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Five Years of the National Education Policy: A Critical Review

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National Education Policy released on 29th July 2020 represented a paradigm shift in restructuring the education system in India, targeting the reform of the existing system to make it more inclusive, multidisciplinary, and skill-based. The policy, which includes promises such as early childhood care reforms, overall curriculum redesign, digital inclusion, and multilingual education, has yet to deliver on its promises with mixed outcomes. It is these reforms that are considered essential in enabling and empowering the vision that guides so much of what is set before the students today. This article is a critical review of the policy, pointing out the effective interventions as well as the current challenges. It highlights the disparities and revenue limitations between the Centre and states, and the institutional inertia that has been impeding progress in a broad exchange. It is also an attempt to introspect on the use of the public consultation process, organisation of governance and the changing political influence on education reform in India.

The preceding National Policy on Education, introduced in 1986 and revised in 1992, had lost track of the requirements of a dynamic society in the 21st century. As the needs for innovation, globalisation, and all-inclusive development emerged and intensified, the leaders of all fields demanded a paradigm shift. One of the biggest consultation processes in the history of Indian policy involved educators, students, researchers, policymakers, as well as civil society, which formed the basis of the National Education Policy—2020 (NEP—2020). Such a participatory framework provided the policy with a firm democratic background and the feeling of ownership, as it closed the dimensions between reality and hope on the ground. The NEP 2020 has been drafted to reform the learning systems and help in reconstituting and setting a new academic agenda in a fast-changing socio-economic and technological environment.

The vision of NEP-2020 is to have an education system whereby creativity, critical thinking and ethical bindings are developed at all levels within an education system. The policy aims to reform curricula in support of diminishing rote learning, encouraging vocational and interdisciplinary studies and promoting multilingualism. The central concern of democratizing education, which has always been there, is the drive to regional, gender, caste and income equity in education. Such a

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