

National Education Policy (Nep) 2020 And the Reconstruction of Knowledge: A Philosophical Perspective

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Abstract:

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is a transformative vision for reconfiguring education in India via a comprehensive and multidisciplinary framework. The policy aims to reconstruct knowledge by merging traditional Indian wisdom with modern global thought, fostering a balanced synthesis of epistemology, ethics, and pedagogy. It contests the strict division of disciplines and underscores experiential learning, critical thinking, and creativity as fundamental to the production of knowledge. The reformation of knowledge under NEP 2020 is based on learner-centric methodologies that acknowledge the diversity of epistemologies. The policy promotes active involvement, inquiry-based learning, and contextual understanding, drawing implicitly from philosophical traditions like constructivism and pragmatism. It further stresses the importance of principles such as inclusivity, equity, and social justice, linking education with the overarching objectives of human growth and national advancement. Moreover, NEP 2020 emphasizes the significance of language, culture, and indigenous knowledge systems in influencing cognitive and moral development. NEP 2020 conceptualizes education not solely as the dissemination of information but as the active reconstruction of knowledge that promotes intellectual independence, ethical consciousness, and continuous learning. In this article, national education policy (NEP) 2020 and the reconstruction of knowledge: a philosophical perspective has been discussed.

Keywords: *National, Education, Policy, Reconstruction, Knowledge.*

I. INTRODUCTION:

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 signifies a substantial paradigm shift in the Indian educational framework, targeting not just structural reform but also a profound epistemic transformation. Grounded in the principles of comprehensive, interdisciplinary, and student-focused education, NEP 2020 aims to reformulate the foundations of knowledge by shifting from rote memorisation to critical thinking, creativity, and experiential learning. This transition signifies a philosophical realignment from viewing knowledge as static and transmissive to perceiving it as dynamic, contextual, and generated via interaction and reflection. Philosophically, NEP 2020 integrates traditional Indian knowledge traditions—which regard education as a means of self-realization and ethical growth—with contemporary global educational paradigms that prioritise inquiry, interdisciplinarity, and inclusivity. It connects with constructivist theories, which assert that learners actively create knowledge via experience, and corresponds with humanistic principles by promoting the holistic development of individuals—intellectual, emotional, moral, and social. The policy also confronts entrenched dichotomies, such as vocational versus academic learning and arts versus sciences, promoting a more integrated and diversified comprehension of knowledge. It seeks to democratise education, enhancing accessibility, equity, and relevance to the requirements of a varied society. Consequently, NEP 2020 can be regarded as a philosophical initiative aimed at reconstructing knowledge systems in India by integrating tradition with modernity, local viewpoints with global insights, and theoretical frameworks with practical applications (Jain, S., 2020).

PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS OF NEP 2020:

Roots in Indian Philosophical Traditions:

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is firmly rooted in India's profound intellectual legacy. It is inspired by ancient knowledge systems like the Gurukul tradition, which regarded education as a whole process encompassing moral, spiritual, intellectual, and physical growth. Philosophies articulated in books such as the Vedas and Upanishads underscore self-realisation, ethical conduct, and the interconnectedness of knowledge. The NEP 2020 reinstates these principles by advocating for value-based education, critical inquiry, respect for diversity, and the cultivation of character in conjunction with cognitive skills.

Influence of Constructivism, Pragmatism, and Humanism:

NEP 2020 integrates contemporary educational concepts to enhance the significance and relevance of learning. Constructivism supports a learner-centered methodology, wherein students actively build knowledge via experience, interaction, and reflection, as opposed to passive memorization. Pragmatism is characterized by its focus on experiential learning, skill acquisition, and the practical application of knowledge, equipping students for real-life situations. Humanism influences the policy's emphasis on the dignity, potential, and individuality of each learner, fostering creativity, critical thinking, emotional well-being, and inclusive education (Patra, D., & Singh, A., 2023).

Holistic and Multidisciplinary Vision:

A fundamental philosophical tenet of NEP 2020 is its comprehensive and interdisciplinary approach to education. It aims to dismantle strict divisions among the arts, sciences, and vocational disciplines, fostering adaptability and the amalgamation of various domains of knowledge. Education is conceived as a mechanism for comprehensive personality development—intellectual, emotional, social, ethical, and artistic. This perspective corresponds with the notion that knowledge is interrelated and that learners must possess a comprehensive understanding of several disciplines to tackle intricate global issues and lead significant lives.

II. CONCEPT OF KNOWLEDGE RECONSTRUCTION:

Traditional vs. Modern Knowledge Paradigms:

Conventional knowledge frameworks are predominantly rigid, hierarchical, and conveyed from instructor to pupil. Knowledge is frequently perceived as definitive and grounded in authoritative sources, traditions, and structured educational institutions. Conversely, contemporary paradigms perceive knowledge as dynamic, created, and contingent upon circumstance. Students engage in the construction of meaning, and knowledge is subject to inquiry, modification, and diverse interpretations. Contemporary education promotes interdisciplinarity and adaptability to evolving circumstances.

Role of Critical Thinking and Inquiry-Based Learning:

Critical thinking is essential for knowledge reconstruction, as it empowers learners to analyze, evaluate, and interrogate information instead of passively accepting it. Inquiry-based learning enhances this process by fostering curiosity, exploration, and problem-solving skills. Students enquire, formulate hypotheses, and investigate evidence, resulting in enhanced comprehension and the generation of new knowledge. This method transitions the emphasis from rote memorization to inquiry and logical reasoning.

Knowledge as Dynamic and Evolving:

Knowledge is not static; it perpetually evolves alongside breakthroughs in science, technology, and human comprehension. Societal transformations, cultural exchanges, and ongoing study continually redefine what constitutes legitimate knowledge. This viewpoint underscores the significance of continuous education, flexibility, and receptiveness to novel concepts. Consequently, knowledge reconstruction is vital for maintaining the relevance and responsiveness of education to current demands (Sharma, R., 2021).

EPISTEMOLOGICAL SHIFTS IN NEP 2020:

From Rote Learning to Experiential Learning:

A fundamental epistemological shift is the transition from rote memorization to experiencing learning. Knowledge is today perceived not as static information to be replicated in assessments, but as a construct developed through experience, inquiry, and critical interaction. Students are urged to investigate, test, and connect concepts to real-world situations, thus promoting profound comprehension and enduring recall.

Integration of Indigenous Knowledge Systems:

The NEP 2020 acknowledges the significance of India's profound intellectual heritage and advocates for the incorporation of indigenous knowledge systems into the curriculum. This encompasses conventional sciences,

regional histories, ecological knowledge, and cultural traditions. This method expands the epistemological foundation of education by recognizing many ways of knowing, rather than favoring solely Western paradigms, and assists learners in cultivating a culturally grounded yet internationally pertinent worldview.

Emphasis on Competency-Based Education:

The policy prioritizes competency-based education, shifting the emphasis from subjects covered to the cultivation of skills, competencies, and dispositions. Knowledge is defined as the ability to utilize learning in various contexts. Assessment processes are restructured to assess critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity, and adaptability, connecting education with 21st-century demands (Varma, P., 2021).

ONTOLOGICAL DIMENSIONS OF EDUCATION IN NEP 2020:

The ontological aspects of education in NEP 2020 signify a profound philosophical transformation in comprehending the essence of the learner and the objective of education. The policy perceives the learner as a holistic entity, prioritizing the amalgamation of cognitive, emotional, social, ethical, and physical dimensions of growth instead of regarding education as solely intellectual instruction. This comprehensive viewpoint acknowledges that genuine learning encompasses the development of values, creativity, critical thinking, and well-being. The NEP 2020 emphasizes education as a vehicle for self-actualization and identity development. It motivates learners to uncover their intrinsic potential, cultural heritage, and personal ambitions, ultimately cultivating a sense of individualism and social responsibility. Education, in this context, emerges as a transforming process that molds both knowledge and character, as well as consciousness. The policy emphasizes the integration of knowledge and life, dismantling the strict divisions between disciplines and fostering interdisciplinary education. It seeks to integrate theoretical knowledge with practical experiences, ensuring that education is significant, applicable, and pertinent to daily life. Consequently, NEP 2020 conceptualizes education as an organic, life-centered process that fosters the holistic development of the individual and correlates knowledge with experiential reality (Nanda, B., 2021).

Education as Holistic Being Development:

NEP 2020 underscores education as a means of fostering the comprehensive development of the learner, integrating intellectual, emotional, ethical, physical, and social facets. This embodies an ontological perspective that humans are holistic entities, and education must encompass all facets of existence.

Learner-Centric Ontology:

NEP 2020 regards learners as active architects of knowledge rather than passive users. The policy acknowledges the distinct abilities, interests, and potentials of every kid, fostering individualized learning trajectories. The focus on multilingualism, experiential learning, and critical inquiry, along with the acknowledgement of multiple identities: cultural, linguistic, cognitive, and social distinctions. Ontologically, the learner is a dynamic, changing entity, and education should enable the actualization of their complete potential.

Knowledge as Experiential and Multidimensional:

The policy expands the definition of knowledge to encompass experiential learning, practical involvement, and real-world application, dismantling barriers between the arts, sciences, vocational training, and conventional knowledge systems, while also addressing ethics, civic duty, and sustainability. Reality is perceived as intricate, interrelated, and experienced, necessitating that education equips learners to engage with it substantively.

Education for Being and Becoming:

NEP 2020 underscores both "being" (the individual's current potential) and "becoming" (future-orientated development). Education cultivates the ontological self, aiding pupils in comprehending their identity and societal role. Simultaneously, it provides individuals with competencies, insights, and attitudes essential for continuous learning and adaptability.

Integration of Traditional and Modern Ontologies:

The NEP acknowledges India's philosophical and cultural legacy by merging traditional knowledge systems, including Vedic, tribal, and indigenous wisdom, with contemporary scientific insights. It promotes contextualized

learning, enabling learners to integrate traditional wisdom with modern global realities, and embodies an ontological perspective that knowledge is diverse, dynamic, and culturally contextualized.

AXIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES IN NEP 2020:

Value-based education and ethics:

The NEP 2020 emphatically promotes the incorporation of moral and ethical ideals within the curriculum. It aims to cultivate attributes such as honesty, empathy, integrity, respect for variety, and compassion among learners. The policy seeks to cultivate persons capable of making responsible judgements in both personal and professional spheres by integrating ethical reasoning and reflective thinking into education.

Promotion of constitutional values:

The policy emphasizes the significance of instilling fundamental constitutional ideals, including justice, liberty, equality, and brotherhood. It promotes understanding and reverence for the ideas stated in the Constitution of India, encompassing secularism, democracy, and human rights. Education is therefore perceived as a mechanism to reinforce national identity while promoting unity amidst variety.

Education for social responsibility and sustainability:

NEP 2020 emphasizes the necessity of equipping learners to confront modern world issues, including environmental degradation, social injustice, and sustainable development. It fosters education that cultivates civic responsibility, environmental awareness, and community involvement. Students are urged to engage actively in society and strive for a more just and sustainable future.

ROLE OF TEACHERS IN KNOWLEDGE RECONSTRUCTION:

Teacher as Facilitator and Co-learner:

In the modern educational framework, educators have transitioned from being just conveyors of knowledge to becoming facilitators of learning. They cultivate interactive and student-centred environments in which learners actively produce knowledge via inquiry, discourse, and collaboration. Teachers, as co-learners, participate in ongoing discourse with students, recognising that learning is a mutual endeavour. This method fosters critical thinking, creativity, and profound comprehension instead of mere memorisation.

Professional Autonomy and Innovation:

Educators are granted professional autonomy to develop curricula, select instructional approaches, and execute assessment techniques according to the needs of learners. This autonomy fosters innovation in pedagogical methods, encompassing the incorporation of technology, experiential learning, and interdisciplinary strategies. When educators are regarded as professionals, their motivation to innovate and adjust increases, resulting in more effective and significant learning experiences (Mishra, L. & Sahoo, K., 2022).

Teacher Education Reforms:

The reconstruction of knowledge requires substantial modifications in teacher education. Pre-service and in-service training programmes should prioritize the cultivation of reflective practitioners who possess pedagogical competencies, subject matter expertise, and ethical consciousness. Priority must be given to ongoing professional development, a research-orientated approach, and engagement with current educational concerns. Reforms seek to equip educators to address varied classroom environments and contribute to the advancing knowledge society.

CURRICULUM AND PEDAGOGICAL REFORMS:

Multidisciplinary and Flexible Curriculum:

Contemporary educational changes prioritize dismantling strict disciplinary barriers through the advocacy of a multidisciplinary approach. This enables students to investigate disciplines in the arts, sciences, and vocational fields, promoting comprehensive growth. Curriculum design flexibility allows learners to select subjects aligned

with their interests, competencies, and professional aspirations. This method not only fosters creativity and critical thinking but also integrates education with real-world complexities and many job trajectories.

Experiential and Competency-Based Pedagogy:

Pedagogical improvements emphasize transitioning from rote memorization to experience and competency-based education. Engagement in activities, projects, fieldwork, and real-world problem-solving facilitates the acquisition of practical knowledge and skills for students. Competency-based pedagogy prioritizes the mastering of concepts, the application of information, and the cultivation of essential skills, including communication, cooperation, and analytical thinking. This guarantees that learners are not only knowledgeable but also proficient in applying their knowledge efficiently.

Integration of Technology in Learning:

The incorporation of technology in education has revolutionized teaching and learning methodologies. Digital instruments, online platforms, intelligent classrooms, and e-learning resources enhance education by making it more participatory, accessible, and inclusive. Technology facilitates individualized learning, enables distance education, and grants access to an extensive array of information and international knowledge networks. It also improves teacher efficacy through novel pedagogical strategies and ongoing evaluation systems (Yadav, R., 2023).

INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS AND CULTURAL CONTEXT:

Revival and integration of traditional Indian knowledge:

Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) underscore the necessity of safeguarding and advancing India's extensive history of traditional wisdom, customs, and cultural manifestations within the contemporary educational framework. The resurgence and incorporation of traditional Indian knowledge entail the integration of ancient disciplines, including Ayurveda, yoga, classical arts, local crafts, and ecological practices, into modern curricula. This not only fortifies cultural identity but also imparts sustainable and contextually pertinent knowledge to learners.

Localization of curriculum:

The localization of curriculum is a crucial element, guaranteeing that education is grounded in the local environment, community activities, and socio-economic conditions. By tailoring coursework to local histories, economies, and customs, learners can connect more profoundly with their education, thus improving engagement and practical comprehension.

Language and cultural diversity:

Moreover, acknowledging linguistic and cultural diversity is crucial for inclusive education. Advocating for mother tongues and regional languages as mediums of instruction, particularly during the foundational stage, enhances cognitive development and safeguards linguistic heritage. It promotes respect for various cultural identities, traditions, and perspectives, hence enhancing societal inclusivity and cultural sensitivity.

CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF NEP 2020:

Strengths and philosophical contributions:

The policy transcends rote memorization and prioritizes critical thinking, creativity, and experiential learning. This corresponds with the constructivist theory of education and reflects the concepts of theorists such as John Dewey. The NEP advocates for the revitalization of old knowledge systems, languages, and cultural consciousness, aligning with Mahatma Gandhi's educational philosophy and his notion of Nai Talim. The implementation of various entry-exit mechanisms and academic flexibility demonstrates a learner-centric methodology, promoting autonomy and lifelong education. Particular focus is directed towards marginalized communities, gender inclusivity, and universal accessibility, in accordance with the democratic principles of education. Digital learning and open educational systems are prioritized, enhancing accessibility and promoting a future-orientated approach (Borah, R., 2022).

Challenges in implementation:

Numerous schools, particularly in rural and tribal regions, are deficient in fundamental infrastructure, qualified educators, and digital connectivity, hence obstructing efficient implementation. The efficacy of the NEP is significantly contingent upon educators; nevertheless, extensive training in innovative pedagogical techniques and assessment strategies continues to pose a substantial problem. The strategy advocates for elevating public investment in education to 6% of GDP; however, real budgetary allocations frequently underperform. Although advocating for mother language education is advantageous, its implementation throughout India's extensive linguistic variety is intricate. Collaboration between central and state governments may impede reforms due to differing priorities and governance frameworks.

Gaps between theory and practice:

Although the NEP prioritizes experiential learning, most institutions continue to adhere to exam-centric and rote memorization teaching methodologies. While technological integration is essential, unequal access to digital resources results in inequities, especially in rural regions. Notwithstanding inclusive objectives, socio-economic disparities persist in limiting access to quality education for marginalized populations. The policy promotes competency-based learning; yet, the current examination system continues to emphasize memorization. Implementation is frequently more robust in metropolitan institutions, exacerbating the disparity with rural educational environments.

III. CONCLUSION:

The National Education Policy (NEP), 2020 signifies a substantial philosophical transformation in India's knowledge reconstruction, transitioning from a strict, colonial, and compartmentalised educational model to a more holistic, flexible, and learner-centred framework. Grounded in the amalgamation of Indian epistemologies with international viewpoints, NEP 2020 redefines knowledge as a dynamic, immersive, and value-driven process that cultivates critical thinking, creativity, and ethical awareness rather than merely the accumulation of information. The strategy embodies aspects of constructivism, pragmatism, and humanism, emphasising that individuals actively generate knowledge through experience, dialogue, and reflection. It fosters interdisciplinary education, therefore eradicating conventional divisions among the arts, sciences, and vocational disciplines, and advocating for the concept of unity in knowledge. This corresponds with traditional Indian epistemic traditions that perceive knowledge as interrelated and holistic. Furthermore, NEP 2020 emphasises the democratisation and localisation of knowledge by promoting education in the home tongue, including indigenous wisdom, and ensuring fair access for all learners. This approach contests epistemic hierarchies and aims to establish a more inclusive and contextually pertinent knowledge system. The emphasis on lifelong learning redefines knowledge as an ongoing, dynamic process rather than a definitive result. NEP 2020 embodies a revolutionary philosophical paradigm that redefines the objectives, essence, and organization of knowledge in education. By integrating tradition with modernity, personal development with societal accountability, and local significance with global proficiency, it establishes the groundwork for a more enlightened, egalitarian, and sustainable knowledge society in the 21st century.

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