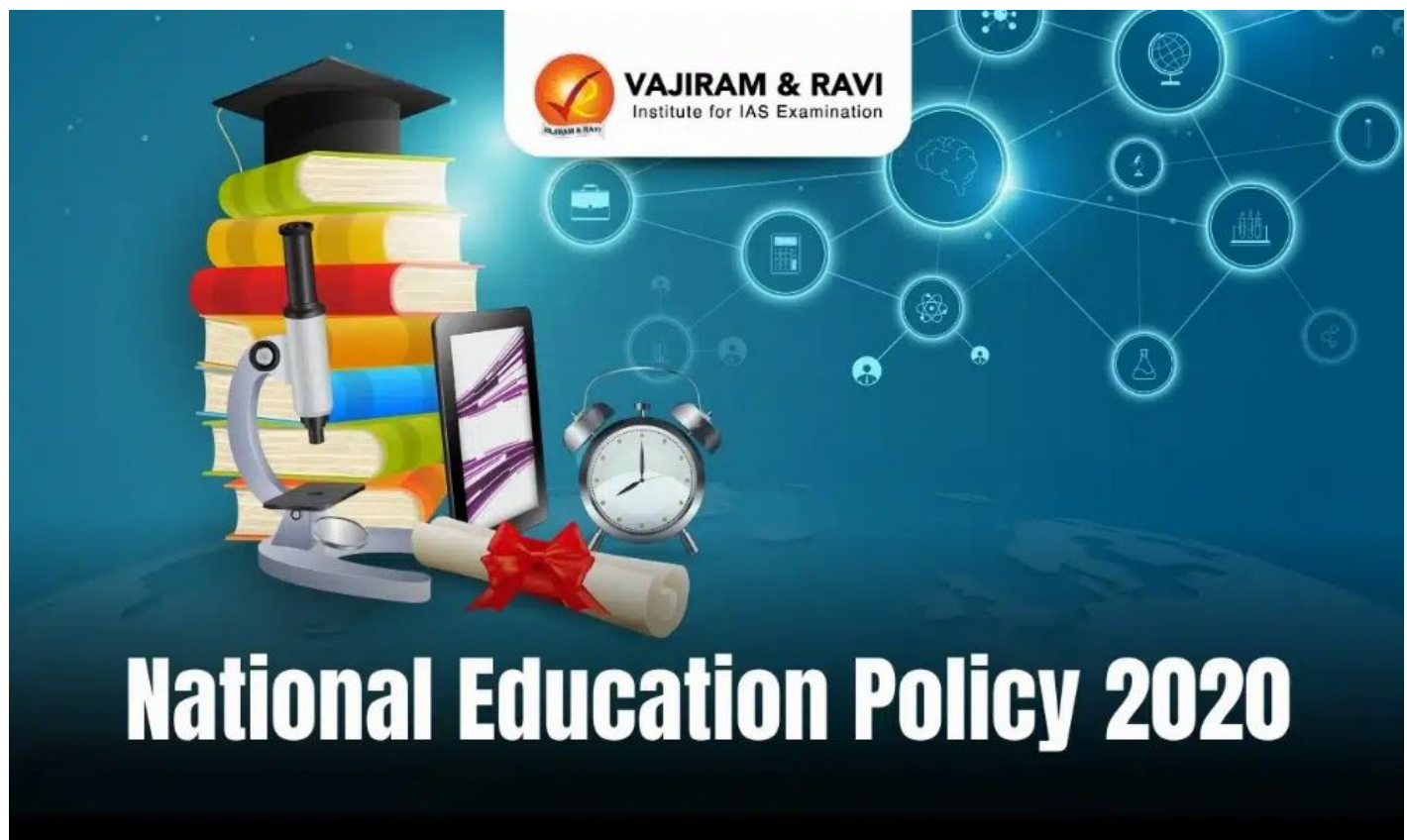


National Education Policy 2020, UPSC Notes

July 11, 2026 • vajiramandravi.com



What is National Education Policy 2020?

The new National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is the first education policy of the 21st century in India, which replaces the previous **National Policy on Education (NPE) 1986**.

- The Ministry of Education formed a committee under **Dr. K Kasturirangan**, which outlined this new policy.
- The National Education Policy 2020 proposes various reforms in school and higher education, including technical education, that are suited to 21st-century needs.
- 5 foundational pillars of NEP 2020: **Access, Equity, Quality, Affordability, and Accountability**.
- This policy is aligned with the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**.
- It aims to transform India into a vibrant knowledge society and global knowledge superpower by making both school and college education more **holistic, flexible, and multidisciplinary** and aimed at bringing out the unique capabilities of each student.

How is NEP 2020 different from the earlier policies?

The **National Policy on Education (NPE)** was first formulated in **1968**, based on the recommendations of the Kothari Commission. The **NPE1986** focussed on providing education to all sections of society, promoting primary education, and establishing open universities. Later, the **Plan of Action (POA)1992** had special emphasis on early childhood care and education and the universalization of elementary education.

The NEP 2020 stands apart and marks a departure from the earlier policies on the following grounds.

- **Focus on holistic development:** By emphasizing on critical thinking, discussion, and analytical learning to enrich India's talent and human resource pool.
- **Integration of vocational education:** The policy recognizes the importance of vocational education and aims to integrate it with mainstream education.
- **Emphasis on technology-enabled learning:** The new education policy recognizes the importance of technology in education and encourages the use of digital tools and platforms to enhance the learning experience.
- **Promotion of multilingualism along with the right to choose:** The new policy emphasizes the importance of multilingualism and encourages the teaching of regional languages alongside English and Hindi with the much-needed flexibility.
- **Flexible and multidisciplinary curriculum:** NEP 2020 offers subject selection, software training in schools, transfer of credits, multiple entries, and exit system to allow for more internal autonomy to institutions.

What are the targets set under NEP 2020?

- Universalization of education from **Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)** to Secondary Education by 2030, aligning with SDG 4.
- Attaining **Foundational Learning & Numeracy** Skills through National Mission by 2025.
- 100% **GER** in Pre-School to Secondary Level by 2030.
- 50% GER in Higher Education by 2035.
- Bring back 2 Crore children to the mainstream through the open schooling system.
- Teachers to be prepared for assessment reforms by 2023
- **Inclusive & Equitable Education System** by 2030.

What are the provisions of NEP 2020?

School Education

- **Ensuring Universal Access at all levels of school education**
 - NEP 2020 emphasizes ensuring **universal access to school education** at all levels, from preschool to secondary.
- **Early Childhood Care & Education with new curriculum and pedagogical structure**
 - With emphasis on Early Childhood Care and Education, the **10+2** structure of school curricula will be replaced by a **5+3+3+4** curricular structure.

- This will bring the hitherto uncovered age group of 3-6 years under the school curriculum, which has been recognized globally as the crucial stage for the development of the mental faculties of a child.

Existing structure	Proposed structure
Not covered (ages 3-6)	Foundational stage 3 years of pre-primary (ages 3-6) + 2 years of Class 1-2 (ages 6-8)
Primary and Secondary stage Class 1-10 (ages 6-16)	Preparatory stage Class 3-5 (ages 8-11)
Higher Secondary stage Class 11-12 (ages 16-18)	Middle stage Class 6-8 (ages 11-14)
	Secondary stage Class 9-12 (ages 14-18)

- **Attaining Foundational Literacy and Numeracy**

- As an urgent and necessary prerequisite to learning, NEP 2020 calls for setting up of a **National Mission on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy**.

- **Reforms in school curricula and pedagogy**

- Students will have increased **flexibility** and choice of subjects.
- There will be **no rigid separations** between arts and sciences, between curricular and extracurricular activities, and between vocational and academic streams.
- **Vocational education** will start in schools from the **6th** grade and include internships.

- **Teacher training and management**

- The existing B.Ed. programme for teacher training will be replaced by a four-year integrated programme with high-quality content, pedagogy, and practical training.
- A **national curriculum framework for teacher education** will be formulated by the National Council for Teacher Education(NCTE) in consultation with NCERT.

- **Multilingualism and the power of language**

- The policy has emphasized the **mother tongue** as the medium of instruction until **Grade 5**, but preferably till **Grade 8** and beyond.
- **Sanskrit** to be offered at all levels of school and higher education as an option for students, including in the **three-language formula**.

- **Assessment and Accreditation**

- A new National Assessment Centre-**Performance Assessment, Review, and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development** (PARAKH) will be set up as a standard-setting body.

Higher Education

- **Holistic multidisciplinary education**

- The policy envisages broad-based, **multi-disciplinary**, holistic undergraduate education with flexible curricula, creative combinations of subjects, integration of **vocational education**, and **multiple entry and exit** points with appropriate certification.
- An **Academic Bank of Credit** is to be established for digitally storing academic credits earned from different HEIs.
- The **National Research Foundation** will be created as an apex body for fostering a strong research culture and building research capacity across higher education.
- **Regulation**
 - **Higher Education Commission of India (HECI)** will be an overarching umbrella body for higher education, excluding medical and legal education.
- **Technology in education**
 - An autonomous body, the **National Educational Technology Forum (NETF)**, will be created to provide a platform for the free exchange of ideas on the use of technology to enhance learning, assessment, planning, and administration.
- **Promotion of Indian languages**
 - NEP recommends setting up an **Indian Institute of Translation and Interpretation (IITI), National Institute (or Institutes) for Pali, Persian, and Prakrit, strengthening of Sanskrit and all language departments in HEIs.**
- **Internationalization of Higher Education**
 - High-performing Indian universities will be encouraged to set up campuses in other countries.
 - Similarly, selected top global universities will be permitted to operate in India.

Other Recommendations

- **Financing education:**
 - The NEP reaffirmed the commitment of spending **6% of GDP** as public investment in education.
- **Adult education**
 - The Policy aims to achieve 100% youth and adult literacy.
 - A **national curriculum framework for adult education** will be developed to cover five broad areas:
 - **Foundational literacy and numeracy**
 - **Critical life skills** (such as financial and digital literacy)
 - **Vocational skills development**
 - **Basic education** (equivalent of middle and secondary education)
 - **Continuing education** (through engaging courses in arts, technology, sports, and culture)

What are the various initiatives to implement NEP 2020?

- **Academic Bank of Credit:**
 - The UGC has issued regulations for the establishment and operation of the Academic Bank of Credits in higher education.

- It will be a national-level digital facility for promoting academic mobility through a formal system of credit accumulation, credit transfer, and credit redemption.
- **NIPUN Bharat:**
 - A National Mission on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN Mission) launched by the Government.
- **Vidya Pravesh:**
 - Guidelines for Three-month Play-based School Preparation Module for Grade 1 Children have been developed.
- **1st Year Engineering programmes in regional languages:**
 - AICTE made provisions for technical education in regional languages.
- **National Digital Education Architecture (NDEAR)**
 - Union Budget 2021-22 announced the setting up of a National Digital Educational Architecture (NDEAR) with a major emphasis on strengthening the country's digital infrastructure for education.
- **Structured Assessment for Analyzing Learning levels (SAFAL)**
 - SAFAL to be introduced in CBSE Schools for Grades 3, 5, and 8 from 2021-22.
 - It focuses on testing for core concepts, application-based questions, and higher-order thinking skills.
- **Online degree programmes**
 - The University Grants Commission (UGC) in 2021 allowed universities to offer online degree courses and expand further in the education sector.
- **Availability of multidisciplinary streams in institutes**
 - Institutes and colleges, including IIT Delhi, IIT Roorkee, and IIT Kharagpur, are gradually expanding to include non-engineering courses to offer students an extended opportunity to learn new disciplines.

What are the criticisms of NEP 2020?

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has received mixed reactions and criticisms from various stakeholders. Some of the major criticisms of NEP 2020 are

- **Emphasis on privatization:** Critics argue that NEP 2020 promotes privatization of education by encouraging public-private partnerships, which may lead to the exclusion of marginalized communities from quality education.
- **Centralization of power:** NEP 2020 has been criticized for centralizing power in the hands of the central government, as it gives the central government the authority to set up a **National Educational Technology Forum** and a **National Research Foundation**.
- **Lack of clarity on implementation:** NEP 2020 lacks clarity on the implementation of various reforms, and it does not provide a roadmap for the effective implementation of the policy.
- **Lack of consultation:** Some critics have argued that NEP 2020 was developed without adequate consultation with all stakeholders, including teachers, parents, and students.
- **Lack of coordination:** NEP 2020 has faced criticism for legal complexities arising from the coexistence of two policies, the Right to Education Act 2009 and the new policy.

What are the challenges in the implementation of NEP 2020?

- **Enormity and diversity:** The sheer size and diversity of India's education sector make implementation an uphill task.
- **Capacity limitation:** The internal capacities within the education ministries (centre and states) and other regulatory bodies are inadequate to steer the magnitude of transformations envisaged in the NEP.
- **Teaching in the mother tongue may pose difficulties:** Due to the diverse linguistic landscape in India, with 22 official languages and numerous dialects, adapting curriculum materials to be taught in the mother tongue can be challenging.
- **Digital divide:** The NEP 2020's emphasis on digitization and e-learning may not take into account the digital divide in India, as only around 30% of the population can afford smartphones, and even fewer have access to computers.
- **Limited resources:** The NEP 2020 calls for a significant expansion of educational resources and facilities (6% of GDP), which may be difficult to achieve in light of competing demands for government funding and limited resources.

Source: <https://vajiramandravi.com/upsc-exam/national-education-policy-2020/>

© Vajiram & Ravi. For personal use only.