was formed as an autonomous organisation to advise both the centre and states on formulating and implementing education policies.

The first National Policy on Education (NPE) was announced in 1968 by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. It was focused on a 'radical restructuring' with equal educational opportunities to achieve national integration. Among many other fundamental changes, it outlined the 'three language formula' for secondary education which is in vogue till today.

In 1986, then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi introduced a new National Policy on Education which called for 'special emphasis on the removal of disparities and to equalise educational opportunity' especially for women, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes in the country along with a 'child-centred approach' in primary education. This was further modified in 1992.

2005 witnessed the adoption of a new approach by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's government (under the NPE 1986 itself) to eliminate the burden of multiple entrance examinations by way of an all-India common entrance examination for admission to various professional and technical programmes in the country. Accordingly, the Three-Exam Scheme (JEE and AIEEE at the national level and State Level

Engineering Entrance Examinations (SLEEE) for state level institutions) came into being.

Then came the historic Right to Education Act 2009 which made education a fundamental right, with free and compulsory education for children between the age of 6 to 14 years.



## A Quintessential Shift for Better Education

In January 2015, a committee under former Cabinet Secretary T.S.R. Subramanian initiated an unprecedented consultation process for bringing in the much-needed educational reforms and revise the outdated three decade old policy. This involved humungous deliberations, consultations and workshops across a wide spectrum of stakeholders taking place over more than 50 months at both the grassroot and national level apart from online collaborations. Finally, the 'Committee for the Draft National Education Policy' - under the chairmanship of eminent scientist and ISRO Chief, Dr. K. Kasturirangan – evaluated the over 2.5 lakh inputs and suggestions emanating from this massive exercise and submitted a report to the Ministry of Human Resource Development.

Based on this report, the Draft New Education Policy was released in 2019 which was followed by a number of public consultations. On 1st May 2020, Prime Minister Modi personally reviewed the National Education Policy (NEP) before it was approved by the cabinet on 29th July 2020.



Narendra Modi  
@narendramodi

Framing of NEP 2020 will be remembered as a shining example of participative governance. I thank all those who have worked hard in the formulation of the NEP 2020.

May education brighten our nation and lead it to prosperity.

7:04 PM · 29 Jul 20 · Twitter Web App

NEP 2020 replaces the 34 year old policy and also happens to be the first education policy of the 21st century. It aims to metamorphose India into both a vibrant knowledge society and global knowledge superpower by transforming the existing school and higher educational systems by 2040. It introduces several changes that are designed to optimise learning for the students even while bringing out their unique capabilities.

The aim is for India to have an education system by 2040 that is second to none, with equitable access to the highest-quality education for all learners regardless of social or economic background – National Education Policy, 2020



Narendra Modi  
@narendramodi

I wholeheartedly welcome the approval of the National Education Policy 2020! This was a long due and much awaited reform in the education sector, which will transform millions of lives in the times to come! #NewEducationPolicy



narendramodi.in  
Cabinet Approves National Education Policy 2020, paving way for ...  
New Policy aims for Universalization of Education pre-school to secondary level with 100% GER in school education by 2030 ...

6:56 PM • Jul 29, 2020  
[Read the full conversation on Twitter](#)

Let us take a look at some of the salient features of NEP 2020.

### Pre-Primary to Secondary Education

**Ensuring Universal Access at All Levels of School Education** – This will be achieved through a two-pronged approach of infrastructure support and innovative education centres along with tracking students and their learning levels to ensure that all children are enrolled and attending school. The aim is to achieve a 100% gross enrolment ratio in preschool through secondary school by 2035 while bringing back the almost 2 crore dropouts back into the mainstream.

**Early Childhood Care and Education with New Academic Structure** - The existing mainstream academic structure of 10+2 (for age groups 6 to 16 and 16 to 18 years) will now be revamped to a 5+3+3+4 model of:

- 5 years of Foundational Stage – This will cover ages 3 to 8 ranging from pre-primary education in pre-school or anganwadi to classes 1 to 2 in primary school. The focus of studies will be on activity-based learning.
- 3 years of Preparatory Stage - This will cover ages 8 to 11 ranging from classes 3 to 5. It will gradually introduce subjects like speaking, reading, writing, physical education, languages, art, science and mathematics.
- 3 years of Middle Stage - This will cover ages 11 to 14 ranging from classes 6 to 8. It will introduce students to more abstract concepts in subjects of



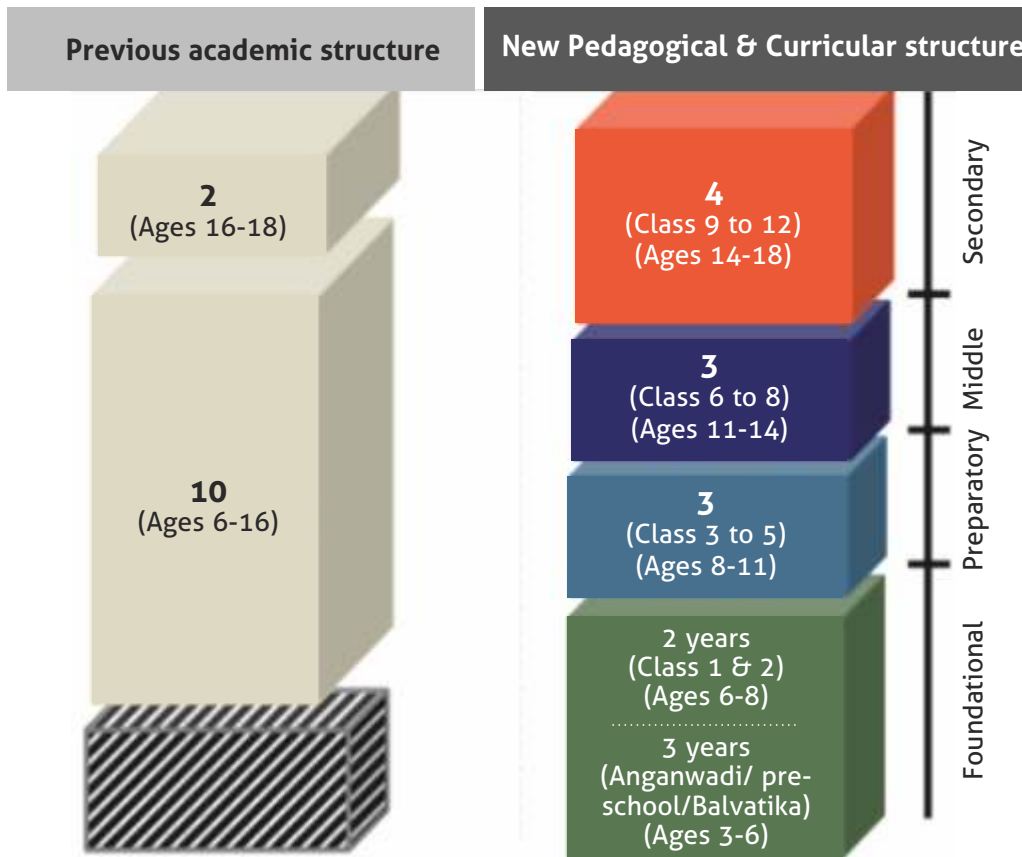
**MHRD**

Government of India  
Ministry of Human Resource Development

## Ensuring Universal Access to Education at all levels



**Image 1: Shift in Academic Structure of School Education**



mathematics, sciences, social sciences, arts and humanities.

- 4 years of Secondary Stage – This will cover ages 14 to 18 ranging from classes 9 to 12. It will be split into two phases of 2 years each that will inculcate multidisciplinary study, coupled with in-depth and critical thinking. Multiple options of subjects will be provided. (refer Image 1)

“Changing the pedagogical structure from a 10+2 system to a 5+3+3+4 system is in line with international educational standards”  
 – Prof Mahadeo Jaiswal, Director, IIM Sambalpur

This move will bring children in the age group of 3 to 6 years into the fold - who are as yet not covered by the 10+2 structure - with Class 1 beginning at the age of 6. It will promote a strong base of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) as age 3 to 6 years is globally recognised as the crucial stage for development of mental faculties of a child that leads to better overall learning, development and well-being. The overarching goal is to achieve universal provisioning of quality early childhood development, care and education by 2030.

**Foundational Literacy and Numeracy** – Both the early grade school curriculum and teacher education will be redesigned to promote the ability to read and comprehend basic text besides the ability to carry out basic addition and subtraction with Indian numerals at the foundational level in all primary schools for all learners by grade 3. This universal foundational literacy and numeracy will be achieved by 2025. A National Book Promotion Policy will also be formulated.

**Holistic and Integrated Learning** – Large scale reforms in school curriculum and pedagogy are envisaged to develop holistic and well-rounded individuals like:

- Reducing the curriculum content to core essentials with focus on critical thinking, discovery, inquiry, discussion with teaching based on analysis and holistic learning methods.
- Experiential learning with a cross-curricular pedagogical approach.
- Flexibility in course choices without separation between arts, humanities and sciences; curricular, extra-curricular and co-curricular activities; academic and vocational streams.





MHRD

Government of India  
Ministry of Human Resource Development

## National Education Policy 2020

### EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION

Universal provisioning of quality early childhood development, care, and education must be achieved by 2030, to ensure that all students entering Grade 1 are school ready



- Multilingualism with the mother tongue/local language as the medium of instruction at least till Grade 5 and Sanskrit to be offered at all levels.
- Mathematical thinking and coding will start from class 6.
- Vocational education to start from the 6th grade and include internships too.
- New and comprehensive National Curricular Framework for School Education, 2020-21 to be developed by the NCERT incorporating revision of textbooks.
- Support for gifted students and those with special talents.

#### Transforming Assessment for Student Development -

There will be a shift from summative assessment to regular and formative assessment that is more competency-based, promotes learning and tests higher-order skills. Even report cards will be redesigned accordingly. Students will take school examinations only in grades 3, 5 and 8 conducted by the appropriate authority apart from the boards in Class 10 and 12. Even the latter will be modified accordingly. The stress on board results will reduce as there will be a common entrance examination for higher education.

**Equitable and Inclusive Education** - No child will lose the opportunity to learn and excel because of the circumstances of birth or background. A Gender Inclusion Fund and Special Education Zones will be set up for disadvantaged regions and groups. Children with disabilities will be enabled to fully participate in the regular schooling process.

Additional provisions relate to:

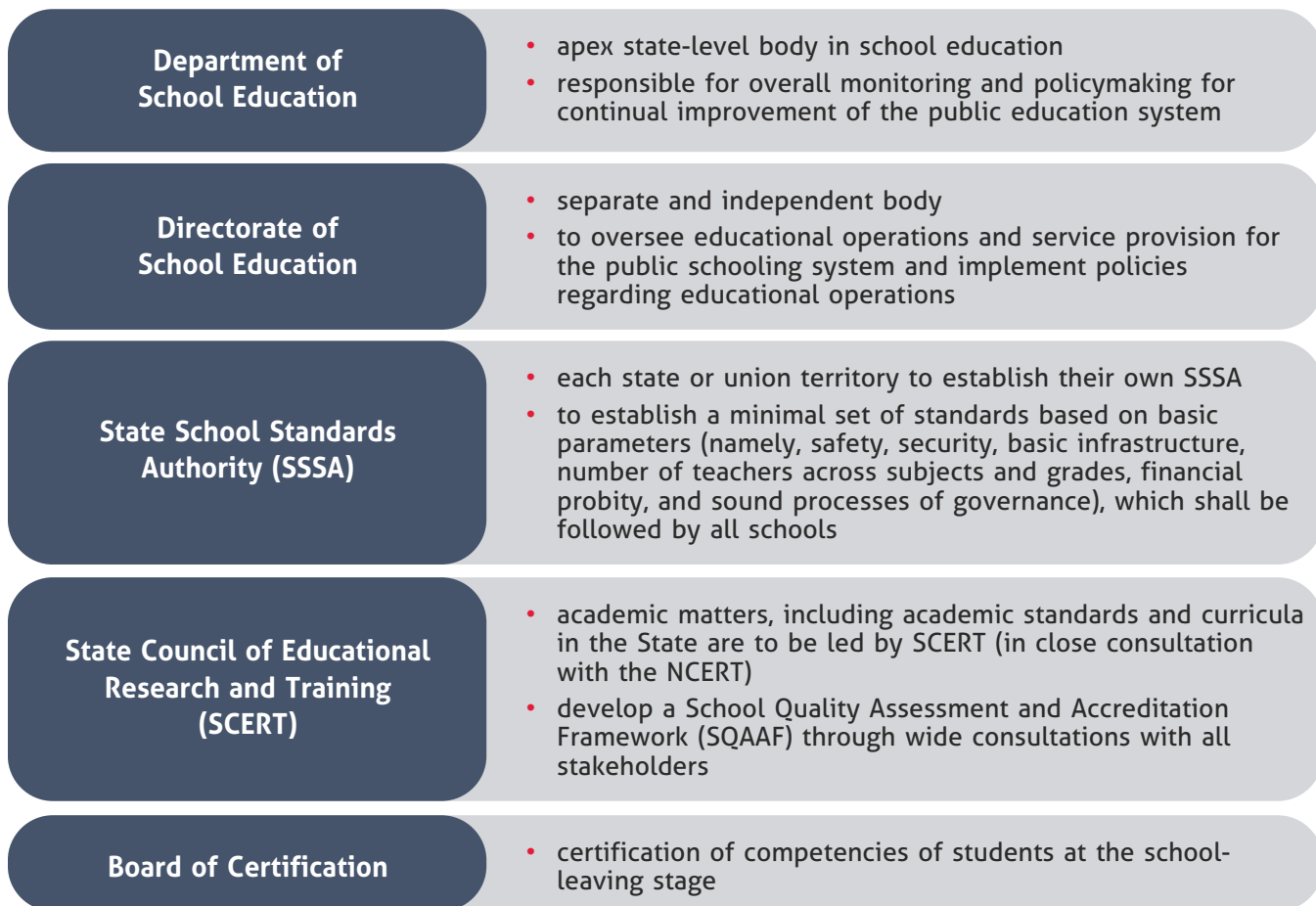
- Weight of the school bag for children in classes 1 to 10 to be reduced with 10 bag-free days in a year
- Providing energising breakfast in addition to midday meals
- Introducing well-trained social workers and counsellors to continuously work with students and their parents
- Robust teacher recruitment, continuous professional development and career management
- Efficient resourcing and effective governance through school complexes/clusters
- Standard-setting and accreditation for school education (Refer Image 2)

### Higher Education

The NEP envisions a complete overhaul of the higher education system to deliver high-quality education, with equity and inclusion. It envisages broad-based, multidisciplinary, holistic undergraduate education with flexible curricula, creative combinations of subjects and integration of vocational education. The primary proposals in addition to the objectives for pre-primary to secondary education highlighted above are:

- Increasing Gross Enrolment Ratio in higher education (including vocational courses) from 26.3% in 2018 to 50% by 2035.
- Adding 3.5 crore new seats to Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

## Image 2: New system for setting standards and accreditation



- Fixing fees of both private and public universities.
- Multi-disciplinary Bachelor's degree of 3 or 4 years (including professional and vocational areas) with multiple entry and exit options and appropriate certification as follows:
  - Certificate after 1 year of study
  - Diploma after 2 years of study
  - Bachelor's degree for 3 year programme
  - 4-year multidisciplinary Bachelor's degree (preferred option)
- Discontinuing M.Phil. (Masters of Philosophy) courses to align degree education with Western models.
- Academic Bank of Credit to digitally store academic credits earned from different HEIs that can be transferred and counted towards the final degree earned.
- Phasing out 'affiliated colleges' in 15 years through a system of graded autonomy.
- At least one large multidisciplinary HEI will be built in or near every district by 2030.
- Establishing Multidisciplinary Education and Research Universities (MERUs), at par with IITs and IIMs as models of best multidisciplinary education of global standards in the country.
- Setting up a National Research Foundation as an apex body for fostering a strong research culture and building research capacity across higher education.
- Requiring all educational institutions to integrate vocational education programmes into mainstream education so that 50% of learners have exposure to vocational education by 2025.
- Achieving internationalisation by promoting India as a global study destination providing premium education at affordable costs with provisions for hosting foreign students, mobility for Indian students to study abroad, high-performing Indian universities setting up campuses in other countries and select top international universities operating in India.
- Transforming the regulatory system of higher education (see Image 3)

### Image 3: Distinct, independent and empowered organisations and structures

HECI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Higher Education Commission of India (the "HECI")</li> <li>• apex body, main purpose is to regulate higher education in India</li> </ul>
NHERC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Higher Education Regulatory Council (the "NHERC")</li> <li>• single point regulator for the entire higher education sector</li> </ul>
NAC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Accreditation Council (the "NAC") (a meta-accrediting body)</li> <li>• to supervise and oversee independent ecosystem of accrediting institutions (which primarily take into account the basic norms, public self-disclosure, good governance, and outcomes)</li> </ul>
HEGC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Higher Education Grants Council (the "HEGC")</li> <li>• to carry out funding and financing of higher education based on transparent criteria</li> </ul>
GEC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General Education Council (the "GEC")</li> <li>• to frame expected learning outcomes for higher education programmes</li> </ul>

#### Other Key Areas of Focus

**Quality of teachers** – Various steps have been outlined for improving the quality of teacher education and their competency at all levels of education. Teachers should be prepared for assessment reforms by 2023. A 4-year integrated B.Ed. degree will become the minimum teaching qualification by 2030.

**Mentoring Mission** - A National Mission for Mentoring will be established with a large pool of outstanding senior/retired faculty.

**Professional Education** – This will become an integral part of the higher education system with stand-alone technical universities, health science universities, legal and agricultural universities transforming into multi-disciplinary institutions.

Along with this, there are extensive measures for promoting open and distance learning, online and digital education and integrating technology in education. The policy also supports promotion of Indian languages, financial support for meritorious students and adult education to achieve 100% youth and adult literacy. It provides multiple mechanisms to curb the commercialisation of higher education while encouraging private philanthropic efforts.

#### Making it Happen

- The Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) will be redesignated as the Ministry of Education (MoE) so as to bring the focus back on education and learning.

- The Prime Minister of India will head the National Education Commission.
- The Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) will be strengthened and empowered with a much greater mandate of developing, articulating, evaluating and revising the vision of education in the country on a continuous basis. It shall work in close coordination with the education ministry and the corresponding apex bodies of the states to attain this vision.
- Considering that education figures under the concurrent list of the Constitution of India, both the central and state governments should carefully plan, jointly monitor and make concerted efforts to implement the NEP. They also have to increase the public investment in education sector from 3% to 6% of GDP as soon as possible.
- There is a need for awareness, sensitisation and acceptance of the NEP 2020 from the bottom up.
- All stakeholders from parents, teachers, trainers, counsellors, social workers and education technology innovators to the governments have to work together in a synchronised and systematic manner.

#### Conclusion

The NEP 2020 envisions an India-centric education system that brings education to a global level while improving quality of education for all the children in the country. It is to be seen whether this visionary document actually manages to overhaul the education system or just ends up as another elaborate informative essay! ▶

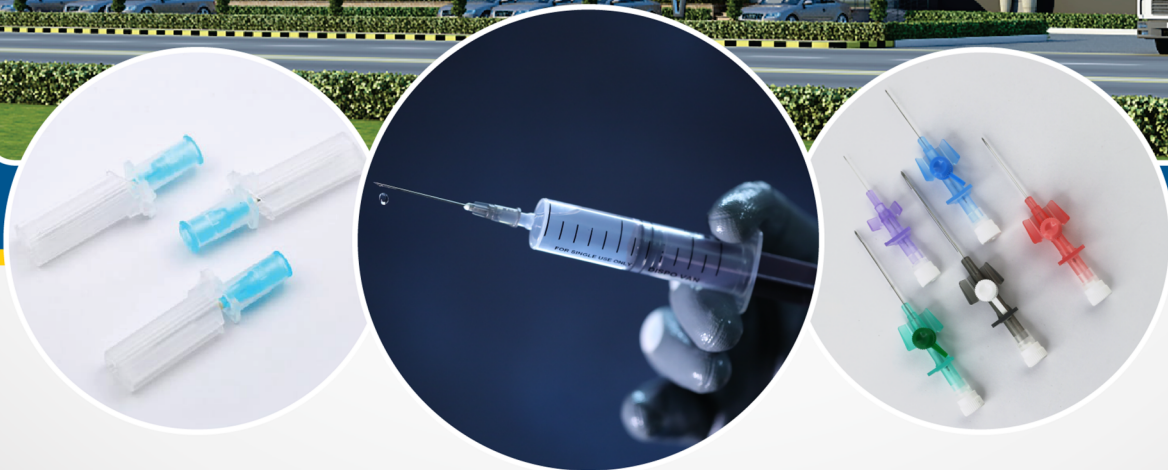




#65YearsOfSuccess

# 65<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

Thank you to everyone who has helped make this possible.  
We hope to continue serving you for many more years to come.



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## The Case For Liberalisation Of Private Sector Schools

Education is a public service, but can the not-for-profit mandate be allowed to deprive students of quality education? In the backdrop of huge learning gaps, the stage is ripe for allowing private schools to earn reasonable profits while improving the quality of public education. Indeed, reforms and liberalisation is the way forward to unleash the true potential of education in the country!



*Private sector education needs an enabling policy environment in the form of well-reasoned structural reforms that will improve both access and quality of school education*

**INDIA OPERATES ON** the mindset that education is a public good, therefore, it should not be allowed to become an opportunity to make profits! This ideological mandate that education must remain not-for-profit has actually shackled the learning outcomes across the country while limiting investments in this sector.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 lays out a progressive vision for education that hinges on foundational skills along with cognitive, social and emotional skills that are imperative for the holistic development of students. The high points include rationalising the curriculum content, changing the examination structure to focus on core capacities, introducing vocational training and a single entrance examination for college admissions.

This development trajectory for propelling Indian education into the 21st century still falls short in harnessing the full power of private schools. Alas, it continues to cling to the bewildering philanthropic mandate stemming from the obsessive stance of keeping education ostensibly 'clean' through not-for-profit mechanisms.

In fact, the draft NEP 2019 itself described the country's regulatory and governance culture as 'sclerotic and disempowering' while calling for a revolution that will 'make regulation a true engine for educational attainment and improvement!' It is lamentable to note that the final version of the policy is still focused on philanthropic private participation and proposes multiple measures to censure 'commercialisation of education', even though it is obvious that the existing regulation itself is smothering the latent potential of private schools.

The FICCI-ARISE (FICCI's Alliance For Reimagining School Education) report on '*Liberalization of India's Private Schools*' released in October 2021 outlines how multiple regulatory structures have stifled private sector education and created a cottage industry of fragmented and unorganised schools. It makes a realistic case for opening up the sector with bold reforms that will not only meet the learning needs of the students but also help realise the goals of the NEP.

## Overview of the Pre-Pandemic Education Sector

Post-independence, India has made impressive strides in both equity and access to school education; this has resulted in gross enrolment ratios for students in elementary level (6-13 years) peaking from 32% in 1951 to an all-time high of 92% in 2019.

This is marked by a huge shift towards private schools. Of the almost 25 crore children in the country, around 13.2 crore study in government schools and the remaining 11.5 crore (nearly 47%) in private schools. This is no mean feat when the percentage of students attending unaided independent schools barely reaches the double digit in the major countries across the world.

According to the Unified District Information System for Education (UDISE), school enrolment has risen from 8 crore to 25 crore over the period 1978 to 2017, a

compounded annual growth rate (CAGR) of 3%. But the CAGR for children enrolling in private schools rose three times at 9%. Meanwhile, enrolment in government schools has fallen from 74% in 1978 to 53% in 2017 (see Figure 1).

In terms of size, in 2017-18, an average private unaided school had 246 students on their rolls, compared to just 120 for an average government school (see Figure 2).

## Preference for Private Education

At the end of 2017, there were more than 4 lakh privately owned schools (of which private unaided schools stood at 3.2 lakhs) as compared to nearly 11 lakh government owned schools. Therefore, private unaided schools now form 23% of all schools in India, compared with just 3% in 1978 (see Figure 3).

However, India's private school sector remains heterogeneous and unorganised, without the presence of any one major school chain or trust dominating the landscape at a national level.

The key factors driving the shift towards private schools is the popular perception that they provide a better learning environment and outcomes as compared to government schools. This is fuelled by parental demand for better quality of education, English as the medium of instruction as well as rising aspirations from India's economic growth (see Figure 4).

While it is widely believed that private schools charge hefty fees, fact is that a bulk of the private schools lean towards the affordable segment. The National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) 2018 data reveals that the monthly median fee in an elementary private unaided school is Rs. 500 per month in rural India and Rs. 958 per month in urban India. At an all-India level, schools with monthly fees at the higher end of the scale (Rs. 2000 per month) are less than 10% of the overall private schools segment.

Indeed, of the students studying in private schools, 91% pay less than Rs. 2000 per month, 71% are required to pay even less than Rs. 1000 per month and 46% pay less than Rs. 500 per month in school fees (see Figure 5).

However, parents have no choice but to choose a school based on the medium of education, infrastructure, board exam results, word of mouth, etc. With the lack of standardised and independent output norms at different levels, there is no reliable compass for comparing the minimum learning outcomes before Class 10. In fact, as per U-DISE 2019 data, 60% of private unaided schools end before board exam testing.

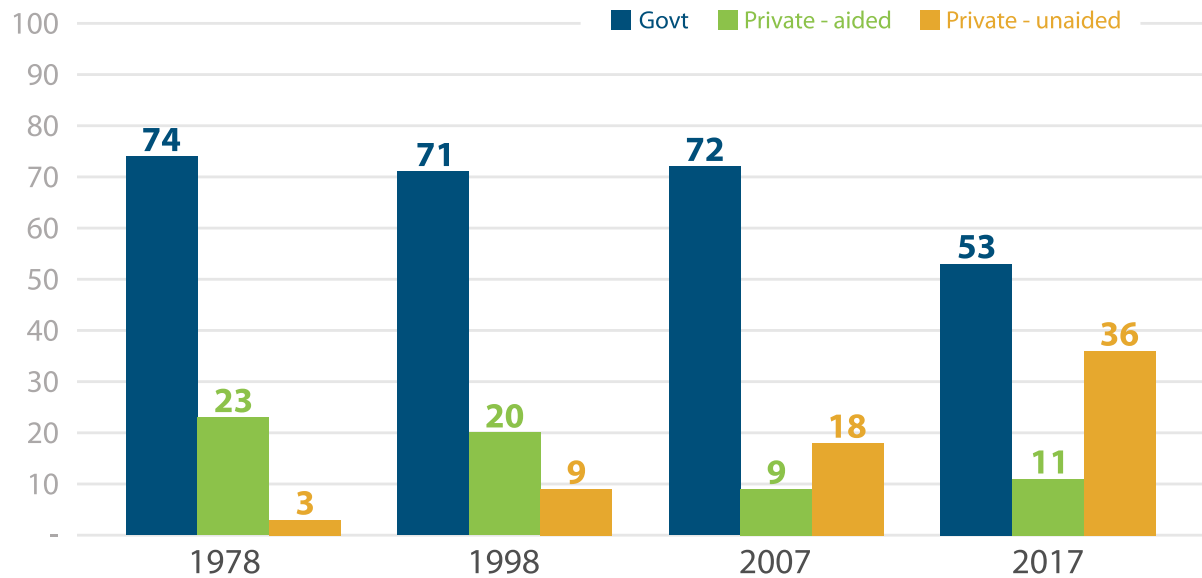
## Huge Room for Improvement

The NEP 2020 emphasises 'universal access to quality education'. While access to education seems to have been mostly resolved, quality of learning remains a key concern. While the private sector has boomed in size and demand, better quality of education remains a mere perception as the actual learning outcomes in the affordable private segment have remained low over the decades (see Figure 6).



**FIGURE 1: The surge in private schools in India**  
(number of students across different types of schools)

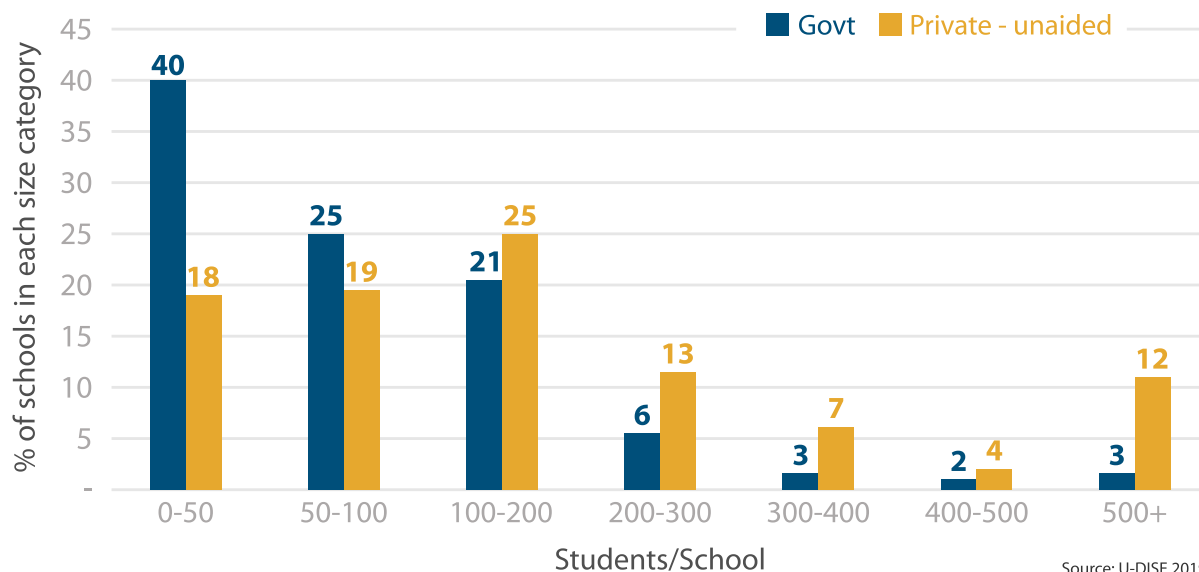
**Growth of School Enrolment**



Source: U-DISE 2019

**FIGURE 2: Private schools on average have more students in the higher size category**

**Growth of School Enrolment**



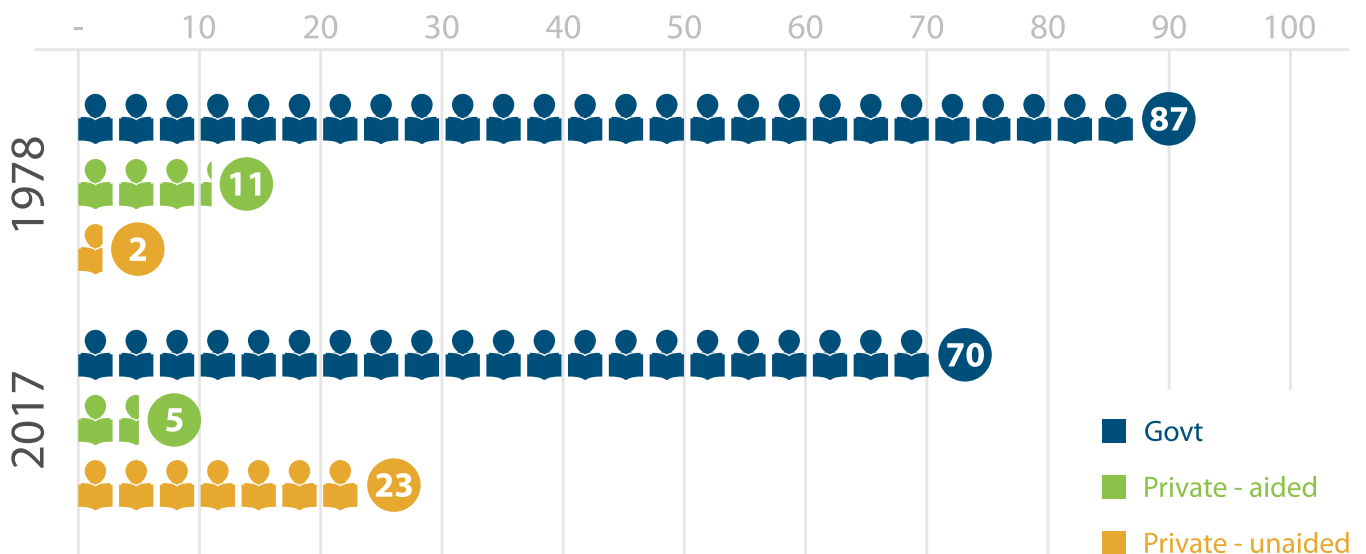
Source: U-DISE 2019

## Categories of private schools in India

Private - aided	Private – unaided	Unrecognized schools	Madrasas
Owned and run by a trust, society, private individual, etc; receives grants from governments, local bodies, etc. Governments have a say in key decisions like fee structure, teacher recruitments.	Owned and run by a trust, society, private individual, or company registered under Section 8 of the Companies Act, 2013 <sup>6</sup> etc; does not receive any financial aid from the Government and has control over key decisions such as fee structure, teacher recruitments.	Not recognised by governmental agencies but runs regular classes. For some, recognition could be in process, or, school can be recognised till a certain grade but have classes beyond this grade.	Set up to teach Islamic religious text among children of the Muslim community and includes Madrassas recognised by state Wakf Boards or are unrecognised.

Source: U-DISE 2017-2018

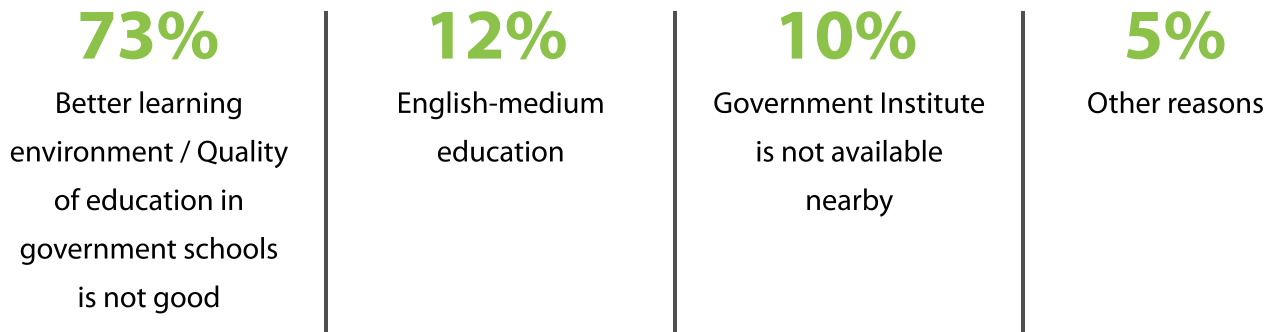
**FIGURE 3: Schools by management type**



Source: U-DISE 2019. U-DISE data for years between 2002 and 2012 is only available for elementary grades, and hence has been excluded.

**FIGURE 4: Reasons for choosing private schools**

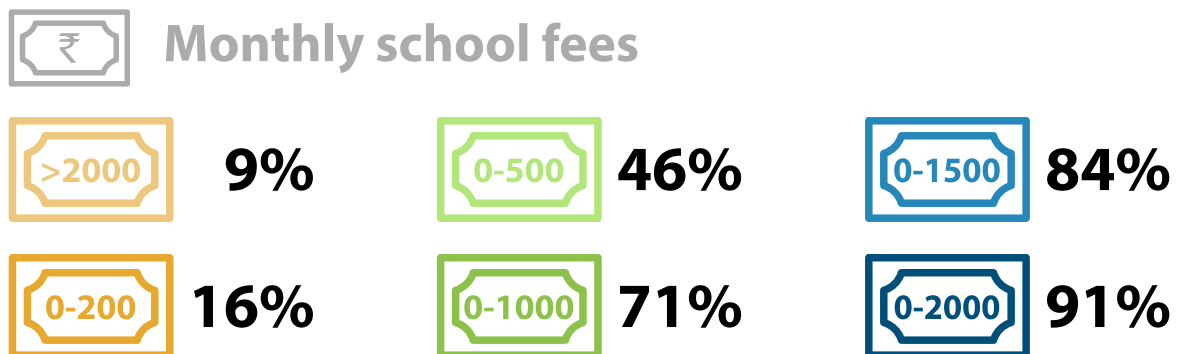
% of total responses  
Reasons for private school enrolment



Source: MoSPI 2015. Note: Calculated based on estimated responses for primary, upper primary, secondary and higher secondary in Rural + Urban areas



**FIGURE 5: A majority of students are enrolled in budget private schools**



Source: MoSPI 2019



**FIGURE 6: Government schools versus private school -**  
 Percentage of children (5-16yrs) at various levels of reading

Type of school	Nothing	Letter	Word	Std1 Para	Std 2 Story
Government	13.3	16	12.6	13.9	44.3
Private	5.7	12.4	11.8	13.4	56.7

Source: ASER 2018

**Government schools versus private schools -**  
 Percentage of children (5-16yrs) at various stages of arithmetic

Type of school management	Nothing	Number recognition 1-9	Number recognition 11-99	Subtraction	Division
Government	9.8	19.8	28.8	17.9	23.7
Private	4.0	11.7	29.9	21.4	33

Source: ASER 2018

Indeed, the learning outcomes in affordable private schools remain largely similar to those in government schools, with both leaving much to be desired in terms of the quality of education. (see Figure 7).

When compared to government and government aided schools, the private unaided ones tend to perform better. But the difference comes in mostly in the higher classes (see Figure 8 & 9).

### Regulatory and Ethical Paradigms Restrict Private Participation

Regulations that were originally framed to govern government schools continue to be applied to the independent ones as well. Moreover, the framework is only focussed on inputs with onerous rules regarding school ownership, minimum infrastructure, fees, governance and permissions while ignoring the crucial outputs of learning outcomes. In fact, a recent report revealed that opening a private school in Delhi requires 125 documents while the applications move through at least 155 steps within the Directorate of Education!

The regulations are not limited to the central government alone, even the state administration, education boards and court verdicts come into play. This kind of a heavy hand makes running a private school a complex and tedious job while negatively impacting the ability to innovate.

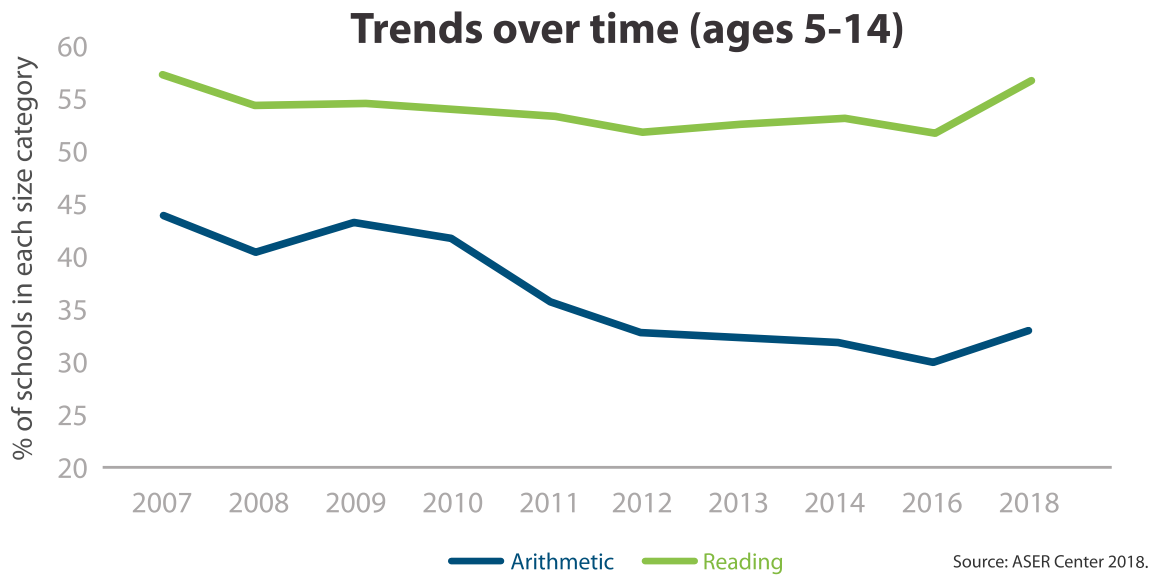
Moreover, with education being mandated as a non-profit activity, private schools have no choice but to operate as charitable trusts or non-profit companies. This drives an inherent lack of transparency even as school owners resort to creative means – ranging from legal and semi-legal to downright illegal - of earning profits.

How does it even make sense to disallow an entrepreneur to make a reasonable profit to cover his costs? Have we not reaped the humungous benefits of liberalisation in 1991 that changed the face of the Indian economy? Why are we depriving the education sector of improved service delivery and better learning outcomes?

Meanwhile, the repercussions are clear - quality players prefer to stay away and even investments are stunted in the education sector. Yet, other sectors linked to education, such as coaching classes and education technology, continue to have a field day by attracting huge investments and even greater profits.

“The NEP 2020 missed an opportunity to take a bold stand on this issue (of allowing schools for profit) — one expects a framework policy to focus on the contentious issues that have plagued our system. The failure to address this issue may lead to a perpetuation of the same sub-optimal conditions that we see in higher education and schooling” - Prof. Vijaya Sherry Chand, Chair of the Ravi J Matthai Center for Educational Innovation, IIM Ahmedabad.

**FIGURE 7:** Arithmetic and reading competency in early years for private school students in the past decade



**FIGURE 8:** Learning outcomes in basic numeracy and literacy skills

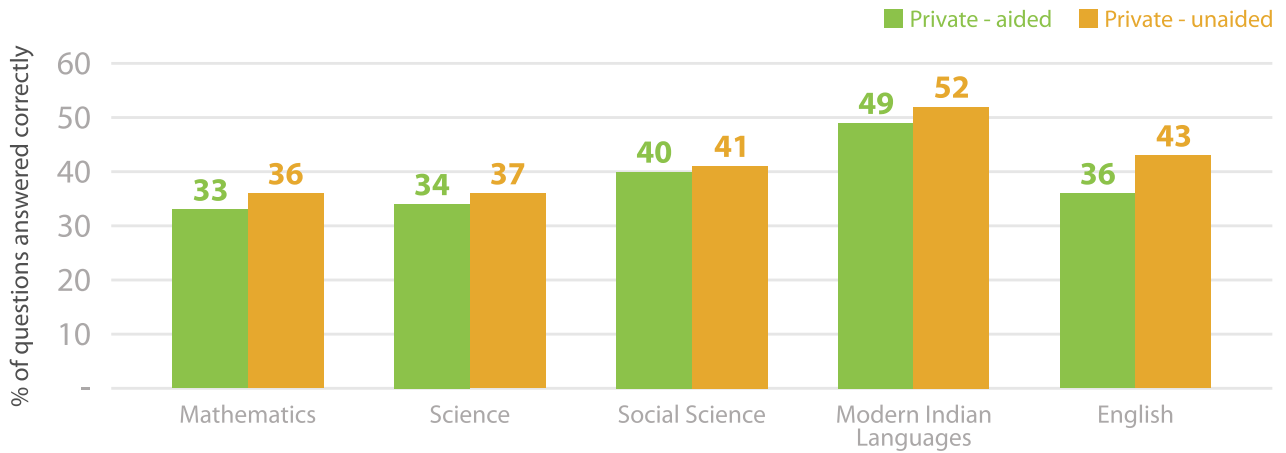
% of Children in	Figures indicate percentage point difference between private and government schools in rural areas in 2018
Class 3 who can at least perform subtraction	22.6
Class 5 who can perform division	17.1
Class 8 who can perform division	14.2
Class 5 who can at least read Class 2 level text	20.9
Class 8 who can at least read Class 2 level text	13.9

### Mean Achievement Scores (250 being average)

	English	Mathematics	Science	Social Science
Govt.	236	239	239	238
Govt. Aided	246	248	248	248
Private	277	269	270	271

**FIGURE 9: Learning in later years as measured by the percentage of questions answered correctly**

**Average performance for Class X (2017)**



Source: NCERT - National Achievement Survey Dashboard 2017. Query: (Year-wise) Arithmetic/Reading - 2018 - type of school- All India.

**CBSE Norms for minimum land requirement**

**1,600 square meters**

For densely populated cities, hilly states and islands

**4,000 square meters**

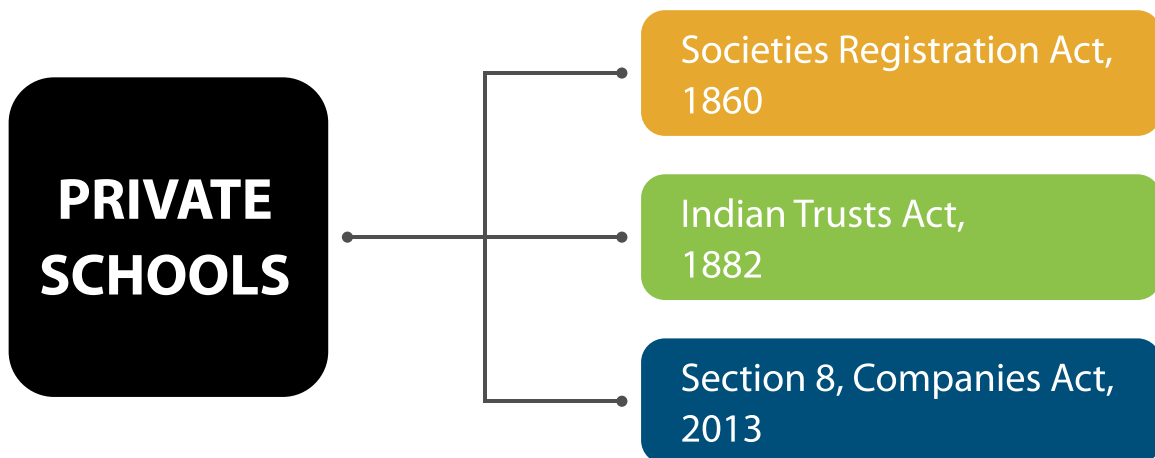
Other cities

**6000 square meters**

Large parts of rural India

Source: Anurag Tripathi: Secretary, "Affiliation Bye-Laws," Central Board of Secondary Education, (2018),

**Ownership laws for private schools in India**





**FIGURE 10:**

Year	Private School Market Size (Rs. Crores)
2013-14	86057
2017-18	233533
<b>CAGR over 4 years</b>	<b>28.35%</b>

Despite all the regulations and the philanthropic mandate, private schooling is an almost \$100 billion industry, having grown at about 15% CAGR over the last decade and over 28% in four years alone (See Figure 10). Rationalising the regulations and removing the philanthropic mandate could push the sector to nearly \$200 billion by 2025.

### Can Public Education Raise its Game?

While education is largely free in public schools, the government spends more than Rs. 30,000 per annum per child on 16 crore children. Meanwhile, affordable private schools provide education at almost a third of this cost!

Additionally, government schools are plagued by myriad structural issues - lack of accountability, over-centralisation, limited state capacity, excessive non-academic duties for teachers and poor utilisation of funds – that constrain their ability to deliver quality education.

As per United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) estimates, the total financial requirement for India to achieve the Sustainable Developmental Goal 4 by 2030 averages \$173 billion per year, far exceeding the current government budget of \$76.4 billion a year for education. It is also obvious that the government is not in a position to shore up investments of 6% of the GDP to fund the NEP's ambitious targets. Therefore, significant private participation will become critical.

### Changing The Status Quo

Given its importance, education needs be regulated, but not at the cost of learning outcomes. However, the regulations should be rationalised while ensuring accountability to norms of learning outcomes, duty of care, safety standards, governance and educational philosophy. The report proposes the following reforms for formalisation of the private schooling sector:

- Compulsory registration of school and accreditation that meets a set of disclosures and safety norms.
- Review of the Right to Education (RTE) Act input-based norms.

- Inclusion of compulsory assessment and dissemination of learning outcomes in the RTE.
- Education vouchers instead of RTE 12(1)(c) to fix design issues.
- Market based pricing (fees) with only one caveat of preventing parental exploitation without hurting schools.
- Restructuring of regulatory bodies that oversee the education sector.

Following these changes, parents and regulators will be in a better position to evaluate the schools while unrecognised schools will also get formalised. However, this alone will not be enough.

It is imperative to allow schools to operate for-profit as this is what will bring in high quality people, capital and competition that will ultimately raise the quality of education while also keeping a check on fee ranges. The report further suggests facilitating complete autonomy to schools (subject to the formalising norms) and changing the regulations to allow various funding and raising capital models of schools.

Manit Jain, co-founder of Heritage School and Chairman of FICCI ARISE observes that currently there is no incentive for large corporates with deep pockets to step into this sector. The huge demand for funds for the sector needs a clean structure that allows for profit. This single move can pave the way for credible and trusted names to invest, allow foreign investment to come in, banks to lend and energize the whole sector.

Another crucial suggestion is that the government should directly fund the students/parents instead of schools - whether private or public. This can be through vouchers, tuition waivers/subsidies, tax-credit scholarships, education savings accounts or Direct Benefit Transfers (DBTs).

With the consolidation, standardisation and flow of investments from larger players, the government can also benefit by way of higher revenues from taxation. At a 20% profitability margin coupled with a 25% net tax rate, taxes from the sector can add up to \$10 billion which can be ploughed back into education. This will in turn raise both quality and affordability.

### Conclusion

Quality education for all requires both public and private schools to perform! It follows that improvement in education will not be possible without involving the private sector. So, why is the government continuing to shoot itself in the foot when India's future is at stake? The FICCI-ARISE report reckons that, '.....the government should consider creating an enabling policy environment for the private players, where they are seen as a 'meaningful contributor' to national building. If measures are not taken on time, it may also swiftly shift India's 'Demographic Dividend' to a 'Demographic Disaster!' ▶

# Appointment of Industry Experts in Universities on the Cards

A revolutionary new development in the higher education sector in India is in the works. If it materialises, university education stands to be transformed in an inherently progressive manner that will introduce exceptional diversity and richness in the knowledge base of the system.



*Industry experts sharing their knowledge with students in universities will be a welcome step for everyone*

**THE NEP 2020** is an ambitious plan that is becoming the harbinger of radical changes in the education system of India. The policy strongly advocates introducing diversity in the university education system. Accordingly, the Ministry of Education constituted a panel which came up with the suggestion that the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) should be allowed to hire industry experts as 'professors of practice'. This is a novel proposal that will not only offer excellent professional exposure to the students but will also open up professional interaction and collaboration between the academia and industry for the greater national interest. The professional faculty members will even get an opportunity to step forward and propose solutions to real world problems.

In fact, it is common practice for industry experts and other practitioners to join the teaching body of higher educational institutions in many countries like U.S.A., Australia, U.A.E., Malaysia, Philippines and parts of Europe.

This is not to say that the regular teaching faculty in colleges and universities is not up to the mark. However, they are limited to the theoretical knowledge of their subject domains which needs to be supplemented by real-world insights and experiential teaching.

## Taking it Forward

The newly-appointed chairperson of the University Grants Commission (UGC), **Mr. Jagadish Kumar** pitched the universalising of this proposal for university education during a meeting of the central university vice-chancellors by making it a part of the implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.

Mr. Kumar observed, "Under the NEP, there is a great emphasis on educational institutions to collaborate with the industry. From the industry side also, a lot of people



want to contribute in the education field."

Education and media circles are now abuzz that the government is considering bringing in a provision for appointing professionals and industry experts for new positions like 'professor of practice' and 'associate professor of practice'. The focus is on distinguished professionals like entrepreneurs, bankers, media persons and diplomats, either practising or retired.

## Reforming the Recruitment Norms

Unfortunately, industry experts cannot be appointed as faculty members in higher education institutions as of now. The current regulatory system mandates that only Ph.D. holders can be appointed as professors and associate professors. This qualification is to be extended to the position of assistant professors — an entry level post at universities or colleges — very soon. The fact remains that while the industry professionals possess thorough knowledge and rich experience, they will not meet the compulsory Ph.D. criteria.

The UGC is in the process of constituting an expert committee to revise the existing regulations of Ph.D. requirement. There will be provisions for these experts to join as full-time, part-time or even visiting faculties. Those who have retired at 60 will also be eligible for these positions and can work till the age of 65. The norms will be framed in such a manner that the new appointments do not impact the existing teaching faculty positions in any manner.

In addition to this, the UGC will also launch an integrated portal for faculty recruitments for all central universities. Instead of every university duplicating the application and appointment process on their individual portals, they can advertise the open positions on the integrated portal. Prospective candidates can register on the portal and submit applications in a standard format which will be automatically transferred to the respective universities. This will become a nodal point that will streamline the process and ensure that professors are appointed without much delay.

## Benefits

Tapping into the competency, expertise and hands-on experience of the industry experts will deliver strong learning outcomes. They have a rich body of industry work behind them and can share valuable practical knowledge with students. Introducing this kind of application-based component in university education will equip the students with real-life skills and make them better prepared to step into the outside world.

This can also open up new avenues of co-teaching where the existing faculty and industry professionals work together to design the content and deliver the learning material in the classroom.

In fact, the onus is on the authorities and universities to milk these resources that will now be at their disposal in a planned, creative and effective manner. The professional experts who join the faculty can also work on research projects, write case papers, participate in consulting activities, review/redesign the curriculum program, organise workshops for regular faculty members to enhance their skills, etc.

## Note of Caution

Just like every Ph.D. holder is not always equipped to become a good teacher, even the best industry professionals cannot be automatically expected to excel in front of a classroom! There is a need for designing structured and organised training programmes that will provide them with the necessary teaching skills while also familiarising them with modern teaching methods including project-based, problem-based, flipped and team teaching. This will ensure that the experts share their insights and learnings in the most effective manner!

## Conclusion

Scrapping the old mandatory Ph.D. requirement is a bold move for allowing industry experts to teach in universities which will make university education diverse and enriching. ▶



## Implementation of the Sweeping Changes: Where Do We Stand?

The NEP 2020 is a constructive statement of intent that is poised to usher in landmark changes in the education sector in the country. The government seems to be rising to the challenge by striving to deliver on its promises! Implementation is moving forward in innovative, flexible and effective ways....

NEP 2020 should be implemented by 2040  
in a phased manner

**THE NATIONAL EDUCATION** Policy (NEP) 2020 presents a comprehensive framework for elementary education to higher education as well as vocational training in both rural and urban India. The proposals will pave the way for transformational reforms in both school and higher education that will deliver wide-ranging benefits to the students by helping them to grow in various fields.

This governmental vision is in tune with the rapid changes in the knowledge landscape and will create a new system that is aligned with the aspirational goals of 21st century education. There is a lot of optimism and expectation surrounding the new policy; however, like any other government initiative, everything hinges on transparent and swift implementation.

Going by the policy contents, multiple actions and initiatives have to be taken by different bodies in a systematic manner. Moreover, various central and state government organisations and the educational institutions need to cooperate to implement the policy at all levels.

However, the policy seeks to bring in a plethora of reforms for the next two decades which are meant to be executed in a phased manner. In fact, the various recommendations come with their own specific timelines for implementation.

## The Devil is in the Details

**Ministry of Education** - One of the first moves following the announcement of the NEP in July 2020 was immediately renaming the Ministry of Human Resource Development as Ministry of Education (MoE). In fact, this was approved by the Union Cabinet along with the policy itself.

**Medium of Instruction** - Shortly after the release of the policy, there was a lot of brouhaha over the concept of mother tongue/local language education at the primary levels in both state and privately owned schools. The government swiftly clarified that no one will be forced to study any particular language and that the medium of instruction will not be shifted from English to any regional language. The NEP only advocates mother tongue as the ideal medium of instruction. This will serve as a broad and advisory guideline with the actual implementation left to the prerogative of the states, institutions and schools.

"No language is being imposed. Multi-lingual flexibility is still the basis for the new NEP 2020"

- **Krishnaswamy Kasturirangan**,  
drafting committee chairperson  
of NEP 2020



**SARTHAQ** - The Department of School Education and Literacy (DoSE&L) in the MoE quickly rose to the occasion by developing a detailed NEP Implementation Plan for School Education - SARTHAQ (Students and



Teachers Holistic Advancement Through Quality Education) that is in consonance with the policy's intent and spirit. It links each NEP recommendation with tasks and also outlines responsible agencies to carry out the tasks along with outputs and timeframes for the same. As many as 297 tasks have been delineated with 304 outcomes. It is particularly noteworthy that this indicative implementation plan prioritises the strengthening of what already exists by charting activities that will build upon existing structures rather than creating new structures.

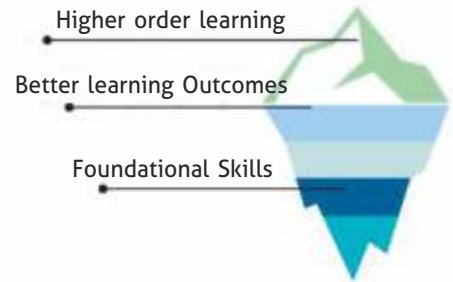
This was developed on the basis of wide and intensive consultations with states and union territories and other autonomous bodies. The Department also organised 'Shikshak Parv' - a Teacher's Fest - from 8th to 25th September, 2020 for discussing the recommendations of NEP 2020 along with strategies for their implementation. A whopping 15 lakh suggestions were received from various stakeholders across 31 states and union territories which were carefully analysed by expert groups before being incorporated in the final implementation plan.

Launched in April 2021, SARTHAQ is conceptualised as an evolving and working document that will be updated from time to time. It has been kept realistic, flexible and collaborative so that expected outcomes can be achieved in a time bound manner. It comprises of clearly defined goals and activities that permit cohesive implementation and joint monitoring by the centre and states. The latter have the flexibility to adapt the plan with local contextualisation and also modify it as per their needs and requirements. However, major portions of the policy will be covered under the new National Curriculum Framework apart from centrally sponsored schemes.

**NIPUN Bharat Mission** – DoSE&L launched the ambitious 'National Initiative For Proficiency In Reading With Understanding And Numeracy (NIPUN) Bharat Mission' initiative to ensure foundational literacy and numeracy for every child at the end of Grade 3 and not later than Grade 5 (by 2026–27). This is a much-needed and welcome move; the NEP itself states, "the rest of NEP 2020 will be largely irrelevant for such a large portion of our students if this most basic learning (reading, writing and arithmetic at the foundational level) is not first achieved". A five-tier implementation mechanism will be set up for the mission at the National-State-District-Block-School level. As an interim measure, a three-month play-based School Preparation Module for

**CHILDREN WHO FALL BEHIND, GET LEFT BEHIND**

**Grade 3** is the inflection point by which children are expected to “learn to read” so that they can “read to learn” after that.



**The Education system aims to achieve Foundational Literacy and Numeracy by 2026-27, where, by Grade 3 every child can ...**

Read with Comprehension      Write      Basic Mathematical Operations      Learn basic life skills      **NIPUN BHARAT**

Grade 1 - Vidya Pravesh - to familiarise children with the school environment has been launched from February, 2022.

**Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan** – This integrated central government scheme has been revamped to ensure inclusive, equitable, quality and holistic school education to children with diverse backgrounds, multi-lingual needs and different academic abilities and make them active participants in the learning process. Many NEP recommendations have been included in the scheme including the strengthening of vocational education initiatives.



**National Curricular Framework (NCF)** – A 12 member steering committee, headed once again by Dr. K. Kasturirangan, is working on developing four NCFs for school, early childhood care, teacher and adult education in accordance with reforms outlined in the NEP. These will serve as a guideline for syllabus, textbook and teaching practices for schools in India. It is also working closely with the states to develop the State Curricular Frameworks.

**Manodarpan** – DoSE&L set up a Working Group to monitor and promote mental health and provide psychosocial support to students. This group also held wide consultations before launching Manodarpan to focus on the mental health and emotional well-being of students. A dedicated Manodarpan Cell has been set up in NCERT to operate a National Toll-Free Tele-Counselling



helpline (8448440632) apart from developing a 'Handbook on 21st Century Life Skills' for school students to face real-life challenges and a manual on mental health for sensitising parents and teachers along with students.

**Standardisation of Indian Sign Language** - Steps are being taken to standardise ISL for deaf and hard of hearing learners. NCERT has signed an agreement with Indian Sign Language Research and Training Centre (ISLRTC) to develop an ISL dictionary for school education.


**NDEAR** - National Digital Education Architecture is an open, interoperable, evolvable, public digital education infrastructure that can be used by multiple platforms and point solutions. This technology-based solution is designed to improve the ease of doing business for educational institutions without becoming outdated with the rapid advances in technology.

**DIKSHA** – Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing - that was originally designed for professional development of teachers - has now been transformed into a 'One Nation, One Digital Education' platform that expands e-learning by providing access to a huge amount of e-content linked to the curriculum. Under the PM e-VIDYA initiative various types of online models will be launched to provide quality education to the students.




**NISHTHA 2.0** - National Initiative for School Heads' and Teachers' Holistic Advancement is a national mission to improve learning outcomes at the elementary level through an integrated teacher training programme for teacher development.





## New Education Policy 2020



- Emphasis on mother tongue till class 5
- Activity-based learning below class 2
- Introduction of subjects between classes 3 to 5
- Coding & internships in class 6
- Multi-disciplinary, flexible choice of subjects in classes 9 to 12.

**Education Minister Mr. Dharmendra Pradhan**

**Continuous Professional Development of Teachers –**

In view of the NEP recommendation for teachers and school principals to participate in at least 50 hours of continuous professional development every year for their own professional development, NCERT has developed a series of courses that comprehensively cover all the aspects of elementary education. These are delivered through the DIKSHA platform and more than 2 lakh participants have undertaken them.

**Assessment Reforms –** Even as the CBSE curriculum is being redefined, the Class X and XII board examinations are incorporating competency-based questions that will be increased by 10% every year. Board exams are already taking place twice a year from 2021-22 to reduce the burden on the students.

**PARAKH - Performance Assessment, Review and Analysis of Knowledge** is a national assessment platform for holistic development that will set standards in alignment with the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) for all Boards of Assessment (BOAs) in the country.



**SAFAL - Structured Assessment for Analysing Learning** is a large-scale assessment framework for

classes 3, 5 and 8 that acts as a system-level check for determining the health of the system and learning outcomes at a regional, state and national level.

**Academic Bank of Credits (ABC) –**

The UGC has rolled out this program for a few institutions allowing their students to accumulate credits and earn various degrees over time. This supports students' mobility across HEIs and lifelong learning for adults. It has also issued guidelines for multiple exits and multiple entry in HEIs, apprenticeship-



embedded degree programmes and internationalisation of higher education.

**NCAL –** NCERT has established a National Centre for Adult Literacy to develop the first National Curriculum Framework for Adult Education along with primers and other online and offline learning resources.

Education Minister **Shri Dharmendra Pradhan** assured the citizens that there is no plan to revise the reservation norms under NEP!

**Situation on the Ground**

UGC Chairman, Prof Dhirendra Pal Singh (retired in December, 2021) observed that the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has affected the implementation of NEP while assuring citizens that once the situation normalises it will be implemented at a faster pace. Meanwhile efforts are on to constitute regulatory mechanisms at different levels and also for implementing the policy in the entire country from the July 2022 academic session.

Karnataka became the first state to implement the NEP 2020 as early as in August 2021 with various initiatives like introducing online courses in degree programmes, revising the college curriculums, offering flexibility of multiple programmes, allowing students to study inter-disciplinary courses, including more sports education and collaborating with foreign universities for student exchange programmes. Madhya Pradesh soon followed suit while other states are also either in the process of or working on the implementation.

Recently, Vice President, M. Venkaiah Naidu also appealed to all the states to implement the new NEP with missionary zeal to bring about transformation in the learning-teaching ecosystem.

**Conclusion**

We are almost two years into the release of the new NEP 2020 and a slew of implementation measures are ongoing to make the dream of a robust, holistic and global education system a reality. But the results at both the early and higher education levels have been mixed! ▶



## **Prof. SURESH BHOJRAJ** (M.Pharm., Ph.D., D.Sc.)

is currently the Pro Chancellor, JSS Academy of Higher Education & Research, Mysuru. He was also the founding Vice Chancellor of this deemed university. With his vast experience in university governance systems, he nurtured the institute to scale great heights and emerge as a pre-eminent university in the nation and elsewhere in a short span of time. He enabled the university to be ranked 34th nationally by the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) in 2019; ranked Number 1 by the Karnataka State University Ranking Framework (KSURF) in 2017 under the Young University category; and obtaining NAAC 'A +' grade with a CGPA of 3.48 out of 4.0. He broke all records by making JSS Academy of Higher Education research be ranked among the top 500 universities of the world by Times Higher Education ranking, becoming the first Deemed University in India to set this record.

Prof. Suresh has to his credit several national and international publications and has initiated several international collaborations through bilateral, academic and research exchange programmes.

He has also been actively involved in uplifting the standards of pharmacy education and profession in India for the past 35 years. He was elected as the President of Pharmacy Council of India in 2003 and re-elected to the same office in August 2008 and August 2013. He broke all records by winning the PCI Presidentship for the fourth time in 2018. He had pioneered the cause of promoting 'Pharmacy Practice' concept in India and has the unique honour of having introduced postgraduate programme in 'Pharmacy Practice' and 'Pharm D' programmes in India.

**Q NEP 2020 is a revolutionary and progressive policy that will change the face of education in India. With your background in academics for a number of decades and heading one of the most active Pharmacy Council of India as President, do you think the government will be able to execute the same or will it remain on paper just like the previous ones? What hurdles do you envisage and how can they be overcome?**

The new National Education Policy is definitely going to bring a paradigm change in the way we think, perceive and experience education. Aimed at redefining the teaching-learning process, this is a very ambitious plan that has absorbed all the best practices from other parts of the world while connecting it with our national needs and making it useful for our country. There are a lot of recommendatory and regulatory suggestions in the document, especially directives for higher education. Now the onus is on the regulatory agencies - like UGC, Pharmacy Council - other agencies associated with higher education and universities to take what is implementable and adapt it to make it more suitable to their own professional needs. Accordingly, they should design regulations to bring about the required change.

The point is that it is not possible or even required to follow every requirement in toto just because it is there. For instance, technical education has to be handled in a particular manner while health sciences require a markedly different approach. For an MBBS course, break-off study options will be better where a student can leave after 2-3 years to pursue something else and come back and practice again. But exit and entry options - with a 2 year certificate or 3 year degree format - will not be feasible as the professional course has to be studied holistically. Based on this foundation, adaptations can be achieved, like imbibing an interdisciplinary approach of incorporating technical subjects or humanities with medicine.

In effect, the NEP is a framework and we have to customise it based on our requirements. Do not make education just about blindly incorporating all the changes from the policy document; give the institutions the autonomy to bring about quality and excellence and also differentiate themselves in the process.

**Q The Right to Education has to be overhauled in line with the NEP? Do you think this will actually happen and what do you feel should be right direction to bring in the change?**

Education is different from literacy. Education leads to a formal qualification at the end of a particular period; making people literate is a different mission by itself with other distinctive aspects. The Right to Education up to a certain level has to be available for everyone to realise the overall vision of the country. Therefore, the legislation has to be modified to accommodate the envisioned changes in a holistic manner while keeping the national perspective, regional differences and multi-cultural framework of our country in mind.

**Q The medium of instruction being the local language/mother tongue is one of the best ideas of the NEP. But do you think this is achievable given the multiple issues like multi-language families and transferable jobs? How do you suggest we can overcome these basic issues?**

In my view, the NEP is not insisting that teaching in the local language should be a hard and fast rule. It simply says that wherever it is possible to teach in the local language and

learning can be better, then go ahead with it. The objective is being missed out as people are debating about other nuances here. Say, in a particular region, if it is easier to communicate in a local language, why not teach in that? Especially in rural areas, a local graduate can teach in the local language or mother tongue to create a relationship with learning. This can be a starting point that will spark interest in education and bring value addition, especially when children are familiar only with that language. Once they embark on the journey of education, automatically other things will fall into place.

Technology is making it infinitely easy to translate the resources into any language and learn them. And no one can deny that it is good to learn as many languages as you can. Many of us can speak our mother tongue but don't know how to read and write the language. So, this kind of added language skills will always be valuable.

**Q How do you think the NEP will affect current research funding from multiple funding agencies of government? What will the impact of the multi- and trans-disciplinary approach be on overall innovation in India?**

The NEP envisages creating a funding arm of the government that will support all the funding schemes. Here, the authorities are looking at national ranking as a base for funding which brings institutional recognition (like top 100 universities being eligible for funding) rather than individual capability. I feel that there should be a compartmentalisation in this approach, otherwise institutions which do not have funds but have a good researcher with great potential to lead the research will never get a chance to rise to the next level just because the institute does not figure anywhere in the rankings. Therefore, ranking or accreditation can be a criteria for certain type of funding, but individual funding should also be made possible.

Incorporating an interdisciplinary approach will surely encourage innovation and also bring in collaborative ways of thinking and working. It is technology that will drive both futuristic needs and successful outcomes across all fields, be it health sciences or transportation. Multi and transdisciplinary programs were there earlier but we lost track of them. Bringing it back is a commendable step that will stimulate innovation in the country.

**Q What kind of competence and infrastructure support will the government need to provide to the institutions serving the major rural centres to implement the structural reforms of the NEP? How do you think your university can collaborate with the government in making the NEP vision a reality?**

The most valuable resource is always the teacher. The government should invest heavily in human resources. Right now we are seeing that many institutions are trying to cut costs by managing with 5 teachers where 10 are needed. So, a major investment in human resources is essential. Next, we need substantial resources to overcome the shortages in use of technology and learning-teaching methods as these can empower the teachers to teach a much larger population. Building infrastructure support is next on the agenda.

At JSS, we are already implementing NEP at different levels - we have started exit entry options for some of our programs, introduced new electives and are moving towards becoming a teaching and research driven university by giving a lot of thrust on research. We are also working on building international cooperation and bringing in an interdisciplinary approach. Many more changes are in the pipeline that will take the spirit of NEP forward in a phased manner.



**Q The proposal of introducing vocational education will equip students with skills for the real world. How will this move play out in the future?**

Vocational education is crucial but it should not be mixed with trade, skill and professional qualifications as this creates duplication and students don't find proper positioning of the opportunities to grow. Right now there is no defined path of what a student can do after getting a B. Voc. degree. The right career opportunities need to be defined more clearly. Clarification is needed when creating the course itself and how it will benefit the students.

For instance, a B. Voc in Computer Science is quite unnecessary. Vocational training should focus on jobs like say, automobile maintenance person which does not entail engineering but only requires basic knowledge of automobiles which can be acquired with hands-on training before landing a suitable job. Similarly, a health worker who has to go to villages to collect data, document it and make inferences can be trained vocationally without involving medical know-how. Therefore, the outcome of vocational education should be aligned.

When it comes to vocational training in schools, in case the government is focused on creating capacity in agricultural sector and introduces the same, students will learn this and can enter the field. But they will be deprived of opportunities to explore other areas which are not being offered to them. So, vocational training should not thrust anyone in a particular direction, but open opportunities for students to take up whatever they want.

**Q Isn't limiting the teacher qualification criteria to B.Ed. degree holders akin to shooting yourself in the foot when there are so many expert teachers who do an excellent job even without the degree? Will a more liberal approach work in this situation?**

The minimum standards of education need to be maintained and this should depend on the various levels. Like for early to primary education, a qualified teacher is definitely equipped to train in a better way. But, in the interior regions of the country, if only one person is available to teach but doesn't have the right qualification, does it make sense to deprive the students of the education? The institutions should get the teachers on board and require them to get the degree in a specific timeframe. Today with online and distance education models, educators can easily get the qualification.

**Q Do you think we can actually bring the Indian education system to global standards? As pro-chancellor of JSS, can you share how this esteemed university is planning to use its credibility and quality to go global?**

The Indian education system has all the ingredients of global standards. This is why our students are able to attain success in studying and working abroad. We may perceive that global education is different and better, but the problem is only with the packaging. Our system comprises of domain knowledge, personality development, nurturing creative abilities, pushing intellectual enquiry and more. In this rich environment, the students start thinking differently, can question things, understand the subtle nuances and so on. They acquire the capacity to consolidate their thoughts in an organised format and give a hypothesis in reports.

Where our schools and colleges are lacking is collaborative education. We abide by the teaching-learning relationship between the teacher and student. Students are not permitted to work together and come up with solutions while global systems encourage, appreciate and reward such novel

approaches. Then again, there is no mentor or guide for the students and they are left to find their own way. Our institutions should stop being merely places for awarding degrees and manifest into a fertile platform where youngsters can think, meet, discuss and exchange thoughts which will ultimately lead to knowledge gain. This is what should be assessed and become the base for awarding degrees.

Every field from economic development, inflation, trade and financial growth has defined global benchmarks which become indexes of comparison. At JSS, quality and excellence have been our driving words since over a decade. We have pioneered a systematic and structured approach wherein we first strengthened our human resource by bring in the right faculty (even from overseas) that is capable of raising the standards of education. Then we reinforced our infrastructure so that teachers have resources on hand before moving on to strengthening our research initiative. Thus, we have built up over a period of time and even undertook ranking initiative from national and international agencies. This has become a benchmark that makes us comparable with other universities. We will continue to improve further on this continuous journey of quality.

**Q How would you advise parents to shift their stance from the focus on results and acing competitive exams to more holistic learning?**

Parents are driven by the sole motive of making their children successful in life. They are pushed into becoming a doctor or engineer or getting into a top institute like IIT or IIM as these are considered the models for success. Now it is crucial to inculcate in parents during the early stages of education that there are many other approaches to success. Not everyone is cut out for these careers and marks cannot be the sole focus of education as this will miss out on learning and creative thinking.

For example, I met with the parents of an 8th class student who showed some interest in medicine. Immediately, they wanted to put him into coaching and make him work hard to score high marks and become a doctor. But what if 5 to 10 years down the line, he realises that this is not what he wants to do in life?

Parents have to take their child's interest and capability into account. This change will not come overnight for sure. We need to keep creating awareness that there are several options and children should be allowed to pursue what they desire!

**Q What further changes would you suggest in the education system in view of the grave learnings from the pandemic? By when do you think the NEP will be implemented completely across the country?**

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought technology to education in a big way. Teachers and students can teach and learn anywhere even without a structured approach. But this cannot completely replace face to face interaction in physical settings. What we now need is a blend of both - do not ignore technology but do not leave classroom presence out of the equation either. Both will influence the quality of education. The western world realised this early on and required students to come back to campus.

The NEP projects that it will be implemented across the country by 2030. But I think we will only manage to cover the areas and completion will be a longer journey. In fact, many other changes will crop up in 10 years and we have to align with them as well! ▶

## Dr. SHAKILA SHAMSU

was formerly OSD (New Education Policy), in the Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education (MoE), and has been a part of the entire journey in the formulation of this current education policy. She has been the Secretary to the Committee to Draft National Education Policy. She was also the Nodal Officer of the flagship Govt. of India Scheme of National Mission on Teachers and Teaching (NMTT). During her tenure 95 centres were approved for professional capacity building of faculty, over 5 lakh faculty trained, and new initiatives of Leadership for Academicians Programme (LEAP), Annual Refresher Programme in Teaching (ARPIT) and Faculty Induction Programmes implemented. Her career spans nearly four decades in teaching/academics in the University of Mumbai, IGNOU and 14 years in the Government of India.

She holds a Ph.D in Distance Education, Gold Medalist for Masters, PG Diploma in Distance Education, and a Degree in Law. She has to her credit a number of articles in international journals, book contributions and involved in the preparation of XI and XII Plan and several Government Reports on education. She has received awards for her contribution to the field of education from different bodies.

Since the approval of NEP 2020, she has addressed several national & international webinars on the various recommendations and implementation aspects of NEP. She is a Member of UGC & NCTE Committees for NEP 2020 Implementation. Currently, she is Hon. Adviser(Special) Education, Centre for Public Policy & Research (CPPR); Member, Governing Council, India MUN, a Pan India UN group for Youth in Climate Action.



**Q NEP 2020 is a revolutionary and progressive policy that will change the face of education in India. As you have been instrumental in shaping this new policy approach, do you think the government will be able to execute the same or will it remain on paper just like the previous ones? What hurdles do you envisage and how can the authorities overcome the same?**

Generally speaking, all policies are intrinsically vision documents and postulate reforms that cannot be self-limiting for reasons driven by pragmatism and operational factors. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 seeks to empower students, teachers and educational institutions. The gamut of recommendations, if implemented in letter and spirit, will reorient the focus on knowledge acquisition, skill development, developing individual potentials, competencies and capabilities, as well as, instilling attitudinal changes suited to 21st century requirements.

The success of any policy lies in its efficacy of it getting translated on ground. The paramount challenge invariably lies in the effective implementation of the NEP 2020 and your concerns in this regard are entirely justified. However, I would like to bring to bear two factors upfront! Firstly, the implementation of social sector policies is both long-term and time-taking, as stakeholder ownership and acceptance is critical to effecting the changes in a smooth cohesive manner. Secondly, the character of reform lends itself to differential timelines. Structural changes take longer to implement as institutions, autonomous bodies, regulatory authorities and also the administrative structures from the Central, State, District and local levels require synchronized transformation in a coordinated manner. This becomes even more daunting when new institutional structures are envisaged. Academic & curricular reforms are relatively easier and are underway. The regulatory reforms and those with legislative implications are still at a nascent stage. The NEP itself states that it would take about 15 years to implement all the recommendations. It is but logical that a phase-wise implementation is the way forward. To put it in larger perspective, by the 42nd

amendment, 1976, Education as a subject is in the Concurrent List making it the shared joint responsibility of the Centre and the States. Hence it is imperative that a participatory approach in which all stakeholders, namely, Central Government, State governments and UT administrations, regulatory bodies, academics, autonomous bodies and institutions, private sector and all other players, work together. Implementing national policies, while respecting and incorporating regional aspirations with an inclusive growth agenda, is undoubtedly an arduous task.

For a country as diverse as India, one has to realize that multiple implementation strategies are required as 'one-size fits all' is not workable and is counter-productive. I share the optimism that keeping the student at the centre of these reforms, all players will work towards making the reforms envisaged in the NEP 2020 a reality.

**Q The Right to Education has to be overhauled in line with the NEP? Do you think this will actually happen and what do you feel should be right direction to bring in the change?**

In light of the NEP 2020, the RTE Act, 2009 will need to be reviewed comprehensively. The implementation plan for the Department of School Education & Literacy, SARTHAQ has listed the sections of the RTE Act that needs to be amended, which are Sections --2(n), 3, 21-23, 31 & 32. To mention one: Task 68 with a targeted timeline of 2024-25, stipulates that alternative and innovative education centres will be put in place by States/UTs (after the amendment in Section 2(n) of the RTE Act) in cooperation with community, civil society, etc. to ensure that children who are dropping out of school are brought back into mainstream education.

These amendments are proposed to be undertaken by holding consultations, followed by finalising the draft amendments and taking the amended legislation to the Legislature and the projected timeline is 2021-23. Bringing about changes in the RTE Act are certainly time-consuming, especially as it involves in-depth and detailed

deliberations with the States. NEP 2020 aims to universalize school education from pre-school to Grade 12 and the vehicle of the RTE is critical to achieving this goal.

**Q The medium of instruction being the local language/mother tongue is one of the best ideas of the NEP. But do you think this is achievable given the multiple issues like multi-language families and transferable jobs? How do you suggest we can overcome these basic issues?**

Knowing the assimilative learning benefits of multilingualism, NEP emphasizes on children being exposed to different languages early on. All languages will be taught in an enjoyable and interactive style, with plenty of interactive conversation, and with early reading and subsequently writing in the mother tongue in the early years, and with skills developed for reading and writing in other languages in Grade 3 and beyond. High-quality textbooks in all subjects, will be made available in the home languages/mother tongue. It must be also clarified that nowhere the NEP talks about shedding the English language which will continue to receive adequate emphasis, as necessary.

The fact that we are a nation of linguistic pluralism and we have more multi-language families today is an enabling reason to promote home language /local/mother tongue education. However, it's a real challenge given the diversity of languages and intra-region variations that State Governments will find difficult to surmount. It would definitely require both the Central and State governments to invest in large numbers of language teachers in all regional languages around the country, particularly, for those listed in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution.

**Q How do you think the NEP will affect current research funding from multiple funding agencies of government? What will the impact of the multi- and trans-disciplinary approach be on overall innovation in India?**

The apprehension that creation of the National Research Foundation (NRF) will limit funding from other funding agencies is unfounded. These multiple funding sources, be it government ministries or research councils/laboratories and HEIs will continue as status quo. It must be rightly understood that the NRF will catalyse research and innovation through the collaborations among higher education institutions, research laboratories and industry, promote interdisciplinary research, over and above the extant eco-systems of research that are operational today. NRF will also promote research in new and emerging areas of artificial intelligence, machine learning on one end of the knowledge spectrum as well as in core areas of Indian knowledge systems, languages, Social Sciences thereby encouraging the cross-fertilisation of disciplines. The enhanced funding through NRF will also help our country to have better research output and join the league of nations which have higher research indices.

Many studies have shown that designing courses, where one discipline learns from the perspective of another, or where the disciplines are integrated, allows for more context-specific programmes that better suit industry and prepare students for jobs. Research is also improved and enhanced through a holistic and multidisciplinary education approach. In a world where interdisciplinary

research is of growing importance, the current monolithic structures restrict the next phase in the evolution of universities. Multidisciplinary education and research will further enable both knowledge dissemination and generation by creating a culture of research in our educational institutions. The idea is to weave academics and research together while also developing their 21st century skills to face new challenges of a dynamic ever changing economic, industrial and technological society.

**Q What kind of competence and infrastructure support will the government need to provide to the institutions serving the major rural centres to implement the structural reforms of the NEP? How do you think universities can collaborate with the government in making the NEP vision a reality?**

NEP recommended that regions of the country with large populations from educationally-disadvantaged Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs) be declared as Special Education Zones (SEZs), for targeted efforts in terms of academic infrastructure and other essential teaching learning materials, human resources essential for the educational development. Specifically, two initiatives will address education in rural areas so as to provide uninterrupted schooling and prevent dropouts. The first is to provide effective and sufficient infrastructure so that all students have access to safe and engaging school education. Besides providing regular trained teachers at each stage, special care will be taken to ensure that no school remains deficient on infrastructure support. The credibility of Government schools will be re-established and this will be attained by upgrading and enlarging the schools that already exist, building additional quality schools in areas where they do not exist, and providing safe and practical conveyances and/or hostels, especially for the girls, so that all children have the opportunity to attend a quality school and learn at the appropriate level. Alternative and innovative education centres will be put in place to ensure that children who are dropping out of school due to various circumstances are brought back into mainstream education. Steps will be taken to strengthen the public education system so as to be able to provide quality education for all.

Establishing more high-quality HEIs in aspirational districts and SEZs containing larger numbers of SEDGs is the other strategy. Universities must not only provide high quality teaching and research, but also have community engagement.

**Q The proposal of introducing vocational education will equip students with skills for the real world. It may even cause students from marginalised backgrounds to drop out and take up jobs. How will this move play out in the future?**

Quality vocational skill-based education has enormous potential for employment opportunities, and is critical for growth of our industries. Vocational education is considered "lower in status", and in order to motivate more students to opt for them, it is important to enhance their status. The fear that students from marginalized sections will drop out of education to take up jobs, is a reality even today. What NEP does is that it truly facilitates the idea of re-entering education through a flexible undergraduate programme and aligning National Skills Qualifications



Framework (NSQF) with National Higher Education Qualifications Framework (NHEQF) for allowing lateral entry.

NEP 2020 aims at re-imagining vocational education both in school and higher education. A flexible curriculum enables student choice with the possibility of switching subject areas at the secondary school level. It envisages introducing vocational arts courses between Grades 6 to 8 at Middle Stage, such that every student will take a fun course that gives hands-on experience of a sampling of important vocational crafts, such as carpentry, electric work, metal work, gardening, pottery making, etc., as decided by States and local communities and as mapped by local skilling needs.

In higher education, it is desirable that the academic programmes identify the focus areas based on skills gap analysis and mapping of local opportunities, within the larger vision of holistic multidisciplinary education. Equally critical is the need for innovation in vocational education – to scale it, improve quality and employability, enhance access, etc. Entrepreneurship education in HEIs will develop students with appropriate knowledge and skills to become innovators and become job creators, thereby propelling wealth generation and reducing unemployment. Finally, appropriate training of teachers across all levels to the more relevant and updated vocational education is important.

**Q What reforms are in the works concerning the teacher qualification criteria of B.Ed. degree holders? Can we look forward to a more liberal approach that will encompass expert teachers who do an excellent job even without the degree?**

The teacher is at the core of the educational system and the NEP has duly recognized the criticality of teachers, teacher preparation and through them the enhancement of quality of learning at all levels. Teacher Education is a major thrust area of NEP 2020 that recommends transformation which will empower teachers with the right qualifications, ensure their continuous professional development as well as career growth. For the first time, a common guiding set of National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST) is being developed which would outline the set of expectations, capabilities, competencies and roles of the teacher at different levels of expertise/stage. Making B.Ed. the essential qualification for all stages would help teachers to move up the hierarchy.

Since the rigour of a professional teacher education qualification is intrinsic to the professional qualification and is critical to the quality of teaching; relaxations in the eligibility criteria for experts to be inducted as teachers is neither desirable nor recommended. The skills related to pedagogy, curriculum development, assessment must be acquired through conceptual and cognitive understanding and practical exposure and hence it would be incorrect to suppose/consider that expertise in other fields qualifies one for teaching. Such experts can provide value addition in specific/niche/ high end digital/scientific areas, which NEP has recommended.

**Q Do you think we can actually bring the Indian education system to global standards? What approach should higher educational institution stake to go global?**

The NEP 2020 is a transformative policy that will propel our academic institutions to reach greater heights of excellence. Indian Universities have produced some of the best minds that are already contributing intellectually to global giants in education, medicine, industry, space and communications technology and many more. The comprehensive path-breaking reforms advocated by the NEP will create an enabling and reinvigorated educational eco-system which will be equal to the best in the world.

**Q How would you advise parents to shift their stance from the focus on results and acing competitive exams to more holistic learning?**

We are living in a world where the jobs of tomorrow are not easily known due to the changes emerging out of industry 4.0. If we continue with discipline-specific silo-based education without instilling the 21st century skills and only focusing on marks/grades and competitive exams, there is a risk of our students not developing holistically. The dynamic nature of economy coupled with risks of the obsolescence of specific skills call for a relook at the way we prepare our students. Accordingly, a learner-centric approach stemming from the need to recognise, identify and nurture each child's unique potential and talent, develop the multiple intelligences that reside in each one of us, and provide opportunities for his/her holistic development, is the cornerstone of NEP 2020.

**Q What further changes would you suggest in the education system in view of the grave learnings from the pandemic? By when do you think the NEP will be implemented completely across the country?**

The 'new normal' has a huge impact on the learning across students in all age groups, but is more pronounced in the younger children and unfortunately the learning loss may be a harsh reality for many children. This disruption has required us to build capacities of all educational institutions in a big way - capacity, not only for teaching with the help of devices, but also for ensuring that learning is taking place in the most challenging circumstances.

The NEP has recognized the need to move towards online learning models and hybrid/blended models as the way forward. However, this calls for bridging the digital divide both at the individual and institutional levels. Equally critical is the need to develop teacher and faculty capacities to leverage technologies for a more synchronous learning experience. Several efforts are ongoing to strengthen digital infrastructure in educational institutions, bringing out guidelines for online/blended education, broad-basing existing educational platforms of DIKSHA, SWAYAM, SWAYAM PRABHA and also teacher training and capacity development of faculty.

Changes in healthcare education, agriculture education, legal education is important to make them more relevant and futuristic. These transformations across all levels of the educational spectrum will bring about a paradigm shift by equipping our students, teachers and educational institutions with the right competencies and capabilities and also create an enabling and reinvigorated educational eco-system for a vibrant new India.

The National Education Policy 2020 is expected to be implemented in a phased manner and by 2035, most of the proposed reforms would have been translated on ground. ▶





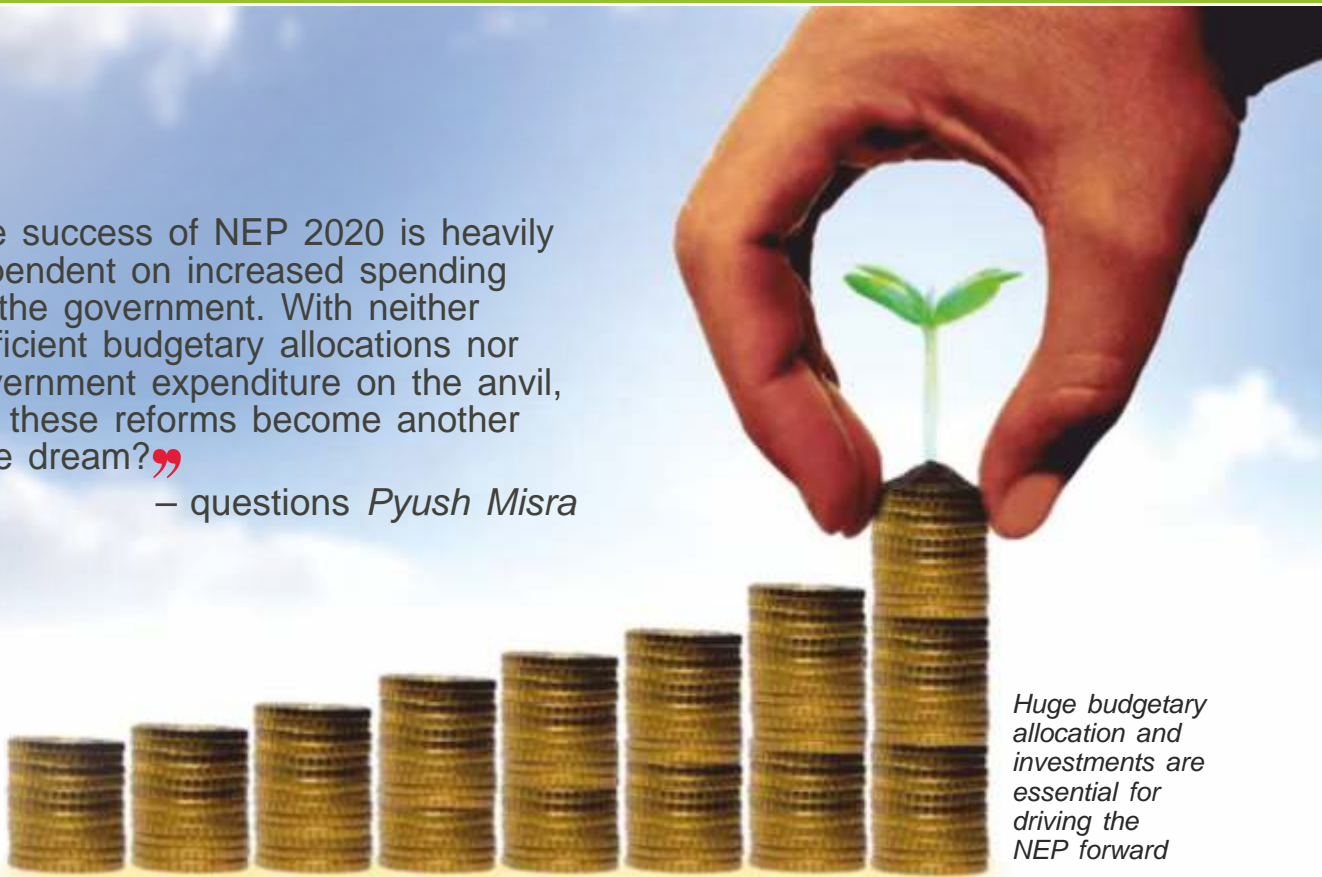
**Pyush Misra**  
Trustee,  
Consumer Online Foundation

## NEP 2020

### – Where Will The Money Come From?

“The success of NEP 2020 is heavily dependent on increased spending by the government. With neither sufficient budgetary allocations nor government expenditure on the anvil, will these reforms become another pipe dream?”

– questions *Pyush Misra*



*Huge budgetary allocation and investments are essential for driving the NEP forward*

**THE INDIAN EDUCATION** system is the second largest in the world with more than 15 lakh schools, 96 lakh teachers and 26 crore students in pre-primary to higher secondary levels. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 aims to establish a comprehensive framework that will bring sweeping changes across this entire education system. We are on the cusp of huge transformations that will remodel the way we learn, teach, govern schools, build capacities of

educational stakeholders, and use technology in education so as to bring them to the global level.

This will be delivered by way of a wholesome range of reforms like building good schools and improving the infrastructure in the existing ones, equipping them with the latest technological tools, adding breakfast to the mid-day meal scheme while making the food more nutritious, making early childhood care and education compulsory, training

teachers for at least an additional 50 hours, promoting research and more.

While almost every recommendation is being lauded on multiple levels, it is clear that making them a reality entails substantial expenses that have to be footed by the government. The policy itself advocates that public investment of 6% of the GDP is essential for financing the critical aspects of the education sector. It also proposes that the overall expenditure on

education should increase from the current 10% to at least 20% of the total budget. The NEP “commits to significantly raising educational investment, as there is no better investment towards a society's future than the high quality of education of our young people”.

But where are these copious resources going to come from? Why are the authorities not allocating more money to the educational reforms as required? The government has actually done the very opposite by reducing its education spending – it was down from 4.14% of GDP in 2014-15 to only 3.2% in both 2020-21 and 2021-22! (see Figure 1) The low spending is further compounded by marked variations by the state governments in their expenditure on education as a proportion of their overall expenditure. Equitable spending across the country remains a far-fetched dream. In fact, education expenditure as a percentage of total government expenditure has also been declining in many of the states over the past years.

The policy talks about universalising elementary education right from pre-school to secondary level. However, a 2021 report by Child Rights and You, along with the Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability reveals that a meagre one-fourth of the total school education budget of the Ministry of Education goes towards secondary education!

### Budget 2022-23: Starving the NEP?

To meet the criteria of 6% of GDP, the 2022-23 education budget should have doubled on last year's allocation. Alas, it boggles the mind to see that it has come down to less than 2%!

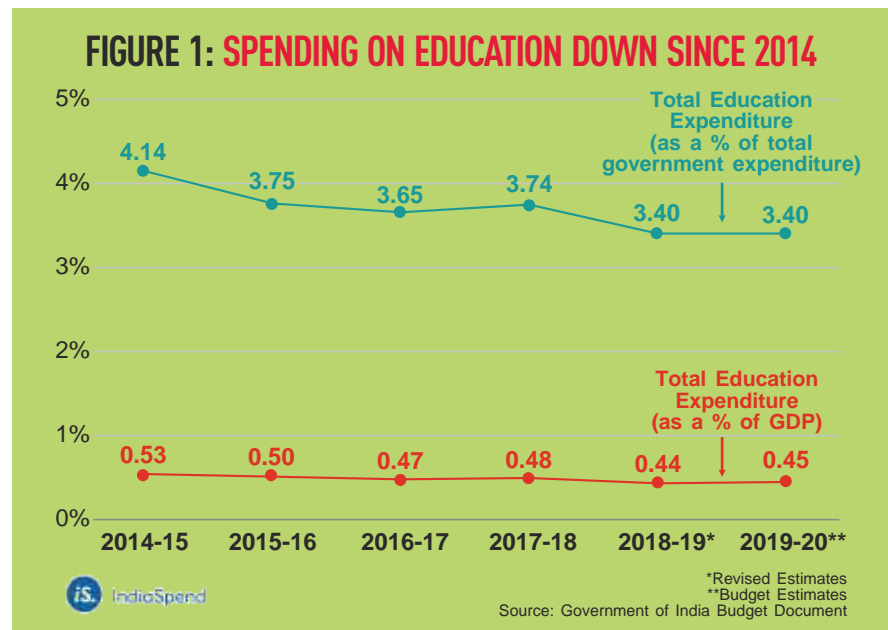
“The education budget may have crossed a landmark of 1 lakh crore but it has been decreasing as a percentage of total expenditure” - *Anil Swaroop, former Secretary, Department of School Education and Literacy, Government of India*

Coming to the minutiae, the budgetary allocation for teacher training and adult education has drastically reduced from Rs. 250 crore in 2021-22 to Rs. 127 crore in 2022-23. The midday meal scheme (renamed as PM Poshan) is also facing a drop in allocation from Rs. 11,500 crore in 2021-22 to Rs. 10,233 crore in 2022-23.

In the face of these budgetary constraints, the question arises: Can we actually afford the NEP 2020? Furthermore, it is deplorable to note that there is a marked underutilisation of the funds with a chunk of the allocations earmarked for the schemes remaining unspent!

NEP to achieve the proposed educational reforms? It is bound to fall short massively in its ability to achieve the targets under the various initiatives in a timely manner.

In fact, they may fail to see the light of the day for years to come, unless the government accords education high priority on the lines of internal security and defence. The authorities should substantially increase the budgetary allocation for school and higher education while ensuring that the money percolates to the grassroot level and is used efficiently. Moreover, linking the funding to the performance of states can result in low-income and



The NEP also calls on philanthropy, including Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), for funding education. 37% of the CSR funding was spent on education in 2016-17, however the figure amounted to only about Rs 2,400 crore. This is less than 0.5% of what the central government alone spends on education and less than 0.1% of the entire education expenditure by the union and state governments.

### Keeping the Tall Promises

Given the huge shortfall of public funding that will be further compounded by the quintessential corruption and bureaucratic inefficiencies, how can we expect the

low-performing states being strapped for central funding.

Instead, why not consider expanding the role of the private sector in education and strengthening the FDI norms for investing in this sector?

### Conclusion

Our spending on education is much lower as compared to other developing countries. India's education budget has never touched the proposed figure of 6% of GDP till date. Is the government just promising us a pie in the sky yet again? Will this new education policy that was launched as a game-changer meet the same fate as the ones before it? ▶

## Paving the Way for a Multidisciplinary Global Approach to Education



The NEP is promoting unity and integrity of knowledge through a multidisciplinary and trans-disciplinary approach that will equip students with crucial life skills while opening up new realms on the lines of the global system of education.



**ARTS STUDENTS STUDY** only Arts subjects and Commerce students study commerce ones. In fact, within the Science stream itself, students taking up engineering cannot venture into the realm of Biology while the doors of Physics and Chemistry are closed to medical students.

Indeed, the Indian education system is defined by a rigid separation of disciplines. There is early specialisation where students have to choose their specific genre of education and this streamlines them into extremely narrow areas of study almost for ever. Can a student who opts for Sciences ever learn Film-making or Cooking or can a History student even dream of studying Mathematics!

### Long Time Coming

Indeed, secondary and higher education in India is archetypically split into the Science, Commerce and Humanities (Arts) streams. Every student is faced with this choice of subject disciplines sooner or later. And once chosen, it literally becomes carved in stone and dictates the course of their entire future.

In fact, this is tantamount to a 'rite of passage' that acquires daunting overtones as only students who make it to the Holy Grail of Science are considered 'smart', 'intelligent', 'will be successful' while even God cannot save those who 'choose' Arts from being looked down upon for the rest of their life! Come to think of it, isn't this too weighty a decision to place on the shoulders of a young 16 year old who hasn't even stepped into adulthood?

Nearly 30% of students in India drop out after Grade 10 – a KPMG report

### Blurring the Lines

The rigid confinement of academic disciplines has unintentionally led to excessive specialisation in every stream. It restricts the career options for students and even opting for a career change at a later point becomes challenging. This is topped by the fact that our engineers and doctors master complicated topics and become specialists in their domain, but have no clue about the functioning of the social world, politics or the economic system at large.

Not to mention the harmful educational hierarchies and snobbery that have sprung all around – aren't all of us guilty of placing Science students on a pedestal while treating others with disdain?

This age-old strict demarcation between various streams of education is finally set to fade into the distance with the new National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 ordaining that the traditional lines between Arts and Sciences, curricular and extracurricular subjects, or vocational and academic streams will cease to exist. It expressly states that, "There will be no hard discrimination between subjects and disciplines. Children will be encouraged to take multidisciplinary projects for better learning outcomes."

While bringing in unity and integrity of knowledge, the NEP will bestow students with greater flexibility to choose

"With reduced insularity and greater freedom in students selecting their subjects of choice, the focus will return to holistic learning of all subjects, rather than a bent towards maths and sciences"



- Divya Lal  
Managing Director, Fliplearn

any combination of subjects leading to an interesting synthesis of Music with Biology, Fashion with Physics or Baking with Economics! The wide choice of subjects and courses will empower students to design their own learning trajectory with a trans-disciplinary approach and thereby define a unique path of life in tune with their personal talents and interests. They will be free to explore subjects of various disciplines that interest them without having to stay limited to a particular genre of subjects only.

The NEP aims to give a more holistic education to the new generation of students powered by a basic knowledge of subjects across educational fields. This will encourage cross-functional thinking while the accumulated credits from the creative combinations of subjects will serve as the platform for acquiring the requisite diploma or degree. The new policy further sets out that even if a subject is not part of the traditional degree programmes, students can still choose to take whatever subjects they are interested in, with each credit earned being differentiated as major and minor programmes.

### Sowing the Seeds of Change

The modern workplace demands new-age skills that cannot remain limited to narrow domains characterised by a technical or liberal arts approach alone. Students need to acquire new dimensions that will polish their technical knowledge while actualising their capabilities.

Removing the hard separations in the structure of formal education will not only allow students to explore their interests, but mixing Physics with Humanities will also round off the scientific temperament with a creative and artistic disposition.





"There is no need for some of our students to enroll in foreign universities, spending dollars on admission. We have all the infrastructure and facilities. The National Education Policy 2020 has further taken care of the issue. Our students will stay and study in the country now"

- Union Education Minister Shri Dharmendra Pradhan



The NEP is endeavouring to boost this kind of a multidisciplinary approach with multiple paradigmatic changes that is a step in the right direction. This will snowball further with all higher educational institutes branching out into varied disciplines of education.

The liberal approach of integrating learning is more aligned with the global education system. In fact, the primary goal of the NEP is to revamp all aspects of India's education system and bring it closer to the best global standards. This will ultimately catapult India into a global knowledge superpower.

### Globalising Education with an Indian Touch

The main thrust of the policy is to integrate the Indian education system with global patterns. It envisages a robust education system coupled with quality research facilities that will ensure that Indian students can get global education at home itself and will not have to go to foreign shores and spend exorbitant sums of money on getting a good degree. The standard setting will also be in line with global best practices.

Even the credit bank system for certificates, diplomas and degrees - that allows students to take a break from their academic programmes - is in accordance with global education systems. Moreover, foreign universities will also be invited to set up campuses in India which will further motivate students to study here itself.

Furthermore, the ultimate goal is to promote India as a global study destination providing premium education at affordable costs. The course contents will be redesigned with a focus on skill education and vocational training for developing life skills apart from promoting talent development at every level. Foreign languages like French, German, Spanish, Portuguese, Korean, Japanese, etc. will be offered at the secondary level so that students not

only learn about different cultures and enrich their global knowledge, but also gain mobility to match their interests and aspirations.

On the one hand, while students become world citizens, they will still stay connected to their cultural roots and develop a nationalistic pride on the other. This is possible because the NEP is rooted in Indian ethos with a unique amalgamation of ancient cultural values and modern knowledge and science. Prime Minister Modi has endeavoured to weave Mahatma Gandhi's principles - such as focus on mother tongue and national languages, employment-oriented education, etc. - into the new policy.

### Another Rhetoric?

It remains to be seen whether India can rise to the challenge of actually implementing the remodelled education policy. Eliminating the ingrained silos between different areas of learning is not a one shot game. It calls for a lot of disruptions in the existing system!

There are big questions about how this multidisciplinary approach will be interpreted and executed in reality. A lot more clarity is needed, not to mention the need to educate teachers to handle the change. Moreover, transforming India into a global

destination for quality education entails a huge amount of infrastructural support and resources which seem like a distant dream considering the level of underfunding in the education sector.

### Conclusion

Indian education is limited to specific disciplines right now and world class universities are sorely missing in the country. The NEP 2020 is futuristic and aims to imbibe the quality and standards of the global education system. But actually achieving the same looks to be another story altogether! ♦



**The NEP is endeavouring to boost this kind of a multidisciplinary approach with multiple paradigmatic changes that is a step in the right direction. This will snowball further with all higher educational institutes branching out into varied disciplines of education.**



**Payal Agarwal**  
Editorial Consultant

# DIGITAL EDUCATION

## We Are Hardly There Yet!

“India has never managed to rank high in the education and learning outcome levels in the world. In the wake of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the fate of an entire generation of students hangs in the balance with India's sheer unpreparedness for online learning standing exposed to the world”

– surmises Payal Agarwal

India's digital divide is leading to inequities in education and creating a learning crisis during the pandemic



**THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC** seems to have fortunately spared children from its devastating and life-threatening impact. However, it has taken an almost equivalent toll on children's learning!

One of the very first moves of controlling the unprecedented pandemic – even before the national lockdown – was the closure of schools to protect the children. In fact, March 2020 spelled the beginning of one of the longest school closures in recent history that has disrupted education like never before. 1.5 million schools were shut and 247 million primary and secondary students were left out of school.

The only alternative method to continue delivering education was the remote format. In a bid to ensure that the children did not miss out on learning, educational institutions were advised to replace in-person classes with virtual learning solutions. And the schools rose to the occasion by swiftly shifting to online education formats by mobilising varied digital platforms like live online sessions through Zoom, Skype and other video conferencing applications, video and audio recordings, WhatsApp groups, TV, radio and more. We witnessed innovative ways of reaching out to the students – from loudspeaker

tutorials to building a platform on a tree to access better signals to transmit the lessons! On the other hand, many enterprising students did not hesitate to literally climb mountains, trudge through forests and sit on the roadside to get internet access on their smartphones.

### How Effective is the Online Learning?

Despite the best efforts, education has been completely derailed giving a profound blow to the children in more ways than one. According to an August 2021 survey by the School Children's Online and Offline Learning (SCHOOL) covering 15 states and union territories, only 8% of rural children were studying online regularly while 37% were not studying at all. Following are some of the reasons behind the poor reception of virtual learning in the country:

**Proper and continued access to technology** – Lack of access to digital devices, unsteady internet connectivity and data costs is keeping scores of students across rural and urban areas from picking up the beat of online education. Only a limited percentage of the households own a computer while a majority of the marginalised population use a basic mobile phone only. According to a

2020 Goldman Sachs report – India Internet: A Closer Look Into the Future — only 42% of all mobile phone owners in the country had a smartphone in 2019-20.

The 2021 Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) survey facilitated by Pratham Education Foundation is well-regarded for providing a range of insights on levels of foundational learning at the elementary level. Being unable to track learning outcomes for the last two years, it has adopted a new methodology to track the access to learning opportunities and technology adoption during the pandemic. (see Figure 1) It reveals that while a mere 21.8% of students in government schools had access to learning, the ratio for private schools was only 10 percentage points higher.

The deprived sections of the society are hard-pushed to make ends meet – a situation which has been further exacerbated by the job losses due to the pandemic. How can they be expected to buy a smartphone when they are struggling to eat? Even in households that do manage to scrape the funds or take a loan to buy a mobile phone, there is the challenge of a single device which has to be shared by the children for accessing their classes.

Then again, the younger ones have trouble following the classes on the tiny smartphone screens while the older ones are hard pushed to do lengthy assignments and research on the same. This is slowly cutting away at their motivation to attend the online sessions.

Footing the internet subscription becomes another ongoing trial. A report on the Key Indicators of Household Social Consumption on Education in India revealed that less than 15% of rural households had access to the internet compared to 42% of urban households. Not to mention the issues of constant interruptions in broadband and mobile data connectivity. Online classes necessitate high-speed internet connection; the patchy connectivity, especially in the interior regions, causes constant log outs which disrupts the learning. Then again,

## Total duration of school closures



(Source: UNESCO (as of November 2021))

*Schools in India have been closed for 82 weeks as it suffered through multiple waves of the COVID-19 pandemic. This is the longest duration that schools have been closed worldwide.*



**Figure 1:** The 16th ASER report is based on a phone survey conducted in September and October 2021 covering a total of 76,706 households and 75,234 children aged 5-16 years across 581 rural districts in 25 states and 3 union territories apart from 7,299 government schools.

**CHART 1: PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN WITH ACCESS TO SMARTPHONES (ALL CLASSES AVG.)**

	Smartphone at home	Access at all times	Sometimes	No access
I-II	64.9	19.9	40.8	39.3
III-V	66.6	23.7	47.2	29
VI-VIII	66.6	27.6	50.2	22.2
IX-XII	72.6	35.4	47.5	17
All	67.6	27	47	26.1

**CHART 2: CHALLENGES FACED BY TEACHERS (ALL CLASSES)**

% Facing Challenges	Low attendance	Children unable to catch up	Connectivity issues
70.2	29.1	65.4	22

**CHART 3: PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN WHO RECEIVE HELP FROM FAMILY MEMBERS**

Class I-II	Class III-V	Class VI-VIII	Class IX-XII
74.3	71	64.9	56.7

**CHART 4: PERCENTAGE OF CLASS I-II WHO'VE NEVER ATTENDED IN-PERSON CLASSES**



**CHART 5: PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN WITH TEXTBOOKS (ALL CLASSES AVG.)**

GOVT **92.3** | PVT **90.7**

**SURVEY COVERED**

- 25 states, 3 UTs, 581 districts
- 17,184 villages
- 76,706 households
- 75,234 children (age 5-16)
- 7,299 schools



**12,459** surveyed students in Classes I-II

**19,414** in III-V

**20,064** in VI-VIII

**15,793** in IX-XII

while most of India now has electricity connections, the availability continues to be sporadic with constant outages, sometimes for hours at a stretch.

**Digital infrastructure in schools –**

Thousands of schools in rural and remote areas could not resume learning during the lockdowns simply because they did not have the resources to teach remotely! According to the 2019-20 UDISE (Unified District Information System for Education) report released by the Ministry of Education, 61% of schools across the country did not have computers while 78% lacked internet access. (see Figure 2)

Despite this glaring deficiency of digital infrastructure, the Education Ministry's budget for digital e-learning (which includes the PM e-Vidya scheme) was reduced from Rs. 604 crore in 2019-20 to Rs. 469 crore in 2020-21 and further lowered to Rs. 421 crore for 2022-23! Indeed, there are sharp shortfalls in both budgetary funding and utilisation in the education sector. Why is the government not spending enough on improving the digital infrastructure for remote learning?

**Technology expertise of teachers –**

A report by Asian Development Bank pegged that around 10 million teachers were impacted by school closures. A significant percentage of them are not technologically literate, let alone being adept with teaching in an online environment. Serious issues related to content curation have surfaced as the teachers find it challenging to design online lesson plans and prepare audio and video teaching materials.

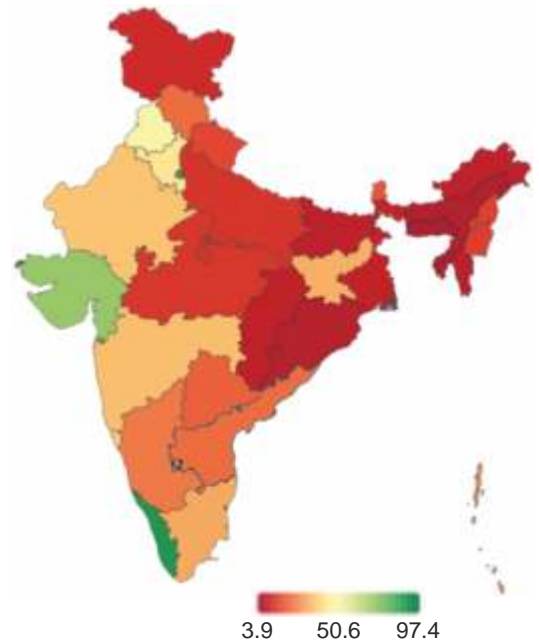
**Far-reaching Effects**

The rooted structural imbalances are not only amplifying the learning inequalities, but also leading to profound learning losses. Students are falling behind even in the minimum proficiency. According to a 2021 UNESCO report, India has lost ground on its literacy rates and now ranks 19th amongst other Asian countries.

A survey on the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on school education was carried out by the National Independent Schools Alliance, a federation of budget private schools' association in September and October 2021. It tested 1502 students of classes 3, 5 and 8 in urban, rural and semi-urban private schools across 17 Indian states and union territories on three categories — reading, writing and understanding in their mother tongue; reading, writing and understanding in English; and mathematics. The report highlighted that highest percentages of children were falling behind their grade level in writing and understanding English while students of classes 3 and 5 performed low in all three areas of study.

During the recent National Achievement Survey (NAS) by the centre, teachers and field investigators across the country reported that primary grade kids struggled to make sense of questions to test basic comprehension and numerical skills. The World Bank's Learning Poverty indicator also estimates that 55% of 10-year-old children from India are not able to read a basic sentence. Two-thirds of

**Figure 2:** Percentage of Schools with Internet Facility (2019-20) (Source: UDISE+ Dashboard)



the parents from the SCHOOL survey stated their children, unable to access schooling online, have fallen behind, with reading and writing skills in decline. According to the ASER survey, 65.4% teachers flagged the problem of children being “unable to catch up” as one of their biggest challenges.

Another survey of 1,400 underprivileged students pegs that the extended school closure has created a 'four year learning deficit'. This means that “a student who was in Grade 3 before COVID-19 is now in Grade 5, and will soon enter middle school, but with reading abilities of a Grade 1 pupil!”

Alas, the worst affected, as always, is the marginalised, rural and poor populations.

**Surge in dropouts** – More and more students are dropping out of school while new enrolments are falling drastically. The families either cannot afford to send their children to school anymore or are pushing them to work as the adults themselves are unemployed, financially stressed or in debt.

Another alarming fact is that more girls are not returning to school which will undo decades of progress towards gender equality, even to the extent of further widening the gender inequality in education. What is more distressing is that these girls will be pushed into early and forced marriages, adolescent pregnancy, violence and more.

**More at stake** - That's not all either. School closures and online classes have impacted children beyond their learning. Their mental health and well-being is bearing the brunt as well. A UNESCO survey revealed that children are struggling with social isolation, access to nutrition and a lack of physical exercise. This is impinging on their overall development.

## NEP: Merely hoping for the best?

The thread of interweaving technology in education runs through the entire new National Education Policy 2020.

Indeed, the policymakers have done a stellar job of imbibing technology to improve both educational processes and outcomes.

The policy talks about using artificial intelligence software in teaching, learning, evaluation and even educational planning, management and administration. The thrust will be on promoting online/digital education to expand the reach and scope across the country. It endorses incorporating technology for both aiding and training teachers. There is mention of developing digital libraries, virtual field trips and setting up virtual labs to give students remote access to experiment-based learning. There is talk of extending both impetus and guidelines to edtech companies and startups to develop learning management systems, ERP software, assessment platforms, online labs, etc. It has further proposed instituting a National Education Technical Forum as an autonomous body to oversee capacity building, develop e-content and provide a platform for exchange of ideas on technology usage to improve learning.

There have been some developments in this regard. For instance, NITI Aayog partnered with Byju's to provide free access to its tech-driven learning programmes to engineering aspirants from 112 districts. But overall, it appears that digitising education is a long shot as the policy fails to clarify how the huge and stark digital divide will be bridged. It blandly states that all schools will be digitally equipped without making any provisions for the same.

## A Wakeup Call

Recently, the UNICEF shared a new composite indicator, 'The Remote Learning Readiness Index' (RLRI) that measures countries' readiness to deliver remote learning. India got a three-star rating which signifies that the country's remote learning systems can be regarded as relatively resilient, although serious concerns still remain about the potential for learning loss and the extent to which

learning can continue in case of disrupted in-person instruction.

Schools are opening up all across the country and we may even move back to completely offline classes from the next academic year. But with the learning abilities of children sorely compromised, it is wishful thinking to consider that two years on, we can seamlessly pick up where we had left off!

The middle and upper class children, who were studying online, will still return to schools, albeit suffering significant dents due to this humungous disruption. But the long-term consequences on their more vulnerable counterparts remain to be seen. Alas, they could even be lifelong! It is not just their learning, development and well-being, but even social mobility and human capital formation that is at stake here. According to a World Bank report, learning losses from prolonged school closures could cost India more than US\$400 billion!

The question here is: will we make education recovery from the learning losses a priority? Moreover, with the looming possibility of new crises leading to more school closures in the future, the education sector has to be made resilient enough to allow inclusive and equitable education for all. The different stakeholders – from the authorities and educational institutions to edtech providers and parents – have to join hands to 'build back better'!

We need to work on both a strong digital infrastructure and comprehensive preparedness plans to leverage our capacity to deliver quality education in remote formats.

## Conclusion

The cruel irony is that while India has emerged as a global leader in information and communication technology and is on the cusp of transforming into a digitally empowered and knowledge economy, a humungous digital divide still splits the country leading to inequities in online learning. Can we afford to make education a privilege that only a few can afford? ▶

## Onboarding Students and Parents with the Moorings of NEP 2020

All development comes through education! India is finally on the threshold of a radical revamp in its education system. The NEP 2020 is a bold move to reform learning and make it a continuous and practical multidisciplinary process. This is a tremendous opportunity for the youth to become the strength of the country, but provided children and parents first tune in with the changes in the scenario!



*The NEP is primed to take learning outside the four walls of a classroom. Are we on board yet?*



**IN THE ANCIENT** times, education was imparted in gurukuls and madrasas in India. This informal system had a rich ethos of unique teaching methods that incorporated religion, logic, mathematics and more.

During the colonial rule, Thomas Macaulay introduced the English education system with English as the primary medium of instruction. He espoused that traditional Indian learning was defective and prioritised creating a class of servile 'babus' imbued with a stereotypical approach that left no scope for ingenuity, visualisation or even critical analysis. In other words, his skewed policies and vested interests crafted a clerical workforce of followers, not thinkers or leaders!

While independent India has been endeavouring to modernise and universalise education with multiple reforms and education policies, the system still clings to this colonial hangover which marginalised both Indian modes of thought and learning. Even after more than seventy years of independence, the nation's educational structures and pedagogy continued to be shackled to an impractical antiquity – like conditioned learning and content-based examinations - that keeps it redundant, irrelevant and basically divorced from any application in real life.

Education should actually be about discipline, curiosity, creativity and development. Even as this will enable learners to break out of the clutches of ignorance and lay the foundation of their future, it will also play a starring role in the development and progress of the country. Indeed, education is an essential cornerstone of the all-round development of the society and the economy.

Alas, the Indian education system has always been lagging behind. Our universities have never featured in the top 100 global rankings. China has managed to overtake India in the last two decades with a Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of almost 60% while India is still struggling under 30%.

## Breathing New Life into the Education System

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is a giant leap forward for India. The nearly 400 page document is all set to restructure the beleaguered education system with many tectonic shifts on the anvil. Built on the tenets of Access, Equity, Quality, Affordability and Accountability, it lays out a new template of 'quality education' for the next few decades that will be more holistic, experiential, discussion-centred and based on analysis.

There are ambitious plans of moving away from the culture of rote learning to a skill-based and cognitive one, with special focus on vocational training since an early age followed by internships. The policy emphasises practical and experiential learning in place of content-heavy curriculum so as to instil critical thinking, enhance the creative potential and develop problem-solving skills of the students. Conventional teaching will be replaced with new methods that stimulate the children's imagination.

Everything from the pedagogical structure to the assessments will be revamped to make it more relevant to the modern times. The focus will be on a qualitative analysis of the children's learning by testing the core competencies and actual knowledge rather than the memorised facts. The class 10 and 12 board exams will be low stakes and report cards will present a comprehensive report of the skills and capabilities instead of just marks and grades.

Co-curricular activities will be accorded more importance and arts will be integrated into the education system. Along with changes in education, the policy also talks about focusing on mental health and social work so as to develop the social, ethical and emotional capacity of the children.

Above all, the policy will herald a new platform for students to exchange their ideas and improve their learning.

## Harmonising with the Change of Course

There is much to rejoice for both students and parents with the NEP 2020 earmarking an inclusive and participatory 'learning how to learn' approach. Once implemented in its true vision, it will bring a progressive shift in education by finally bridging the gap between current learning outcomes and those that should actually be achieved.

In the words of the policymakers, it will produce engaged, productive and contributing citizens that are capable of rational thought and action, possess scientific temper and creative imagination and will build an equitable, inclusive and plural society.

There is a constant chatter around the need for political will and budgetary allocations to urgently convert this joyful dream into a wonderful reality. Both educational institutions and educators have to be prepared to bring in fundamental changes in their teaching practice and philosophies. However, the biggest contribution should come from the parents and students who have to wake up and become equal stakeholders in this mammoth mission.

Indeed, it will be a big challenge for the children to adjust to the new learning environment, learning process and learning opportunities. They need to be flexible and keep an open mind to adapt to the innovative changes that will take place in the classroom.

Classes will no longer be rigid but become learning playgrounds. The learning will be activity-driven with a focus on role play and discovery. Skill improvement and competency development is in store, but only if the students can shift their focus from purely academic pursuits to incorporating non-academic options as well. There will be confusion in the beginning, but being receptive to the changes and seeking guidance from teachers/counsellors whenever needed will help them get the hang of things.

Now the onus will be on the students to pick and choose their subjects and topics to match their innate

interests and talents. They have to build the courage and curiosity to introspect on their distinctive ambitions and skills so as to make the right choices. They should be open to choosing diverse subjects without confining themselves to the rigid disciplines of Science, Commerce or Arts as a multidisciplinary education will broaden their perspective of the world around them.

Students also need to learn to be accountable for their decisions as they will no longer be able to blame parents, relatives or the society for not giving them the freedom to choose what they should study!

### Need to Adapt

The role of parents has to grow into equal partners in the education and they have to become directly involved in the learning process of their children. This begins in the formative years itself where they should participate more meaningfully through storytelling, poetry, songs etc. The home environment should be transformed into a safe, engaging and positive learning space as this will be a key driver of the learning outcomes.

As students become free of the archaic ways of learning, it is the duty of their parents to give them room to explore, make mistakes and reflect on the experiences. Encourage them to ask questions, explore free thinking and build a fresh viewpoint on varied topics. There will also be constant interaction and collaboration with the teachers, facilitated by technology and leveraging online communities.

For decades Indian parents have complained about the school system that concentrates exclusively on good marks for being promoted to the next grade without any attempt to help children build future-ready skills or develop their overall personality. Now this kind of dismissively summative assessment will finally shift to a competency-based approach that tests the analysis, critical thinking and conceptual clarity of the students. The focus will move from academic performance to discovering and developing the innate aptitude and interests.

Now it will be the turn of the parents to have an open mindset and keep realistic expectations from their children by understanding this kind of a progressive approach to evaluation. Do not force the children to mug up the books like earlier as they will be learning through

application. Parents can actually breathe easy now and concentrate on the child's overall learning and well-being rather than worrying incessantly about them not scoring high enough marks!

In fact, the 10th and 12th board examination results will no longer dictate the child's future as there will be common college entrance tests. Moreover, the government has put a seal of approval on students exiting an undergraduate program at any point or taking a break year without it spelling doom for life!

As every child has unique capabilities, the role of the parents will be to identify and nurture their talents while empowering them to follow their heart. They have to grow out of the persistent mindset to push their children into the Science stream and stop belittling 'arty' or other

offbeat subjects as useless options. Above all, quit the incessant and traumatic comparisons by coming out of the regressive 'Sharmaji ka ladka' rut and be sensitised enough to appreciate the supposed 'misfits'.

Then again, a multidisciplinary education is on the cards that is more aligned with the global system. Let your child mix Mathematics with Sociology or Philosophy if he/she wants and rest assured that this will provide far greater scope to take the learnings beyond the classroom and into the real world.

So, welcome the creative combinations and give them the freedom to turn their passion into a fulfilling profession.

Especially parents from less-privileged backgrounds will find it taxing to understand the radical changes in the education landscape, especially when they have not been involved in their children's learning so far.

### Conclusion

The blueprint for a vibrant knowledge society is ready and waiting in the wings. Bringing it centre stage will transform the new generation of learners from mindless followers to leaders! But, for this, we have to create a synergy so that students can learn happily and comfortably which will develop them into well-rounded personalities. The road ahead is not easy – neither for students who are used to the erstwhile structured education system nor the parents who still bear the marks of their own shackled learnings! ▶

**National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is a big revolution replacing the 34-year-old policy ideas. It envisions bringing about much-needed modification in the Indian Education System.**





**Dr. Alka Mukne**  
Ph.D. (Tech.)  
Board Member-PSAIF

## Can the NEP Rise to the Challenge of Arbitrary, Unjustified and Exorbitant Fee Demands?

“The NEP is geared towards eliminating commercialisation and profiteering from education that stand in the way of developing a robust system of learning. It proposes instituting multiple mechanisms with checks and balances in the regulatory system. However, parents continue to be burdened by the sharply inflated fees with no respite in sight!”

– Dr. Alka Mukne

**WHEN IT COMES** to choosing a school or college, parents take everything from the curriculum and pedagogy to the teaching faculty and reputation of the institution into account to ensure that their child gets top quality education. However, at the end of the day, the fees plays a starring role in the final decision. Obviously the income and monthly household budget can only be stretched so much to incorporate a higher expenditure on education, no matter how good the learning or facilities!

Alas, private, unaided education today is defined by 'five star' schools and colleges that charge lakhs of rupees in the name of fees and other arbitrary charges that are out of reach of the common man. Most of them seem to be operating purely on commercial motives and imparting education has become just another business activity.

The new National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 also articulates that, “The current regulatory regime has not been able to curb the rampant commercialisation and economic exploitation of parents by many for-profit private schools, yet at the same time; it has all too often inadvertently discouraged public-spirited private/philanthropic schools”. In fact, 'better regulation of fees in private schools' was one of the key suggestions by an expert committee set up in 2017 that prepared the draft education policy.

The problem seems to have intensified further during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The authorities issued various directives to the educational institutions – from not hiking the tuition to reducing fees in view of the facilities not being used and running costs coming down due to virtual classes – to provide some succour during these unprecedentedly harsh times.

Yet, 63% parents affirmed that the schools did increase the fees during the academic year 2021-22, as revealed

by a survey of 26,000 parents from 302 districts conducted by community social media platform LocalCircles. 33% parents said that the fees was increased by more than 20%, 23% reported a 10% to 20% increase and 7% pegged the increase at 0 to 10% from that of 2020-21. Only 1% of parents said that their schools reduced the fees by 10% to 20% while 2% reported a fee reduction of more than 20%. There was no fee increase for 22% of the respondents. This was after a Supreme Court ruling ordered a minimum 15% per cent reduction in school fees!

To top this, about 65% of parents said that their state government was inactive or ineffective in regulating school fee increase during the pandemic.

Moreover, many schools debarred students from attending the online classes or writing the exams on account of non-payment of fees despite an express ruling against such penal action.

Many parents had no choice but to shift their children to government schools. The ASER 2021 report reveals that enrolment in private schools decreased from 32.5% in 2018 to 24.4% in 2021 for children in the age group of 6 to 14 years. In government schools, the average enrolment was 64.3% in 2018 which increased to 70.3% in 2021. The shift from private to government schools was seen in all grades and among both boys and girls at an all-India level.

In direct contradiction to this scenario are the 'low-fee' educational institutions. Indeed, a major chunk of students in the age group of 6 to 14 years are enrolled in private schools where the median fee is only a couple of hundred rupees. Lacking the infrastructure to conduct online classes and unable to collect the meagre fee from the parents, many of them had no option but to shut down.



## The NEP Stance

The policy expressly states that families and communities must be protected from usurious commercial practices like unreasonable and arbitrary increases in tuition fees. Additionally, both government and private schools have to publicly disclose information relating to the fees on the school and on State School Standards Authority (SSSA) websites along with information about the number of classrooms, students and teachers; subjects taught; and overall student outcomes on standardised evaluations.

The NEP seems to be more expansive and regulatory towards private higher educational institutions (HEIs). It prescribes a progressive regime of fee determination with the HEIs being free to set the fees for their courses independently. The same should be transparently and fully disclosed with any profits therefrom being reinvested in the education sector itself.



However, the fees will be capped and disallow any abrupt increases during the period a student is enrolled. An official in the ministry clarified that, "A new fee structure will be developed for different types of institutions depending on their accreditation so that individual institutions are not adversely affected." Therefore, it will ensure reasonable recovery of cost while curbing commercialisation.

There is an additional social responsibility element where at least 20% of the students should be studying through 'freeships' with an additional 30% through significant scholarship assistance.

This will be supplemented by governmental efforts to incentivise meritorious students in the scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, other backward classes and other economically deprived segments. There is also a proposal to expand the National Scholarship Portal to support, foster and track the progress of students receiving the scholarships.

## A Common and Broad Regulatory Framework

The NEP proposes setting up a single regulator for higher education in the form of a Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) with four independent verticals for regulation, standards, funding and accreditation. This will replace the UGC-AICTE (All India Council for Technical Education) and function as an overarching umbrella body for the entire higher education, except medical and legal education.

Public and private higher education institutions (including private philanthropic partnerships) will be governed by the same set of norms based on common guidelines of good governance, financial stability and security and educational outcomes under the aegis of the HECI. They will also be subject to a 'light but tight' regulatory approach while abiding by audit and disclosure standards like other 'not for profit' entities.

## Looming Limitations

Governmental attempts to make education accessible to all sections of society can potentially translate into over-regulation of the sector. Meanwhile, the policy has opened the doors to foreign universities setting up campuses in India, but they may be put off by the fee limits and other regulations.

Moreover, the rationale of mitigating opportunity costs and fees for those pursuing higher education seems misguided as most of the Indian universities are already funded by the government with significant fee caps and subsidised education. And it also remains to be seen how the HEIs will be able to fund the scholarships in a realm of 'fee control'.

There are some glaring loopholes as well – like protection to families only when faced with unreasonable hikes in tuition fees. This ignores the rest of the fee structure which can be easily manipulated to circumvent the restriction on increasing the tuition. In fact, the Draft NEP 2019 had aimed to cover all divisions of the fee structure by stating that any substantial increase in the fees that cannot be anticipated or justified shall not be made, including under any 'fees head' such as 'school development' or an 'infrastructure fund'. But the approved version restricts itself to regulating tuition fees only.

It is being argued in varied circles that the NEP proposals will only function as guiding principles and are not binding on any of the agencies or educational institutions. This will leave the schools and colleges free to play the field in an arbitrary manner, just like they have been doing till now!

## Conclusion

The NEP is still beset with challenges and limitations that can have a negative fallout. The consumers are clamouring for respite from the high costs of educating the future citizens of the country. Can the educational institutions be allowed to continue their free rein on fees which can end up strangling the youth and talent of the nation? More thinking, more planning and more strategizing is the call of the times! ▶



## Educated Consumer = Informed and Aware Consumer

Students are the bedrock of the future and they should be properly acquainted with their rights and responsibilities as a consumer. The role of educational institutions in this context cannot be overemphasised. After all, an educated consumer is an informed consumer and an aware consumer!

**Young consumers between the age of 6 to 18 years play a vital role as they are the future of the economy and the country**

**INDIA IS COMMITTED** to providing free and compulsory education to all children. The Right to Education Act was enacted in 2009 which made free and compulsory education a fundamental right of every child in the age group of 6 to 14 years. The new National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 extends this eligibility window both ways to 3 to 18 years with the aim of achieving universal elementary education at both the primary and secondary level. There is a studied focus on creating a vast and robust system of higher and technical education as well.

The Consumer Protection Act, 1986 laid down Right to Consumer Education as one of the six basic rights of the consumer. Given that this is considered a constitutional right, the new Consumer Protection Act, 2019 modified the provision as 'Right to Consumer Awareness'.

### Importance of Consumer Awareness

Both the government and consumer protection organisations are undertaking numerous initiatives to protect the rights and interests of the consumers. Wide-ranging rules, policies and laws and other measures are available, including judicial proceedings, when the consumer has been wronged or his rights have been violated.

Yet, consumers still fall victim to varied unscrupulous and exploitative trade practices ranging from substandard products/services and high prices to adulteration, faulty weights and measures and more. They are easily duped by shopkeepers, retailers and manufacturers at various

junctures. This is primarily because they are unaware of their basic consumer rights, let alone the legal processes at their disposal.

On the other hand, aware consumers are in a position to make judicious purchases while protecting themselves from exploitation. They can make a stand when something is not up to the mark. They will know about the various avenues available to seek redressal, restitution or other remedies and can utilise them when they are dissatisfied with the products and services they consume. They also become empowered to influence the market through rational decisions which is crucial for a well-functioning market economy. Indeed, an aware consumer is an asset to the society!

With every right, there comes a responsibility as well. People should be alert and conscious in their role as a consumer – right from checking for standardisation marks and reading the information on the labels to clarifying the details and retaining the bills as proof of purchase.

### Role of Education

Education liberates people from the clutches of ignorance, misbeliefs and exploitation. It enlightens the mind by shining the light of knowledge on various aspects of life and society. Indeed, education has the power to change people, the system, the economy and the world at large!

As the students will grow into adult consumers, instilling consumer consciousness at the tender age will

go a long way. In fact, consumer rights and protection issues feature in some manner or the other in the curriculum of schools and universities.

- The Central Board of Secondary Education has highlighted certain foundations of consumer protection in the syllabus.
- IITs, IIMs, IIPA, IIFT and some reputed central universities provide consumer education, training and research on a more structured and sustained basis. Special courses are available at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels.
- Many schools, colleges and universities actively participate in government initiatives like 'JaagoGrahakJaago'. Seminars, conferences, workshops, competitions, consumer fetes and research studies are also organised around the theme of consumer protection.
- Consumer clubs have been set up in many schools and colleges that are affiliated to a government recognised board or university. They serve as a platform for disseminating information and awareness through consumer-related activities and programmes. The objective is to mobilise the youth by instilling in them the spirit of protection of consumer rights which will serve to strengthen the consumer movement in the country.
- A Centre of Excellence has been established in some IITs and IIMs to facilitate action suits for major consumer problems.

Through these measures, students are enlightened about their basic rights like insisting on and getting a bill for every purchase, getting clear and complete information about the product/service, being updated about safety aspects of the goods and so on. They become cognizant of unfair and unethical situations where they are being cheated and how to confront the same. It also shapes their behaviour and conduct in the society when they are purchasing goods or hiring services. Therefore, consumers get maximum satisfaction, or, in other words, the most bang for their buck!

Even without studying about specific consumer issues and rights, general education itself gives students the knowledge and skills to make better buying decisions. They also become equipped with a logical viewpoint which translates into the ability to analyse the situation and solve the problem or seek the right assistance for doing the same.

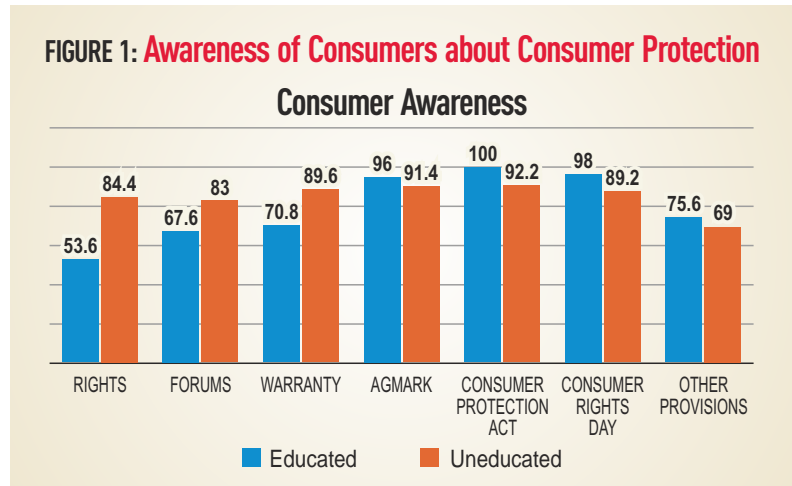
### The Ground Reality

The literacy rate has been steadily rising in the country. But consumers are still being exploited and complete consumer protection remains a myth! Poverty and unemployment is blamed for this mess.

However, a 2016 study of 1000 consumers from Andhra Pradesh – comprising of an equal number of

educated and uneducated people – examined the extent of awareness among consumers of their consumer rights. It revealed that education did not create much difference in the level of awareness as a majority of both literate and illiterate respondents were not acquainted with their consumer rights, consumer forums, warranty/guarantee features and AGMARK. Neither did most of them have any idea about the Consumer Protection Act, the Consumer Rights Day or other provisions for protecting consumers. (See Figure 1)

A positive correlation was found between consumer perceptions, buying practices and problems. The survey states that, “The consumers are confronted with numerous problems due to lack of knowledge or awareness of their rights and enactments of the Government. He does not exercise his rights as a



consumer.” And the situation does not seem to have improved much over the years.

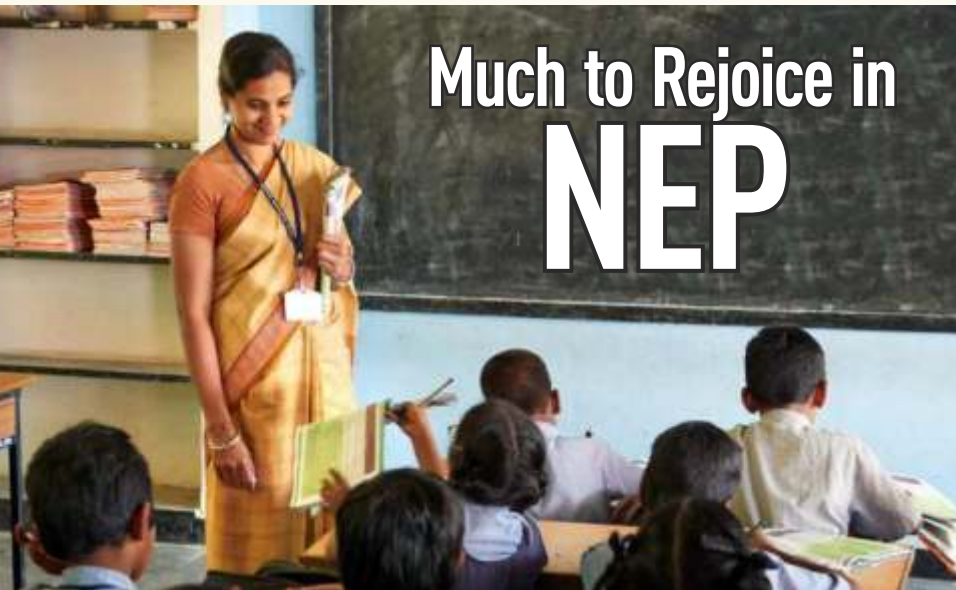
Therefore, the government and educational institutions cannot afford to flinch from their duty anymore. They need to make concerted efforts to incorporate consumer awareness in the school curriculum that will familiarise students with their rights as a consumer along with the various laws and Acts that are enacted by the Government from time to time. This should not be a mere add-on in some chapter of the syllabus but a well-crafted, elaborate and effective consumer awareness programme that will enable them to understand their role as a conscious consumer.

Indeed, education cannot be limited to just academic subjects. It should incorporate social issues as this will update students about the real-life scenarios and thus, shape the leaders of the future!

### Conclusion

The laws are in place, but people do not know their rights. They have no idea about the instruments of protection and what they can actually do. It is holistic education that will enable the students of today to grow into alert and efficient consumers tomorrow. This will drive growth and development in the country as well! ▶





## Much to Rejoice in NEP

**The NEP 2020 is a novel and revolutionary policy which is poised to bring in path-breaking changes that will universalise education in the country while ensuring that the children receive comprehensive, top-quality and holistic education. It has been applauded both nationally and internationally. The accolades flowed in from all stakeholders ranging from educational institutions and academicians to parents with some critical opinions and recommendations as well.**

### THE NATIONAL EDUCATION

Policy is trying to nurture skill-based learning which is essential for the students of the 21st century. The need of the hour is to concentrate on critical thinking abilities, analytical skills, communication skills and enhance emotional intelligence. NEP 2020 will play a crucial role in the holistic development of a child.

– **Dr Sebastian P. G.**, Principal,  
Christ Academy, Bengaluru

The attempt to hone a child from the foundational age of 3 years instead of 6 years brings our new education policy at par with the global developed nations, but it's the focus on education technology that takes it ahead of them by leaps. After 1992, this revision was long overdue, and it's heartening to note that NEP 2020 has taken care of all the demands of contemporary education requirements and practices. Now it's time for the education fraternity to execute it well and bring the needed changes that this policy envisages.

– **Himanshu Gupta**, Managing  
Director, S. Chand & Co., Delhi

Great planning. Everything is changing in India except Education Policy. Process of learning must

change for development. I am a product of 10+2 system. I very strongly feel not only the system of education, the contents of our books also must change particularly the HISTORY. Will be waiting eagerly for the new system's implementation.

– **Srikumar Chaudhari**, Parent

The New Education Policy is a positive move towards augmenting learning in India. It will improve overall accountability in the ecosystem.

– **Neeti Sharma**, Senior Vice  
President, TeamLease Services

The launch of the National Education Policy 2020 was a remarkable progression in the area of education and learning. Our current education system was never designed to fulfil the needs of our children. The New Education Policy came at a time when schools had to adjust to changing societal demands and expectations by transforming themselves in role and identity.

– **Ameeta Mulla Wattal**,  
Chairperson, DLF Foundation Schools

The NEP articulates a desire to break away from the current rote-learning based model. It is good to see an increased focus on the application of a

small number of core concepts rather than shallow memorisation of a vast syllabus. It is also encouraging to note the importance given to the development of essential 21st century skills like critical thinking. Overall, this has the potential to bring India's outdated education system into the 21st century. Much will, however, depend on how it is executed. To bring about any improvements to the teaching methodology in classrooms, large investments in teacher training will need to be made. To truly focus on skills, the need of the hour is a way for the boards to track whether these skills are in fact being developed to the desired level or whether schools are paying lip service. This was the missing link that caused the earlier CCE system to fall flat.

– **Sriram Subramanian**, CEO,  
Callido Learning

This new policy is the need of the hour. Why children of 21st century should follow an age-old policy? Like everything else, education policies should also change according to the changing times.

– **Sunidhi Venketesh**, Parent,  
Bengaluru

**Our young generation is the future leader of the country. So empowering today's young generation means empowering India's future! – PM Modi**

UPDATE ...



Moving a Step Ahead

Update on the March edition on

# World Consumer Day – Protecting Consumers in Navigating the World of Digital Finance

**THIS MARCH 15TH**, the world celebrated Consumer Rights Day on the theme of Fair Digital Finance with a two-pronged approach of recognising the vast potential and opportunities of digital finance while highlighting the need to follow safe practices to safeguard against frauds.

Consumers International hosted a Fair Digital Finance Forum from 14th to 18th March to focus on the need for both digital finance products/services and innovative regulatory approaches centred on consumer protection and empowerment. The week long unique and visionary series of events sparked the first-ever global conversation on the consumer vision for fair digital finance. It called on businesses, governments and policymakers to ensure that digital finance is:

- **Inclusive:** Extending access to digital finance for all
- **Safe:** Mitigating harm in digital finance from scams, fraud and phishing
- **Data protected and private:** Safeguarding the data of every consumer of digital financial services
- **Sustainable:** Ensuring green and socially responsible digital financial products

The Forum also kicked off the 'Consumer Vision for Fair Digital Finance', offering insights from leaders in the consumer movement to develop a unique blueprint of a fair digital financial future. It presents the opportunities and risks of the broadening digital finance marketplace while offering tangible ways in which digital finance can be harnessed to the benefit of all consumers.

Meanwhile, in India, the Department of Consumer Affairs organised a 'Consumer Empowerment Week' from 14th to 20th March 2022 and hosted a number of events including rural outreach programmes in 75 villages across the country.

We are hoping that fair digital finance becomes a reality for consumers everywhere! ▶



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## YOUR OPINION MATTERS

# Letters to the



(March issue: World Consumer Day – Protecting Consumers in Navigating the World Of Digital Finance)

We are truly humbled by the praise and acknowledgment that is flowing in from varied sources. Please feel free to send in your comments, views or feedback on The Aware Consumer magazine at [bejonmisra@theawareconsumer.in](mailto:bejonmisra@theawareconsumer.in) – we will publish your opinions and implement your feedback while ensuring that your voice is heard on the right platforms.



My heartiest congratulations for bringing the right issue on rights, well-being and economic empowerment of consumers through financial tools. We feel proud of you and your team for effective advocacy of consumers rights.

– **Dr. G.N. Singh**, Ex-Drugs Controller General of India



This is the era of information technology and artificial intelligence, and technology has made lots of changes in our routine life. It's run so fast as if we do not keep updating ourselves before going to bed, next day we become obsolete, and the reason - the world is on our finger tips. Being a government official, I have notices lots of changes in last two decades – we were compelled to learn computers when it was introduced. I remember that the first desktop was given to district offices in the year 1996-97. And we didn't even know how to operate it. Slowly all government officials were asked to learn computers and it was made compulsory for passing out basic examinations. As a result, now almost all employees are computer literate. Government has taken many other measures to digitalise all documents and made the offices paperless.

A big revolution in the field of finance as citizens started to adopt this with pleasure so as to avoid standing in queue and instead avail all required details by using mobile or laptop. Developed countries have already taken initiatives before India in almost all fields, but now India is not behind either. The latest decision taken by government to pay online toll tax by providing fast tags has thus saved time and efforts. Now almost all government offices are well equipped with latest technology and almost all payments/fees are done digitally. It has some limitations of frauds but the same is equally protected by cyber laws.

This latest edition of the magazine has covered all details of what actually consumer needs and gives answers to all.

In the beginning people are always hesitant to use new innovations due to lack of security and less trust in such transactions. They are also not well aware of usage of such applications, but after experiencing it becomes easy. As this is a big revolution of this era, I am sure people will choose digital platform to optimise errors.

I again congratulate the team for publishing such a wonderful magazine which covers details pertaining to consumer awareness which is a big help to society. By publishing such magazine editor has tried to educate public at large.

– **Dr C D Shelat**, Deputy Commissioner, Food and Drugs Control Administration, Gujarat • [cdshelat.fdca@gmail.com](mailto:cdshelat.fdca@gmail.com)



This is very informative and authentic magazine. Content & design is good. Waiting for its Hindi edition.

– **Uday Kumar Manna**, National Convener, RJS

• [rjspositivemovement@gmail.com](mailto:rjspositivemovement@gmail.com)



The 'Aware Consumer' magazine has been playing a leading role in empowering the consumers and spreading awareness about issues of prime importance. The magazine has also been successfully capturing the emerging trends and issues that affect the consumers. The February issue has highlighted the short-

comings in India's digital payment sector that need to be solved so that consumers and businesses can benefit from responsible and long-term financial inclusion.

Consumers are more conscious of things that are sourced sustainably and certified, ranging from books to electrical appliances, as environmentally friendly standards and sustainable norms reshape businesses. We from the Network for Certification and Conservation of Forests ([www.nccf.in](http://www.nccf.in)) are developing and implementing India-specific and globally benchmarked sustainability certification standards that have immense potential to contribute towards sustainable development, sustainable management of forests/trees outside forests, climate action, land restoration and biodiversity conservation.

Our work compliments the efforts of 'Aware Consumer' in meeting the aspirations of environmentally conscious consumers and the stakeholders of natural resources. I compliment Prof Bejon Kumar Misra, the publisher of the magazine and his dedicated team for effectively leading the consumer movement in India through consumer education and advocacy.

– **A.K. Srivastava**, Director General, Network for Certification and Conservation of Forests  
• [aksmoef@gmail.com](mailto:aksmoef@gmail.com)



I would like to share that 'The Aware Consumer' magazine is a nice initiative as it is very informative in terms of various aspects of consumer education. It's really important to create awareness on the guidelines & provisions of CPA to protect the consumers. The articles published on different verticals are impactful for the benefit of the consumers. Best wishes for the upcoming editions!

– **Tarali Sarmah**, Senior Assistant Director, Indian Chamber of Commerce  
• [tarali.sarmah@indianchamber.net](mailto:tarali.sarmah@indianchamber.net)



for the next issue in June dedicated to World Accreditation Day with a focus on National Accreditation Board for Hospitals & Healthcare Providers (NABH)



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