

# A Critical Analysis of Growth and Development of Elementary Education with Special Reference to NEP 2020

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## ABSTRACT

Achieving full human potential and developing an equitable and just society have been addressed by the National Education Policy-2020, the 21st Century Education Policy. It revised and reformed all aspects of existing educational structure and contents. It aims at introducing a novel system aligning with the goals and aspirations of 21st century education including Sustainable Development Goal-4 (SDG4). Admittedly issues of access and equity have been the major focus of previous policy implementation. But National Education Policy(NEP-2020) appropriately deals with the unaccomplished agenda of the National Policy on Education(NPE-1986/92) since then Right To Education 2009(RTE-2009) has laid down the underpinnings for achieving universal elementary education. It is , therefore ,necessary to find out ideal road-map of child-education and the possible ways and means of its optimum growth and development with reference to the NEP-2020. Undoubtedly, there are ample suggestions as to how we can promote the growth of a scientific, philosophical and psychological outlook, but they need to be properly discussed and critically examined. However, they may enrich and ennoble our endeavours in the sphere of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) and Elementary Education (EE) as envisaged by NEP-2020. The study is intended to emphasise on how to achieve the said goals.

**Keywords :** NEP-2020, Elementary education, Instinct, Behaviour.Childhood.

## Introduction

Relating to the most rudimentary aspects of a subject is generally called elementary. So our elementary education must also be reflective of our fundamentals of life and growth as well as the skills and components to stand on with. Like other animals human infant is basically a biological entity at the beginning of life born with some basic instincts. The indwelling instincts are like the seeds of different qualities in man. And public temperament harbours and insulates that seeds. So nourishment according to the temperament is vital to concretize the inherent instincts into qualification, the instincts do not germinate otherwise, or even if they germinate their educated growth is difficult to take place. So the actual growth depends upon temperamental nourishment of every individual that our elementary education and childhood care should aim at. First the instincts of a child should be watched that are normally perceived or understood through his habits and behaviours and whether or not the child's acquisition (learning or others) are based upon normal higher instincts. (Bhattacharya 1939:83-84). 'The goal of elementary education must also focus

to develop an 'elevated intellectualism' in a person which is the ability to discern the good from the bad. Of a child's innate instincts, some may be righteous while others may not..the core of education is to make the desired instincts effulge with every emphasis, urge, attitude and expression'(Bhattacharya 1939:74-75). One among the fundamental principles of our national policy of education reads thus- recognizing, identifying and fostering the unique capabilities of each student, by sensitizing teachers as well as parents to promote each child's holistic development in both academic and non-academic spheres. So 'the systematic organisation of habits and instincts with the purpose of fulfilling the becoming of life by a graduated active manipulation of behaviour is to be called education and the function of teacher is to infuse character and conduct through every subject and activity' (Ibid:150). The childhood and elementary teachers' education must also focus on the child-psychological principles of how to organise and sublimate the wild instincts and habits of the infant into desired or ideal manner Experimentation is the key to bring change. Gijubhai

makes it possible saying that a teacher with untiring spirit to learn should question the existing system, methods and failure trying out for several things that will make real learning occur (Dixit 2020: 24).

### **Aims and Objectives**

The main objective of the proposed study is to discuss and assess the role of ECCE as well as the elementary education as the pre-requisite for human resource development. Finding the future prospect of its growth and development in context of the National Education Policy -2020 are also within the scope of the study.

### **Methodology**

The qualitative and descriptive methodology has been applied to fulfil and achieve the objectives. The study was pursued by collecting data from primary and secondary sources. The information sources used to understand the concept were various articles on draft NEP-2020, NPE-1968 and 1986, published papers in journals.

### **Literature reviewed**

A number of scholars wrote papers on the NEP-2020 and gave a detailed account on the provisions related to ECCE and elementary education with their insightful opinions, comments and suggestions. But in no writings the authors stressed and focussed over the child education, its issues, challenges and the necessary modifications needed for its proper growth and development. Noted scholars H.Verma and A.Kumar (2021:293-297) gave a theoretical analysis on NEP-2020 but did not focus on foundational, preparatory and middle stages as part of elementary education and its role over next academic years. Pallathadka et al conducted a case study on School education according to NEP-2020, concluded that the policy has different educational stages (5+3+3+4), emphasizing a solid base for Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), every child aged 3-6 years has free, healthy and high-quality childcare in education by 2025. This scheme aims at the overall development of the child. B. Raju (2022) suggested that while preparing curricular/pedagogical framework the works of western scholars (Rousseau 1712-1778), Dewey (1859-1952) and Montessori 1870-1952) on early childhood education and observations of Indian philosophers (Gandhi 1869-1948, Tagore 1861-1941, Aurobindo 1872-1952) of young children should

be considered for an initial cadre of high-quality ECCE teachers.

### **Previous National Policies and Elementary School Education**

In India the colonial education policy continued up to 1964 when the government of India felt the need to change the national pattern of education. Toward the end of the third five year plan the Education Commission was appointed for the comprehensive review of the education system with a view to initiating a fresh and strenuous effort at educational reconstruction (NEP-1968). The important features of the NEP-1968 on the elementary education are following-

- \* It gave importance to the early fulfilment of the Directive Principles under Article 45 of the Constitution seeking to provide free and compulsory education for all children up to the age of 14.
- \* Proposed initiatives to reduce prevailing wastage and stagnation of compulsory school education.
- \* A common school system of 10+2+3 should be adopted to promote social cohesion, national integration and a uniform educational structure across the country.
- \* Regional languages as medium of instruction are a sine qua non for educational and cultural development at the primary and secondary stages. Three language formula at the secondary stage should be adopted and vigorously implemented by the state governments.

### **Provisions of ECCE and Elementary Education in NEP-1986 and POA-1992**

The NEP-1986 a National System of Education implies that up to a certain level, all students must have access to education of a comparable quality by initiating appropriately funded programmes by the governments. Effective measures have been taken in the direction of the common school system recommended in the 1968 policy. It also recommended that the National System of Education is to be shaped by strengthening the institutions like University Grants Commission (UGC), All India Council of Technical Education (AICTE), Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) and the Indian Medical Council (IMC). Together with these the National Council of Educational Research and

Training (NCERT) and the National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA), the National Council of Teacher Education (NCTE) and the National Institute of Adult Education (NIAE) will be involved in implementing the educational policy.

### Key Highlights of NEP 1986

1. Universalization of Primary Education and Adult Literacy by 1990. (Pallathadka et al 2021: 265)
2. Establishment of District Institutes of Education and Training (DIET) with the capability to organise pre-service and in-service courses for elementary school teachers and the non-formal and adult education personnel. (Sharma and Kulshreshtha 2021:109)
3. To establish the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) at the national level with power to accredit institutions of teacher education with regard to curriculum and methods.
4. The policy called for a 'child-centred approach' and 'Operation Blackboard' to expand primary education nationwide.
5. It envisaged the Open University System and 'Rural University Model' for 'special emphasis on the removal of disparities and to equalise educational opportunity'.
6. Schemes like Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, national programme for Mid-Day Meal, Rashtriya Madhyamik Abhiyan, Navodaya Vidyalaya in each district were introduced by the government.
7. National Programme for Girls Education at Elementary level. (Puri and Misra :2014)

### Implications of Statements in NEP 1986

Realising the crucial importance of rapid physical-mental growth and cognitive stimulation at home during early childhood as vital for the later years of life the National policy on education has given a great deal of importance to ECCE as an support service in universalization of elementary education and a input strategy of human resource development. The significance of holistic nature and child-centeredness in the programmes of ECCE as well as primary education has been spelt out and it cautioned against the dangers of using formal methods of teaching and early introduction of the 3R's. The policy specifically focuses on the need for early care and stimulation of children belonging to the most underprivileged groups,

those who are still outside the mainstream of formal education and a support service for working women of the disadvantaged sections of society. NPE set the target of modest network of ECCE facilities in all tribal development blocks and those having substantial scheduled caste population and slums in large cities by the end of seventh plan. NEP gave first priority to Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE). The thrust emphasised on universal enrolment and universal retention of children up to 14 years of age and a substantial improvement in the quality of education. Under its provisions, Operation Blackboard Scheme emphasised on minimum two rooms, two teachers and a set of minimum essential teaching learning aids

### NEP-2020 phases and the place of ECCE & Elementary Education

The new education policy has laid a great emphasis on ECCE and EE as cost- investment for the benefit of total investment in educational sector. It envisages that a strong investment in ECCE has the potential to provide young children the access to participate and flourish in the educational system throughout their lives because it envisages that 85% of a child's cumulative brain development occurs prior to the age of 6 years. The four pillars of NEP-2020 Access, Equity, Quality and Accountability are designed to ensure that every child in the country has access to quality education that prepares them for a successful future. The extant 10+2 school-education structure is replaced and modified with a new curricular format of 5+3+3+4 covering ages 3-18.

In the new policy the entry level age is 3 years for school education and three years of early childhood care and education to get all school ready at the age of 6 years. The foundational {the pre-school and grade 1 & 2, (5=3+2) yrs.}, preparatory (3 yrs.) and middle (3 yrs.) phases constitute the primary (I to V) and upper-primary (V to VIII) stages of the former and existing policy. In the new policy the secondary (4 yrs.) stage includes the secondary (IX, X) and higher secondary (XI, XII) stages of the former policy. The concept of higher secondary phase has been abolished in the new policy.

### Planning, Implementation & Curriculum for ECCE and EE

The first three years of life is assumed as the

early childhood care period and the rest up to 14 years of free and compulsory educational period including foundational, preparatory and middle stages as per the new policy is in the realm of elementary education. The overall aim of ECCE is to attain optimal outcomes in the domains of physical and motor development, cognitive development, socio-emotional-ethical-cultural development and the planning and implementation of ECCE curriculum is to be carried out jointly by the ministries of Human Resource Development(HRD), Women and Child Development (WCD), Health and Family Welfare(HFW) and tribal affairs. A joint task force will be constituted for smooth integration of ECCE into school education. A national curricular and pedagogical framework for ECCE children will be framed by NCERT aligned with the latest research on national and international best practices incorporating the local indigenous tradition involving art, stories, poetry, games, songs etc. The policy envisions that the current workers are to be trained as per NCERT framework and are to be issued certificate and diploma programme covering early literacy, numeracy and relevant aspects of ECCE run through digital/distance mode using DTH channels and smart phones for minimal disruptions to their current work. The training is to be mentored by Cluster Resource Centres of School Education Department with one monthly contact class for the assessment and later by stage-specific professional training, mentoring and career mapping for their continuous professional development. For universal access the ECCE centres are to be strengthened with high-quality infrastructure, play equipment and well-trained workers/teachers with a focus on developing cognitive, affective and psychomotor abilities. Achieving universal foundational literacy and numeracy in primary schools by 2025 has been the highest priority of the education system and the MHRD is directed to set up National Mission on Foundational Literacy and numeracy and a national repository of its high-quality resources is to be made available on the Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing. Each stage's curriculum and pedagogy is planned to be based on its preceding stage's principles with its additional components. Like the middle stage will comprise three years of preparatory curriculum with introduction of stage specific abstract concept in each subject of science, social science and humanities. (NEP-2020)

### **Experiential Learning and from content to competency based Curriculum**

Nep-2020 envisages that in all stages hands on learning are to be adopted including arts and sports integrated education, play-discovery- activity and story-telling based pedagogy within each subject in relation with different subjects. Classroom transaction will shift from content to competency based learning to its core essentials with exposure to critical-creative thinking, inquiry-based, discussion and analysis based exploratory, communicative and collaborative learning. It aims to provide a holistic and flexible learning experience to children by minimising the school curriculum content and focusing on key concepts, ideas, applications and problem-solving.

### **Comments and Suggestions on NEP-2020 from critical point of view**

Nep-2020 has to be implemented on an experimental basis, in case it proves to be productive and then only it should be instituted all over India (Pallathadka et al 2021:270). In most of the government aided schools there is a scarcity of teaching staffs for long time, adequate human resource is required to implement NEP-2020 and teachers should be given some autonomy and freedom to work at their own pace. Since Education is a concurrent subject, the States need to come forward to carry out the policy decisions in first place. The National Higher Education Regulatory Council as the top controlling organization can be opposed by the States. Presently skilled teachers are lacking in ECCE and EE, it will make the policy execution difficult in this scenario (Verma and Kumar 2021: 296). The ECCE centres should be converted into kindergarten and one staff should be appointed from ASHA(Accredited Social Health Activist) worker so that health and education can work together. In NEP-2020 the entry level age for school education is 3 years which is too early to introduce the formal education snatching their childhood days in the name of ECCE. The Developmental psychologists like Piaget(1896-1980, Bruner (1915-2016), Vygotsky (1896-1934)and Gardener (1943) proposed that children's natural modes of learning are play and activity. The focus of child education should be child's own intuition and interests, action and direct observation ,according to Froebel, are the greatest ways to educate

youngsters In a highly bureaucratic system the hands are bound by rules for every minute detail and teachers find no scope to bring change in child learning in an efficient manner (Dixit 2020:22).

Primary education up to the present secondary level should be made compulsory with every emphasis for its growth through thoroughly practical nature. In elementary level education practical methods of class room transaction should be laid more priority than theoretical aspects because it moulds automatically according to people's instinct and temperament through the hands on learning. And the 'main move of this practical education must be from an inclination to fulfil the Master beloved by serving the environment through inquisitive acquisition-finding out the necessities of every individual for the acceleration of further becoming with a firmness of being. If this attitude of practical manipulation is grown in every student as a common sense then it is sure they will be able to procure the needs of life rendering service to the environment as a part of their own interest wherever they stand. Otherwise whatever hullabaloo over the compulsory primary education there may be the volume of degrees will only generate or increase the extent of unemployment issues.'

### Conclusion:

All programmes of 'Education should aim at formation of right types of concentric habits and behaviours, unfoldment of distinctive traits and faculties, broadening and deepening of feeling, sympathy, sentiment and interest, fostering of self-control, self-denial and self-less service and development of a consistent character and an integrated, complete personality' (The Message, Vol.VIII). Great stress should be laid on the conduct and character of parents and teachers to impart education and transform the individual life because youngsters unconsciously and involuntarily imbibe what they actually practice in day to day life, not what they teach. The NEP-2020 aims to provide a holistic and flexible learning experience to students by minimizing the school curriculum content and focusing on 21st century skills as analytical and critical thinking, experiential learning and creativity. These are to instilled right from childhood through appropriate provision and implementation of elementary education as the basic right of all citizens. Let us start thinking

and working afresh in the light of greater being and becoming as has been envisioned in our new education policy actively through dedication and discipline if, we wish to make education full of meaning and purpose in our life since 'it is better to remain uneducated than to be mis-educated because nature's push spontaneously helps one to be educated.

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