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# A SPECIAL EDITION ON NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY, 2020



NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY (NEP) 2020

# National Education Policy 2020:
# A Transformatory Blueprint for India's Education System

**DR. S. M. IMRAN**

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, sanctioned by the Government of India on July 29, 2020, is a path-breaking reform that seeks to transform the education system of the country to make it more inclusive, flexible, and in tune with the needs of the 21st century. Replacing the 34-year-old National Policy on Education (1986), NEP 2020's vision is of an education system that promotes critical thinking, innovation and balanced development while tackling India's varied socio-economic challenges. This article delves into the major features, goals and possible effects of NEP 2020.

NEP 2020 is inspired by the vision to make India a global super knowledge power through an education system indigenous in ethos, but competitive, secure and globally connected. Its fundamental aims are to ensure universal access to quality education for all, ranging from early childhood to higher education. It aims to foster intellectual, emotional and ethical development through a multidisciplinary approach.

The policy focuses on preparing students for the global workforce with an emphasis on creativity, critical thinking and problem-solving. It also seeks to redress gender, socio-economic and regional disparities. Additionally, NEP 2020 strives to bring the country's education system at par with global standards while maintaining cultural heritage.

NEP 2020 reimagines school education with a renewed focus on early childhood care and foundational learning, reorganizing the pedagogical structure and fostering inclusivity. A major reform is the introduction of a new pedagogical framework that replaces the old 10+2 system with a 5+3+3+4 structure. This corresponds to the Foundation Stage (ages 3–8), which includes three years of pre-primary education and Grades 1–2, with play-based learning.

Board examinations will be deprioritized, with options for multiple attempts and an emphasis on competency-based assessments. Moreover, ongoing professional training for teachers is emphasised, especially in new pedagogical methods and the use of technology.

NEP 2020 seeks to reform higher education by enhancing access, promoting research and increasing flexibility. Multidisciplinary Education and Research Universities (MERUs) will be established, and institutions will be encouraged to adopt integrated curricula with flexible degrees that include multiple points of entry and exit and academic credit banks. The policy aims to increase the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education to 50 percent by 2035 from 26.3 percent in 2018 by improving infrastructure and expanding online education.

A unified regulatory body, the Higher Education Commission of India (HECI), will be established to simplify governance, accreditation, and funding. To promote research and innovation, the National Research Foundation (NRF) will be created to support cutting-edge research across all disciplines. Additionally, NEP 2020 encourages foreign universities to establish campuses in India and supports Indian institutions in expanding their global presence.
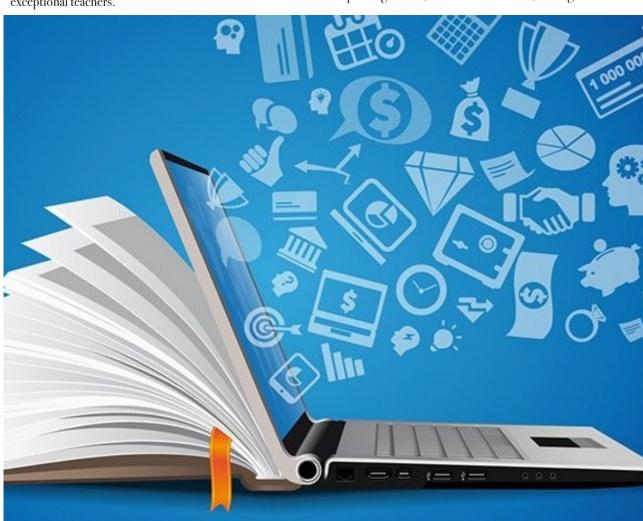
The policy emphasizes the integration of technology to bridge learning gaps and improve outcomes. Digital platforms such as DIKSHA and SWAYAM will be scaled up for online learning and teacher training. The National Educational Technology Forum (NETF) will be set up to facilitate the integration of innovation and technology in education. Blended learning, which merges online and offline modes, will be promoted to make education more accessible, especially in remote locations.

Teacher training and professional development are integral to NEP 2020. By 2030, a minimum four-year integrated B.Ed. degree will be required for teachers. Continuous Professional Development (CPD) will be implemented, requiring teachers to undergo 50 hours of training annually. The policy also provides for merit-based promotions and rewards to recognize exceptional teachers.



To equip students for employment, NEP 2020 incorporates vocational education from Grade 6 onwards. It envisions that 50 percent of students will be exposed to vocational training by 2025. Internships, apprenticeships, and vocational courses will be introduced to ensure that education remains industry-relevant.

The policy emphasizes equity and inclusion, focusing on marginalized groups such as girls, socio-economically disadvantaged populations, and differently-abled children. Special Education Zones will be created in areas with educational imbalances, and additional scholarships and infrastructure incentives will be provided to address these gaps.

Despite the ambitious goals of NEP 2020, several challenges must be addressed for successful implementation. Funding is a major concern; while the policy recommends that 6 percent of the GDP be allocated to education, the current expenditure is approximately 4.6 percent, making increased funding a priority. Teacher training will require upskilling millions of educators in new pedagogical methods and technology, demanding both significant investment and time.

Infrastructure development is also essential, particularly for expanding ECCE, vocational education, and digital connectivity in rural areas. Furthermore, effective implementation will require coordinated efforts between the central and state governments, as education is a concurrent subject.

If effectively implemented, NEP 2020 has the potential to transform India's education system. It promotes holistic development, empowering students with critical thinking, creativity, and practical skills. Its multidisciplinary approach will enhance the global competitiveness of Indian graduates. The emphasis on inclusivity will help narrow social gaps and empower marginalized communities, thereby fostering social mobility. In the long run, an educated workforce and research-driven innovation could significantly contribute to the country's economic growth.

It is concluded that NEP 2020 is a groundbreaking attempt at redesigning India's education system to address the challenges of a fast-changing world. By prioritizing inclusivity, flexibility and innovation, it seeks to raise a generation of learners who can drive India towards a knowledge economy. However, its success depends on strong implementation, adequate funding, and coordinated cooperation among stakeholders. As India embarks on this revolutionary journey, NEP 2020 holds the promise of creating a brighter, more inclusive educational landscape for generations to come.

*-The author serves as University Librarian*

> ## The policy focuses on preparing students for the global workforce with an emphasis on creativity, critical thinking and problem-solving

# NEP 2020: Transforming school education in India

**DR. RABIA NOOR**

NEP or National Education Policy 2020 has been a topic of discussion in educational institutions, of late. Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST) is no exception, which has made it mandatory to provide clarity on the policy to faculty, students and scholars from time to time. While NEP 2020 holds much significance in higher education, it is of equal importance at the school level.

The implementation of NEP 2020 in school education aims to transform India's education system by focusing on foundational literacy and educational structure. NEP 2020 brings a student-friendly, skills-oriented and future-ready approach to school education. It modernizes the Indian education system, making it more inclusive and holistic as well as in line with global educational standards.

There are several reasons as to why implementation of NEP 2020 at the school level can be seen as a positive step. Foremost, NEP 2020 is focussed on child-cantered and age-appropriate learning. It has replaced the previous 1986 policy and introduced a 5+3+3+4 system, emphasizing Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE). This new arrangement signifies the first part covering primary to second grade, the second part for third to fifth grade, the third part for sixth to eighth grade, and the final part for ninth to 12th grade.

The shift from the traditional 10+2 system to the 5+3+3+4 structure aligns with children's developmental stages. Policy makers as well as child experts believe that the emphasis on play-based and activity-based learning in early years supports better cognitive and emotional development. This approach is believed to leverage a child's natural inclination to explore and learn through hands-on experiences, thus fostering creativity, problem-solving skills and social-emotional growth.

Besides, there is a shift from rote learning to skill development in the NEP 2020, which renounces cramming facts and fosters curiosity and inquiry instead. To implement skill education from an early age, the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE)—India's largest national board with 30,634 affiliated schools—has undertaken some significant initiatives. For middle grades (VI-VIII), CBSE has introduced 12–15-hour skill modules on 33 subjects like data science, design thinking, mass media, coding and so on.

At the secondary and senior secondary level (grades IX-XII), students can opt for a skill subject as the 6th elective from a list of 42 subjects. These subjects promise better career benefits and employability opportunities for the students. Pertinently, there was a policy update on January 10, 2025, which allows students to replace the marks of an academic subject with the skill subject, in case they fail in any elective subject. This offers greater flexibility in their academic journey, while promoting conceptual critical thinking, creativity and understanding among students.

NEP 2020 stresses on reforms in assessment and examination system. It encourages formative assessments, peer reviews and self-assessment. It also reduces exam pressure and allows continuous tracking of progress, not just final scores. Moreover, the NEP-based curriculum offers holistic and multidisciplinary education. It integrates arts, sports, life skills, values and ethics with academics. It aims to create well-rounded individuals, and not just exam scorers.

Multilingualism and local language emphasis is another plus point. Teaching in the mother tongue or local language till grade five can make learning more accessible and inclusive, especially for rural and tribal children . NEP 2020 promotes digital literacy and use of technology in education, which in turn prepares students for the digital age and evolving job markets. It has also made possible early introduction of vocational skills, which aims to connect vocational and formal education. Students are supposed to be exposed to hands-on vocational training (for instance, gardening, coding, crafts, etc) right from the middle school. This builds real-world skills and encourages dignity of labour among students.

There is also a focus on foundational literacy and numeracy. Recognizing that many children lack basic reading and mathematical skills by grade three, NEP 2020 has introduced NIPUN Bharat to ensure universal foundational literacy. It is believed that early intervention helps prevent long-term learning gaps.

The bottom-line is NEP 2020 has addressed the problems in the school education system. It ensures quality early childhood care and education for all children, and emphasises on the significance of the same.

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# Financial Autonomy under NEP 2020

**SAMEER WAZIR**

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 marks a transformative shift in India's higher education landscape, placing financial autonomy at the heart of institutional reform. As a finance officer in an Indian university, I view this paradigm shift as a decisive step toward fostering innovation, global relevance, and fiscal accountability in our higher education institutions (HEIs).

Financial autonomy, as envisioned under NEP 2020, empowers HEIs to manage their own resources strategically, aligning financial planning with academic priorities. However, this transition calls not only for visionary leadership but also for skilled financial professionals who can manage complex, decentralized financial systems.

NEP 2020 reimagines HEIs as self-governing entities with the capability to generate and manage their own finances. The policy encourages diversification of income sources, moving beyond traditional government grants to explore alumni contributions, industry partnerships, endowments, and consultancy services. Importantly, it mandates the development of robust internal financial systems to ensure transparency and efficiency systems that can only be sustained through the presence of trained financial human resources.

The policy also allows institutions to set their own fee structures within a framework of equity and inclusion. While this provides flexibility for targeted investments in infrastructure and faculty development, it also underscores the need for careful oversight to prevent fee structures from becoming exclusionary. The role of finance officers becomes central here, to manage affordability alongside sustainability.

The autonomy granted under NEP 2020 opens new avenues for HEIs to become globally competitive. Freed from restrictive funding models, universities can adopt long-term strategies for academic and research excellence. This includes prioritizing investments in research and development, attracting international collaborations, and enhancing global rankings through outcome-based funding models guided by the proposed Higher Education Grants Council (HEGC).

**The autonomy granted under NEP 2020 opens new avenues for higher education institutions to become globally competitive**

Financial autonomy also facilitates the creation of entrepreneurial ecosystems within universities—through incubation centers, innovation hubs, and technology transfer offices. Institutions like the IITs and IIMs have already leveraged their autonomy to build sustainable financial ecosystems. Other HEIs can follow suit, provided they build a cadre of skilled financial professionals who understand institutional development, compliance, and fund mobilization.

# NEP 2020 and Native Language: Importance of education in mother tongue

**DR. RUHEELA HASSAN**

Mother tongue is the language that a person has grown up speaking from his/her early childhood. It is a person's native language. What we see all around the world is the use of either a major commercial language or a colonial language as the medium of instruction in schools. Maintaining your first language is critical to your identity and contributes to a positive self-concept.

The Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) reiterates that continuing to study your mother tongue after childhood helps you learn how to value your culture and heritage. For parents, keeping their first language alive at home teaches children to take pride in their culture and roots. Even the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has recommended that classes be taught in the community's mother tongue during the early years of primary school so that students can fully learn to read and write. During this time, they are also introduced to early mathematical concepts and other academic subjects.

In 1999, UNESCO proclaimed February 21 as International Mother Language Day to promote cultural diversity and multilingualism across the globe. Another research published in Economics of Education Review showed that when children were taught in primary schools with their mother tongue as the medium of instruction, it did improve their educational outcome.

## Benefits of teaching in native language

Educating children in their mother tongue will also build a strong home-school partnership in their learning. Parents will be able to participate in their child's education and make the experience of learning for the students more wholesome. It will also benefit the primary school teachers, as many of them find it difficult to express themselves in English, thus creating a knowledge deficit. Learning in a foreign language also brings a sense of alienation from one's own culture and heritage. Education in mother tongue will help the students get a better sense of their cultural background.

A survey by the People's Linguistic Survey of India (PLSI) found that India has lost around 220 languages in the last 50 years. UNESCO has also declared 197 Indian languages as 'endangered'. Various unscripted languages are particularly in danger of becoming extinct. When senior members of a tribe or community who speak such languages pass away, these languages often perish with them; too often, no concerted actions or measures are taken to preserve or record these rich languages/expressions of culture. So, teaching and learning in the mother tongue need to be integrated with school and higher education.

## National Education Policy 2020 and Mother Language

National Education Policy 2020 is India's third educatin policy after NEP 1968 and NEP 1986. The Union Cabinet has approved the new National Education Policy 2020 with an aim to introduce several changes in the Indian education system –



from the school to the college level. It recognizes that language is inextricably linked to art and culture. As per the policy, the tone, perception of experience, and familiarity (apnapan) inherent in conversations among speakers of a common language are a reflection and record of a culture. Culture is, thus, encased in our languages. Similarly, art, in the form of literature, plays, music, film, etc., cannot be fully appreciated without language. In order to preserve and promote culture, one must preserve and promote a culture's languages.

The NEP, 2020, gives a pathway to promote native languages. It suggests that wherever possible, the medium of instruction until at least Grade 5, but preferably till Grade 8 and beyond, will be the home language/mother tongue/local language/regional language. Thereafter, the home/local language shall continue to be taught as a language wherever possible. This will be followed by both public and private schools.

For each language listed in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution, academies will be established, composing of the country's leading scholars and native speakers, to develop simple yet precise terminology for contemporary concepts. These academies will also publish updated dictionaries regularly (analogous to the successful efforts for many other languages around the world).

The policy strongly suggests that all languages in India, and their associated arts and culture will be documented through a web-based platform/portal/wiki, to preserve endangered and all Indian languages and their associated rich local arts and culture. The new education policy also encourages scholarships to study languages and suggests that writing in native languages should be promoted.

It strongly recommends that teachers should be encouraged to use a bilingual approach, including bilingual teaching-learning materials, with those students whose home language may be different from the medium of instruction. For institutions, the policy recommends that high-quality textbooks, including in science, be made available in home languages/mother tongue. In cases where home language/mother tongue textbook material is not available, the language of transaction between teachers and students will remain the home language/mother tongue, wherever possible.

The education policy suggests a three-language formula for the educational institutions. It advises states to enter into bilateral agreements to hire teachers in large numbers from each other, to satisfy the three-language formula and also encourage the study of Indian languages across the country. However, it directs that no language will be imposed on any state. The policy also recommends that all efforts be made to create highquality bilingual science and math textbooks and materials, so that students can think and communicate about these subjects in both their home language and English. According to the policy, all efforts must be made early on to ensure that any gaps that exist between the language spoken by the child and the medium of teaching are bridged.

*-The author serves as Dean Outreach, IUST*

> **Parents will be able to participate in their child's education and make the experience of learning for the students more wholesome**

Despite its potential, financial autonomy poses significant challenges. Many universities lack the administrative and technical capacity to manage diverse funding streams. Smaller institutions risk financial instability if autonomy is not matched with capacity building. Without trained financial experts, the risks of mismanagement, lack of accountability, and prioritization of revenue over academic quality are real.

Affordability is another pressing concern. While NEP emphasizes scholarships and inclusion, implementing these initiatives requires meticulous financial planning and oversight. This makes the presence of competent finance teams non-negotiable.

To fully realize the promise of NEP 2020, HEIs must prioritize the recruitment and training of financial human resources. Universities should invest in financial leadership capable of developing sustainable models, managing institutional budgets, and ensuring accountability. Strengthening industry and alumni partnerships, and scaling financial aid through government schemes like the PM Vidya Lakshmi Yojana, must be key strategies—coordinated by capable finance professionals.

In conclusion, NEP 2020 offers Indian universities a powerful framework for financial independence. But this autonomy must be anchored in governance, equity, and skilled financial stewardship. With the right talent and systems in place, our universities can emerge as self-sustaining, globally competitive centers of excellence.

*-The author is Finance Officer, IUST*

# Design Your Own Degree: NEP's flexible approach to education

**PROF. JAVED HUSSAIN MIR/**

**DR. SHAHKAR AHMAD NAHVI/**

**DR. ASIF ALI BANKA**

Education sector policy makers, educators and parents often ask why our educated youth face learning and performance deficits as compared to the so-called advanced countries. Often, our students who are at the top of their classes or have excellent board exam scores invariably struggle to do well in career-determining competitive exams and job markets. One of the main reasons for this is that our traditional curriculum and teaching pedagogy fail to deliver what cognitive scientists call usable knowledge, i.e., knowledge not only for passing a test but knowledge that once learned, can be used in daily life and problem solving.

In response to this challenge, India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 calls for a fundamental shift in how we educate and empower our students, envisioning an approach that is multidisciplinary, innovative, and rooted in active and experiential learning. In 2023, the Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST) took a transformative step toward implementing NEP 2020 through the launch of an innovative four-year BS (Design Your Own Degree) (DYOD) program. The DYOD methodology is an ambitious response for reshaping the traditional model of higher education. It allows students to customize their academic pathways, making learning more relevant, hands-on, and aligned with the evolving demands of the workforce.

At the heart of the DYOD initiative is the use of problem-based and project-based learning (PBL) in the pedagogy. Unlike traditional methods that emphasize memorization and recall, PBL encourages inquiry, critical thinking, teamwork, and creativity. Through tackling real-world problems, students learn to apply theoretical knowledge, collaborate across disciplines and build the competencies needed to navigate complex learning and working environments. In doing so, DYOD goes beyond merely transferring knowledge — it transforms students into active, engaged learners and future-ready professionals.

However, transitioning from traditional pedagogies to active learning has posed significant challenges. For many students and teachers, accustomed to lectures and textbook instruction, adapting to PBL requires a profound shift in mindset and practice. To encounter this, instructors must learn to design and facilitate open-ended inquiries, assess learning outcomes that are process-oriented and create opportunities that foster collaboration and creativity. Meanwhile, students must move from passive reception of information to active engagement and problem-solving — a shift that demands motivation, adaptability and resilience.

Several other challenges have emerged in implementing the BS (DYOD) program. Firstly, there is an insufficient supply of PBL-oriented curricula and case studies that are relevant to the local context of Kashmir and the wider Indian experience. Secondly, many faculty members require specialized training in PBL design and facilitation, as well as access to peer learning opportunities.

Thirdly, aligning traditional assessment practices with the dynamic nature of PBL remains a work in progress, making it challenging to measure competencies like critical thinking, problem solving, teamwork, and creativity. Perceived or real concerns about the DYOD mismatch with the needs of current competitive examination regimes and/or job markets pose significant hurdles.

To overcome these constraints, IUST is focusing on building institutional capacity for PBL, including targeted faculty training and collaborative curriculum design. Developing and sharing localized case studies can support teachers in making connections between theory and practice. Creating peer learning platforms will enable faculty to share best practices and adapt PBL methods across disciplines. Strong institutional support and incentives for pedagogical innovation, combined with continuous monitoring and feedback, can help embed NEP 2020 ideals more deeply within the BS (DYOD) program and the mainstream Four-Year Undergraduate Program (FYUGP) of IUST.

By strengthening DYOD and systematically adopting its pedagogies through the FYUGP, IUST aims to operationalize NEP 2020 to its fullest over the next three years. It aims to create an educational ecosystem that readies students for the 21st century's complexities and opportunities, fostering relevance, holistic development and transformative learning.

**NEP 2020 calls for a fundamental shift in how we educate and empower our students, envisioning an approach that is multidisciplinary, innovative, and rooted in active and experiential learning**

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# Manuscriptology in Vision of NEP 2020

### DR. AAMIR HABIB/ GHAZI NAZIR NAQASH

South Asia's manuscript heritage, a tapestry of linguistic and intellectual richness, bears witness to millennia of cultural and intellectual growth. Thousands of manuscripts etched on palm leaves, birch bark, paper, and other materials stand as silent custodians of the subcontinent's vast knowledge systems, encompassing religion, science, philosophy, arts, and literature. Yet this invaluable legacy faces the risk of neglect owing to the scarcity of scholars equipped to decipher and interpret these ancient texts. The National Education Policy–2020 offers a timely and significant opportunity to revitalize manuscript studies and embed this crucial field within the mainstream of Indian higher education.

Clause 22.16 of NEP-2020 affirms the need to expand institutions devoted to studying classical languages and literature, with explicit attention to the collection, preservation, translation, and scholarly engagement with the multitude of unexplored manuscripts. This marks a critical shift from passive preservation to the creation of a dynamic scholarly ecosystem where manuscripts are rigorously studied, interpreted, and contextualized for contemporary relevance. Strengthening institutes dedicated to classical and regional languages is central to this effort. By ensuring systematic training for new cohorts of students, particularly in the study of manuscripts and their connections with wider fields of knowledge, NEP-2020 addresses the pressing shortage of trained manuscriptologists.

The discipline of manuscriptology, encompassing palaeography, codicology, critical editing, and conservation, requires an inherently interdisciplinary approach. NEP-2020's call to integrate classical language institutes with universities, while safeguarding their autonomy, reflects a deep understanding of this necessity. Such integration will foster robust multi- and interdisciplinary programmes, recognizing that meaningful engagement with manuscripts demands expertise not only in

## NEP 2020 offers a timely and significant opportunity to revitalize manuscript studies and embed this crucial field within the mainstream of Indian higher education

linguistics and history but also in religion, art history, material sciences, and technological methods essential for dating and conservation.

Equally important is the policy's commitment to research, translation, and interpretation. The proposed establishment of a new institution for languages, along with dedicated national institutes for classical languages within university settings, signals a structural advancement. These centres, in collaboration with rejuvenated language departments, are envisioned as hubs for systematic inquiry into manuscript content. The long-overlooked task of translation is here restored to prominence, as countless manuscripts remain unrendered and inaccessible. The planned translation centres are designed to bridge this gap, rendering ancient knowledge intelligible to the modern scholarly community and the public alike. This initiative promises to enhance not only academic discourse but also global appreciation of South Asia's intellectual heritage.

In essence, NEP-2020 redefines manuscript studies from a specialized pursuit to a matter of global academic significance. By affirming the worth of these silent guardians and investing in the expertise required to unlock their wisdom, the policy lays the foundation for a future where South Asia's documentary legacy informs modern research, enriches cultural consciousness, and contributes meaningfully to the ongoing global dialogue of civilizations. The National Research Foundation's commitment to fostering excellence in this domain underscores the depth and ambition of this transformative vision.

In this transformative spirit, the International Centre for Spiritual Studies at IUST has initiated efforts to preserve and translate rare manuscripts of religio-historical and literary importance. The Centre aspires to emerge as a locus for safeguarding and disseminating this priceless documentary wealth, contributing to the broader revival of India's manuscript legacy as envisioned in NEP-2020.

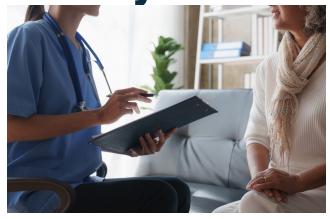*-The authors serve as Assistant Professors at International Centre for Spiritual Studies, IUST*

# Empowering Nursing Education Through NEP 2020: A Pathway to Holistic Healthcare

### SYED SHAHID SIRAJ

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, a landmark reform in India's educational landscape, envisions a transformative shift from content-heavy learning to competency-based, holistic development. While the policy broadly covers various domains, one of its most promising but less-discussed implications lies in the realm of nursing education–a discipline that not only demands clinical precision but also moral resilience, cultural sensitivity, and lifelong adaptability.

Over the decades, Nursing in India has grown in numbers but continues to face systemic challenges, including rigid curricula, limited interdisciplinary exposure and a heavy emphasis on rote-based knowledge. However, NEP 2020 offers a breath of fresh air by promoting flexibility, multidisciplinary learning and value-based education, all of which align seamlessly with the evolving demands of nursing in a post-pandemic world.

One of the policy's core tenets—integration of vocational education into mainstream learning, offers great promise for nursing students. By encouraging clinical exposure and hands-on learning from the early stages, NEP paves the way for producing practice-ready nurses rather than theory-bound graduates. Moreover, the emphasis on credit-based systems and the academic bank of credits provides students with the freedom to learn at their own pace. Students can transfer credits between institutions easily. They can mix courses from different disciplines. It is particularly relevant and beneficial to nurses who wish to branch into fields such as public health, research, psychology, or health administration.

## By encouraging clinical exposure and hands-on learning from the early stages, NEP paves the way for producing practice-ready nurses rather than theory-bound graduates

Another noteworthy aspect is the focus on regional languages and cultural relevance in professional education. This move holds the potential to improve healthcare communication in rural and semi-urban India, where language barriers often compromise the quality of care. For instance, a nurse trained in local language will not just become a caregiver but a bridge between modern medicine and indigenous understanding.

# NEP 2020: A Vision for the Future of Education in India

**UMAR AFZAL DAR**

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is a comprehensive policy document released by the Government of India in July 2020, outlining the vision and priorities for the education sector in the country. It replaces the previous National Policy on Education, which was last revised in 1986. One of the key goals of NEP 2020 is to provide inclusive and equitable education for all students, regardless of their socio-economic background or geographic location. To achieve this, the NEP proposes several major reforms in the education system.

In the domain of higher education, the NEP envisions the creation of a unified system with a single regulatory body for both public and private institutions. It advocates for the promotion of research and innovation and suggests the establishment of a National Research Foundation to support these initiatives. Teacher education is another major focus, with the policy stressing the need for high-quality teacher training and continuous professional development. It recommends the development of National Professional Standards for Teachers and the use of technology to enhance teacher education. The policy also proposes the creation of a National Teachers' Portal to provide access to teaching resources and support systems.

Language is treated as a vital component in the NEP. The policy acknowledges the significance of multilingual education in fostering both national unity and cultural diversity. It promotes the use of mother tongue or regional languages as the medium of instruction until at least Grade 5, and encourages the study of Indian and classical languages.

Several anticipated benefits emerge from the NEP 2020. It supports a flexible and multidisciplinary curriculum that aims to nurture the overall development of students while preparing them for the 21st century. Students will have greater freedom to explore diverse subjects and build a broad skill set aligned with their interests and aspirations. The policy promotes experiential and hands-on learning methods, including project-based and inquiry-based approaches, which aim to enhance student engagement and develop critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. It seeks to improve teacher quality by introducing high standards for training and professional development, thereby ensuring better educational outcomes for students.

NEP 2020 also aims to widen access to higher education by increasing the number of colleges and universities and offering flexible and diverse degree programs. This is expected to open up more opportunities for students across various socio-economic backgrounds. The policy is particularly focused on increasing access and equity in education, especially for students from disadvantaged communities. It envisions expanding school infrastructure in underserved areas and proposes the establishment of a National Scholarship Portal to offer financial assistance where needed. In doing so, it aims to reduce educational barriers and promote social equity. Furthermore, the NEP acknowledges the importance of preserving India's rich linguistic and cultural heritage by encouraging the use of mother tongue and the integration of cultural studies at all levels of education.

Despite these advantages, there are significant challenges associated with implementing NEP 2020. One of the biggest concerns is funding and the availability of resources. The policy demands substantial investments in infrastructure, institution-building, and student support systems, and it remains uncertain whether the required financial commitment will be met. There is also a pressing issue of teacher shortages, especially in rural and remote regions. While the policy calls for increased recruitment and training, attracting and retaining qualified educators in all areas may prove difficult.

Resistance to change could also pose a problem. The policy proposes a paradigm shift in how education is structured and delivered in India, and it may face opposition from educators and institutions accustomed to the current system. Effective communication and stakeholder engagement will be crucial to overcoming this resistance. The sheer scale and scope of the proposed reforms make implementation a complex task that requires coordination among various government agencies, educational institutions, teachers, parents, and students. Achieving uniform and consistent implementation across the country will be a significant challenge.

Another area of concern is the development of appropriate systems for student assessment and institutional accountability. As the NEP promotes flexible, interdisciplinary curricula and encourages non-traditional, hands-on learning methods, it may become more difficult to design assessments that accurately measure student learning. It will be essential to develop new tools and mechanisms to ensure that learning outcomes are tracked effectively and that institutions are held accountable for educational progress.

The future of NEP 2020 will depend on several factors, including political will, financial support, stakeholder collaboration, and the capacity to implement complex reforms at scale. While it is difficult to predict exact outcomes, the potential of the policy is undeniable. If implemented successfully, NEP 2020 could transform the Indian education system and significantly improve the quality of education at all levels. Its focus on skill development, critical thinking, and holistic education aligns well with the needs of a rapidly changing global landscape. Ultimately, the NEP is a bold and forward-looking document with the potential to usher in a new era of learning, equity, and opportunity for learners across India.

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> ## NEP 2020 advocates for the promotion of research and innovation and suggests the establishment of a National Research Foundation to support these initiatives

NEP 2020 also underscores teacher training and faculty development, which are essential in nursing education. The rapid technological and procedural advancements in healthcare require nurse educators to be perpetual learners themselves. By institutionalizing Continuous Professional Development (CPD), the policy ensures that nursing instructors are not only academically updated but also emotionally and pedagogically equipped to nurture the next generation of compassionate caregivers.

Perhaps the most promising shift lies in the emphasis on research and innovation. For far too long, nursing research in India has been viewed as an academic formality rather than a tool for real-time problem-solving.

NEP's call for fostering research from undergraduate levels and setting up research-intensive institutions could finally provide nursing with the scholarly recognition it deserves.

As a nurse educator, I see NEP 2020 not just as a policy but as an opportunity to reimagine nursing education in a way that is student-centric, practice-driven, and socially responsive. The future nurse is no longer just a bedside caregiver but a policy advocate, community leader, and knowledge producer.

It is time for nursing institutions, policymakers, and educators to seize this opportunity, align with NEP's progressive vision, and shape a workforce ready for India's 21st-century healthcare aspirations.

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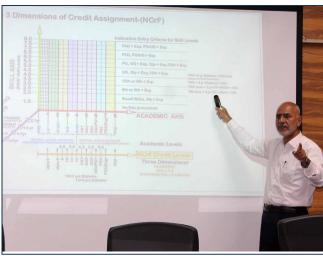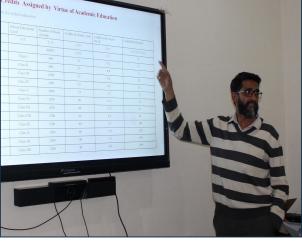
# IUST holds seminar series on NEP 2020

Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST) has been actively running a comprehensive seminar series on National Education Policy (NEP), 2020, so as to foster a deep understanding of the policy among teaching and non-teaching staff of the varsity. Launched by Vice Chancellor, IUST, Prof. Shakil A. Romshoo, the university-wide series features discussions on flexible curricula, skill education modules, student-centric innovation initiatives and other aspects of the policy. The series also aims at effective execution of the NEP 2020.

PHOTOS by *Zahoor Ahmad Gilkar/IUST*