

The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi approved the National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) on July 29, 2020. This policy replaced the 34 year old National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986. The draft National Education Policy (NEP) developed by a committee chaired by K. Kasturirangan. It is the first education policy of the 21st century and aims to bring transformational reforms in both school and higher education sectors. It is aligned to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and is based on the foundational pillars of Access, Equity, Quality, Affordability and Accountability and it has a target of 50% Gross Enrollment Ratio by 2035 and provision for multiple entry and exits. It aims to transform India into a vibrant knowledge society and global knowledge superpower by making both school and college education more holistic, flexible & multidisciplinary, as per the requirements of 21st century.

The new academic session will begin in September-October. The delay is due to the unprecedented coronavirus disease (Covid-19) outbreak and the government aims to introduce the policy before the new session kicks in.

New National Education Policy 2020:

School Education Key Highlights

1. Existing 10+2 Structure to be modified to 5+3+3+4 structure where the first three years would be formative play school years of nurser and Kindergarden. The structure would cover ages of 3 to 18 years of age.
2. Foundational State of 3 and 2 years would include play school and Grades 1 and 2, Preperatory Stages of Grade 3 to 5, Middle School of Grades 6 to 8 and Secondary Stage of Grades 9 to 12.
3. Emphasis on Early Childhood Care and Education or ECCE for ages 3 to 6 where provisions would be made to ensure universal access to high qualify ECCE across the country in phased manner.
4. Four years for higher secondary gets lift up - Arts, Commerce, and Science removed - Students to choose what they want to choose. Coding is to begin from Class 6. Music, Arts, Sports, would be at the same level. Students will be given increased flexibility and choice of subjects to study, particularly in secondary school - including subjects in physical education, the arts and crafts, and vocational skills.

5. Early childhood care and education to get a complete National mission on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy to be set up to focus on foundational literacy.

6. Indian Knowledge Systems, Languages, Culture and Values to be given focus. Furthermore, Technology would be used extensively. E-Content in Regional Languages would be developed and not only in Hindi and English. School will be digitally equipped. National Educational Technology Forum, NETF would be formed.

7. All State/UT governments will prepare an implementation plan for attaining universal foundational literacy and numeracy in all primary schools for all learners by grade 3 to be achieved by 2025.

8. NIOS and State Open Schools will also offer A, B and C levels that are equivalent to Grades 3, 5, and 8 of the formal school system; secondary education programs that are equivalent to Grades 10 and 12; vocational education courses/programs; and adult literacy and life-enrichment programs.

9. Curriculum content will be reduced in each subject to its core essentials - key concepts, ideas, applications and problem solving. Emphasis will be on critical thinking and more holistic, inquiry-based, discovery-based, discussion-based, and analysis-based learning.

10. The three-language learned by children will be the choices of States, regions, and of the students, so long as at least two of the three languages are native to India.

Higher Education Key Highlights:

1. Regulatory System of Higher Education to be distinct for regulation, accreditation, funding and academic standard setting - all under the umbrella of Higher Education Commission of India or HECI.

2. Four Verticals of HECI to be National Higher Education Regulatory Council or HNERC, National Accreditation Council (NAC), Higher Education Grants Council (HEGC) and General Education Council (GEC) which would further form a National Higher Education Qualification Framework.

3. UGC, AICTE to be replaced by a single Higher Education Regulator - HECI.

4. The professional councils, such as the Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR), Veterinary Council of India (VCI), National Council for Teacher

Education (NCTE), Council of Architecture (CoA), National Council for Vocational Education and Training (NCVET) etc., will act as Professional Standard Setting Bodies (PSSBs).

5. Universities to be named not on the basis of ownership but on quality of education.

6. Impetus to multidisciplinary education. Even IITs are to move towards a more holistic curriculum with arts and humanities.

7. The undergraduate degree will be of either 3 or 4-year duration, with multiple exit options within this period, with appropriate certifications, e.g., a certificate after completing 1 year in a discipline or field including vocational and professional areas, or a diploma after 2 years of study, or a Bachelor's degree after a 3-year programme. The 4-year multidisciplinary Bachelor's programme, however, shall be the preferred option.

8. Students pursuing 4 year degree programme would have an option of getting a degree with Research, if the research process is completed in the area of study as specified.

9. National Research Foundation would be set up with a goal to enable 'a culture of research'. NRF would be governed independently by rotating board of governors. Primary task of NRF would be to fund competitive, peer reviewed grant proposals of all types and across all disciplines and also act as a liaison between researchers and relevant branches of government so as to allow breakthroughs.