



National Education Policy 2020: Escorting in a New Digital Era

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ABSTRACT

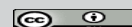
Circumstances changing with time give rise to new thinking and discovery. The Covid-19 pandemic has taught us that it is necessary to have alternative methods to run the country's proceedings in a smooth manner even in difficult times. When traditional methods of education were disrupted during the pandemic, digital mode was adopted for quality education. Accordingly, the National Education Policy 2020 acknowledges the significance of digital technology in view of the potential risks and threats like Covid-19. Policy recommends suitable bodies, schemes, educational apps, digital infrastructure etc. in view of digital empowerment. In this regard, NEP 2020 advocates that digital platforms should be expanded to offer quality education for all. ICT based education has to be promoted in the face of present and future challenges. The present paper describes the digital aspects of the National Education Policy 2020 and shows its significance in educational sector.

Keywords: Covid-19, educational apps, National Education Policy, education

Education develops our knowledge, perception and sensitivity and it is the means of our physical, mental and emotional development. Education is committed to nurture each individual, develop and share its potential and help in the all-round development. The objectives of an educational institution can be accomplished by effectively utilizing and developing its human resources. The future of any nation depends on its educational level, education patterns and education system. According to Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2018), "Education trains learners with a spirit of innovation and determination, and helps in building lifelong skills for their all-round development."

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In this era of digitalization, the quality level of education is also based on digital empowerment. National policies related to education were formulated keeping in mind the objective that education should be accessible to all. There is no doubt that as per the current scenario, the policy makers have accomplished the National Education Policy 2020 in such a way that digital education can be accessible to each and every corner of the country. The main objective of national educational policy 2020 was to promote knowledge, skills and value, with the focus on enabling each and every student, as a good human being and good citizen, for substantial contribution to the development of our country (Saxena & G. S.). The new National Education Policy 2020, released by the Government of India, emphasizes that every child in India should be nurtured through online education. The National Education Policy 2020 recommends to implement online adult education, regional e-content development and digital education from primary to higher educational levels (National Education Policy, 2020). Considering the supremacy of new technology in education, NEP 2020 targets to entirely transform the Indian education system and declare India as a ‘Global Knowledge Superpower’ by 2030. This policy is 21st century’s first education policy after the National Education Policy of 1986 and the amendment in the Education Policy of 1992. Access, equity, quality, affordability and accountability are the five pillars of the National Education Policy 2020. This education policy has been equipped according to the needs of the students of the 21st century. NEP 2020 is ensuring an intellectual, social and scientific conducive work environment with the concept of the use of digital technology in the teaching-learning process. NEP 2020 motivates educational institutions from lower to higher level to go digital and adopt online approach. It emphasizes on making the curriculum holistic, multi-disciplinary and flexible. The National Education Policy 2020 has made its recommendations keeping in view the importance of active participation of students in all spheres of life such as social, digital, political and economic etc. Recognizing the intricacy of the fact that education is connected to practically all walks of life, NEP 2020 is set to bring about a positive and all-round change in developmental sectors by leveraging digital technologies at all levels of education. Every nation is facing unprecedented challenges in the field of social, economic and environmental, education is the only means through which globalization and technological development can be harnessed in a better way. Realizing the importance of emerging digital technology, various important provisions have been made in the National Education Policy 2020 with the aim of improving the education system at all levels.

Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing (DIKSHA)

Digital infrastructure for knowledge sharing is a National level platform for teachers through which education is imparted across the nation in distance mode and which is beneficial for both teacher and students. It leverages the present day technology keeping the teacher as the focal point. The dependence on online resources during the Covid-19 pandemic has led the government to set up digital units to boost up e-education in schools and higher educational institutions. Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing (DIKSHA) is responsible for digital-content and capacity building. In the National Education Policy 2020, high quality level of teaching-learning is being promoted through online integrated system in educational institutions. According to Jha, *et al.* (2021), “The National Education Policy draws

attention to the digital set-up of teaching-learning process and promotes e-learning by focusing on online learning platform, assessment, digital resources and infrastructure.” Online, offline and hybrid mode will be modified by creating digital infrastructure. A digital infrastructure should be created to disseminate various virtual educational platforms through which online education should be imparted (Wao, A. A., & Wao, A. A., 2021). The National Education Policy 2020 recognizes the need to create a well-developed and interoperable public digital infrastructure in the Indian education system. Multiple online platforms and point solutions can leverage this infrastructure to reform device infiltration in India. NEP advocates the collaborative use of machine learning, artificial intelligence, block chains, smart boards, adaptive computer devices, etc. classroom learning for student’s development. National Education Technology Forum (NETF) is emphasizing on promotion of free exchange of ideas and evaluation, planning and learning etc. through digital infrastructure. Digital infrastructure has proved to be a boon for groups who were deprived of education during the pandemic, such as disadvantaged groups, students from rural public educational institutions and small private institutions, etc. This framework will ensure equitable use of digital technology in educational institutions across the nation. Using digital infrastructure, every educational institution in India will contribute towards fulfilling the grand vision of Digital India.

Virtual Teaching Platforms and Means

Every teacher should be trained, skilled and qualified because the teacher is the future builder of each nation. NEP 2020 advocates expansion of e-learning applications and platforms based on modern technology to improve teaching learning process. It recommends the provision of modern technological tools to the teachers so that every teacher becomes familiar with the digital mode of teaching. Keeping in view the situation arising during Covid-19, it is necessary that the teachers should be made aware of the new educational technology. NEP 2020 ensures that a digital platform full of educational resources is given to teachers and towards which teachers can work with full devotion. Authorised modern educational platforms like PM e-vidya, Swayam portal, Nishtha, Diksha and Swayam Prabha TV etc. will be helpful to every teacher to provide systematic, comprehensible, helpful tools for monitoring student progress. The National Education Policy recommends making suitable digital tools and apps for students with special needs (Kasinathan, 2020). As the Covid-19 pandemic has shown that digital devices provide two-way video and audio, similar tools are needed in the current education system.

Provision of Virtual Laboratory

Virtual Labs essential for creating digital infrastructure in educational institutions according to NEP 2020. With the expansion of online educational platforms through virtual labs, students can be given practical e-learning experience. Moreover, there is a dire need to provide online learning facilities to the students and teachers. Currently used online educational resources like Diksha, Swayam, e-Gyankosh and Swayamprabha will be leveraged in setting up virtual labs. It is mandatory for every student and teacher to have proper awareness about use of appropriate digital tools and cyber security. Provision

of online education will be made through suitable digital tools to socially and economically deprived students.

Content Formation, Digital Depository and Broadcasting

It is proposed in the National Education Policy 2020 that educational institutions of every level will keep a digital archive related to the subject matter. Creating publicly available online content, learning games, virtual reality etc. through digital repositories that can be rated by users for effectiveness and quality. It will be mandatory to include all the dimensions of the curriculum under the digital depository. It will be mandatory to include all the dimensions of the curriculum under the digital depository. The content will be created and disseminated through digital arrangements including student-friendly software, fun and learning apps, content related to Indian art and culture with usage of various languages. Proper guidelines will be followed to produce and broadcast this online coursework. A systematic and reliable backup plan will be provided for broadcasting of e-content to students and teachers. Learners will also be responsible for rating the effectiveness and quality of content based on e-learning.

Hybrid Learning

Face to face teaching-learning process is as important as digitalization in the education system. NEP 2020 clearly states that while promoting the use of digital platforms in educational institutions for learning, the importance of the traditional method of teaching should not be ignored. Accordingly, to make the teaching-learning process effective, blended learning models should be introduced for different subjects. Effective models of blended learning suitable for various subjects will be developed and expanded at all level educational institutions. The National Education Policy 2020 includes online and blended learning in the educational set-up for the development of the professional skills of teachers and cognitive development of students. There are limitations in online/digital education of certain disciplines such as the performing arts and sciences, which can be partially overcome by innovative measures. To make e-learning effective, it is essential to blend it with pragmatic and activity-based learning, which will help to develop the cognitive, social, affective and psychomotor domains of learning process in a balanced manner.

Virtual Mode of Assessment and Examination

NEP 2020 recommends digitally designing and implementing assessment frameworks that take place in the teaching-learning process. Competencies, Rubrics, Portfolio, Standardized Assessment and Assessment Analysis NEP 2020 advocates creation of all these through online platform. Online assessments and examinations are essential in developing modern technological skills in both teachers and students. National Assessment regulator PARAKH (Performance Assessment, Review, and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development), Board of School Education, NEET (National Eligibility Cum Entrance Test), (NTA) (National Testing Agency) NTA etc. adequate bodies will be responsible for designing and implementing the online assessment process. Every aspect of examinations and assessment including

proficiency, portfolio, rubrics, standardized process of assessment and assessment analysis will be enhanced by digital technology. With the change in pedagogy, online assessment demands a unique approach (Sheergugri and Raj, 2022). Emphasis will be given on research to develop new methods of educational assessment and examination by using digital technologies.

Teacher Training

There is a provision in the National Education Policy 2020 that teachers of educational institutions will receive training to become top level online content creators. It will be ensured that every teacher can be fully digitally trained and certified. With all the virtual resources and training teachers need to upskill. It cannot be taken for granted that an effective teacher in a traditional classroom will be digitally enriched and will prove to be an effective teacher in an online classroom as well. Educational activities like change in pedagogy, creating online content, online assessment and examination will require a specific approach. According to Parsad *et al.* (2023) “The National Education Policy 2020 recommends building a robust teacher training and support system that provides teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively implement the new curriculum”. Each teacher will need a specific training to conduct online exams on a large scale, limit the types of questions asked, deal with networks, power cuts and prevent unethical practices. Teachers will undergo rigorous training in creating e-content, using online tools and digital apps, and virtual creation of student-centred pedagogy. Emphasis will be placed on the role of the teacher for student-teacher interaction and their active participation in online learning.

Combating the Digital Divide

An important dimension of the National Education Policy 2020 is digitization from primary to higher level of education which encourages lifelong learning and flexibility (Muralidharan *et al.* 2022). Digital access to a large part of India’s population is extremely limited due to various geographical, economic, social and cultural conditions. There should be public ownership of ICT infrastructure and resources for universal and equal access to education widely (Vermeulen *et al.* 2017). Existing suitable digital platforms such as TV and civic radio will be extensively used for online education delivery and outreach to these disadvantaged groups. Various educational programs will be conducted 24 × 7 in different languages on these online platforms as per the requirement of the students. It should be ensured that online content is available in all Indian languages. It will be necessary to make the digital content accessible to the teachers and students through suitable resources as per their convenience.

Research and Innovations

Research based on online/digital education will be encouraged and digital technology will be promoted in the educational sector. The provision of National Research Foundation (NRF) given in National Education 2020 will be responsible for creating a qualitative environment in the field of research. The National Research Council aims to enhance the R&D agenda by creating a research ecosystem for government, universities, research institutes and businesses (Saxena & Kanwar). Researches will

play an important role in using technologies for online teaching-learning process and setting standards of pedagogy by suitable bodies like National Education Technology Forum (NETF). Priority will be given to researches on various aspects of educational technology such as teacher's training, professional development, teaching-learning and evaluation process etc. so that necessary reforms can be made.

CONCLUSION

A historic change is expected in Indian education system under the provisions given in the National Education Policy 2020. Digitization in education is a dynamic initiative and to implement the objectives of National Education Policy 2020, qualified and specialized connoisseurs will be required. Keeping in view all the dimensions of diversity, complexity, geography and modernization in a country like India, there is a need for more investment in building open, interoperable and developed digital infrastructure in the education sector. To meet the needs of e-learning at all educational level, the policy would require a dedicated unit aimed at creation of digital infrastructure for knowledge sharing, implementation of online educational content and assessment etc. Experts are needed to guide the rapid development of digital technology and provide high quality e-learning. Experts related to education, administrative officials, ICT experts, digital assessor and e-governance etc. will be able to incorporate digitization in education. Recognizing the importance of digital technology in the education sector, the Indian authorities are further encouraging it. ICT based education has given a new direction to the entire education system through revolutionary changes. Securing digital infrastructure, enhancing digital skills and promoting digital security in educational institutions is an important goal of the new National Education Policy 2020. The digital norms set out in the policy will enable India to foster a stronger society and knowledge economy by strengthening educational technology. Extensive use of digital technology in teaching-learning process will be helpful in reducing language differences, promoting inclusive education, educational administration and management etc. It is expected that this National Education Policy will take India as a world power in the future. National education policy 2020 based on knowledge, technology and modernity will definitely contribute in the development of the country. The five pillars and objectives of the education policy will complement each other, which will inspire the Digital India campaign.

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