

Constraints and Ways for Implementing National Education Policy – 2020 In Tamil Nadu

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ABSTRACT

The National Education Policy - 2020 is considered crucial for the Indian education system (Kennedy Andrew Thomas, et al., 2024) because it aims to fundamentally transform education by making it more inclusive, equitable, and holistic, focusing on developing 21st-century skills (highereducationplus.com, 2024) like critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving, while integrating vocational training and promoting quality teacher training across all levels of education. However, the implementation of the NEP has sparked concerns in Tamil Nadu, where politicians and some educators argue that it exacerbates existing inequalities rather than bridging them. Issues such as lack of access to quality infrastructure, trained teachers, digital resources, and the emphasis on multilingual education have made it harder for rural students to cope with the changes. They argue that the focus on multiple languages and changes in curriculum place an extra burden on students who already struggle with basic access to education. Additionally, Tamil Nadu has been advocating for its two-language policy, which focuses on Tamil and English. Without political will and change, implementing NEP 2020 in holistic manner with the satisfaction and acceptance of all stakeholder will be herculean task in Tamil Nadu as on date.

Key words: NEP-2020 (National Education Policy-2020), NPE (National Policy on Education), GER (Gross Enrollment Ratio), UGC (University Grants Commission), TN (Tamil Nadu), HEI (Higher Educational Institution)

1. INTRODUCTION

The year 2020 is the most catastrophic and exceptional year for countries across the world. India smartly managed the ill effect of Covid-19 due to cooperation of everyone and at the same time one of important quantum shift that took was the development and introduction of National Education policy (NEP) 2020. The NEP is a comprehensive framework to guide the development of education in the country. The ancient Indian educational system focused on the moral, physical, spiritual and intellectual aspects of life (One School Global, 2024). It emphasized on values such as humility, truthfulness, discipline, self-reliance and respect for all creations. Students were taught to appreciate the balance between human beings and nature. Introduction of western education system during colonial period by Lord Macaulay (T. Ashok Kumar et al., 2025), the focus towards a curriculum centered and primarily western knowledge through English as medium of instruction. This quantum shift laid the foundation for the modern education system in India, which while providing lot of opportunities, also introduced to a

severe setback to traditional indigenous knowledge system. To balance both ancient Indian educational system and western introduced educational system, post-independence Government of India promulgated three educational policies in 1968, 1986 and 2020. The need for a policy was first felt in 1964 when Congress MP Siddheshwar Prasad criticized the then Government for lacking a vision and philosophy for education. In the same year, a 17 – member Education commission, headed by then UGC Chairperson D S Kothari, was constituted to draft a national and coordinated policy on education (emite.co.in, 2023). Based on the suggestions of this Commission, Parliament passed the first education policy in 1968. The NEP – 2020, is the third national education policy of India. From the three policies NEP-2020 marks a significant milestone in Indian’s education system focusing to transform the country’s educational landscape (T. Ashok Kumar et al., 2025). The NEP-2020 was introduced with the goal of transforming India’s education system by emphasizing multidisciplinary learning, flexibility in subject choices, vocational training, and a shift towards regional languages in early education. In case of school education, NEP-2020 replaces the current 10+2 system into 5+3+3+4 class studies. It also proposes three languages formula, out of which the mother tongue alone is the medium of instruction up to 5th standard, English is compulsory as second language and third language may be any Indian native language the student can choose (Abhishek Anand, Pankaj Singh., 2025). From 6th standard onwards States have freedom to choose the language of instruction in the democratic and decentralized manner, which was laid in NEP-2020. Unfortunately, Tamil Nadu, a non-Hindi and three language formula discontinued state since 1968, vehemently opposes the NEP-2020 since its introduction. The opposition is primarily on three reasons viz., introduction of three language formula, conducting common evaluation examinations at 3, 5 and 8 standards and start of four years degree programme with middle exit facility. This paper aims to discuss the various challenges and means towards the implementation of National Educational Policy – 2020 in the state of Tamil Nadu.

2. Key points about the background of NEP 2020

The development of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 in India stemmed from a need (Evans, Denise Nicole, 2023) to revamp the existing education system (Kishore Kumar et al., 2020), which was based on the outdated National Policy on Education of 1986, and to align it with the demands of the 21st century by focusing on access, equity, quality, affordability, and accountability; this process began in 2015 with a committee led by former Cabinet Secretary T.S.R Subramanian to initiate consultations for a new policy, culminating in a draft NEP submitted in 2019 by a committee chaired by renowned scientist Dr. K. Kasturirangan, which was then further refined through public feedback before being finalized as the NEP 2020.

- **Outdated Policy:**

The existing National Policy on Education from 1986 was considered significantly outdated and needed major revisions to address contemporary challenges in the education sector.

- **Committee Formation:**

In 2015, the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) constituted a committee under the leadership of T.S.R Subramanian to start consultations for a new education policy.

- **Draft NEP 2019:**

Based on the committee's report, a draft NEP was prepared in 2019 by a committee headed by Dr. K. Kasturirangan, a prominent scientist from the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO).

- **Public Consultation:**

The draft NEP was released for public feedback to gather suggestions from various stakeholders, including educators, parents, and civil society organizations.

- **Focus on 21st Century Needs:**

The primary goal of NEP 2020 was to create an education system that equips students with the skills and knowledge necessary to thrive in the 21st century job market (Webster University), including critical thinking, creativity, and adaptability.

3. Key aspects of NEP 2020 that make it important:

- **Holistic approach:**

NEP 2020 promotes multidisciplinary education, integrating academic knowledge with vocational skills, arts, sports, and physical fitness, fostering a well-rounded development of students.

- **Focus on 21st-century skills:**

The policy emphasizes developing critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving abilities, considered essential skills for the modern workforce (T Ashok Kumar et al., 2025).

- **Improved access and quality:**

NEP 2020 aims to ensure universal access to quality education from pre-primary to grade 12, with a focus on early childhood care and education (T Ashok Kumar et al., 2025).

- **Assessment reforms:**

It advocates shifting from rote learning to competency-based assessment, utilizing formative assessments to better track student progress and development.

- **Teacher training emphasis:**

NEP 2020 prioritizes continuous professional development for teachers to enhance their skills and effectiveness in the classroom (isteonline.in)

- **Flexible curriculum:**

The policy allows for more flexible curriculum design with multiple entry and exit points, enabling students to tailor their education based on their interests and career goals (Abhishek Anand, Pankaj Singh, 2025).

- **Integration of vocational education:**

NEP 2020 aims to seamlessly integrate vocational training within the mainstream education system, providing students with relevant skills for the job market.

4. Views of Tamil Nadu for opposing NEP 2020 implementation

Tamil Nadu making clear its opposition to the under mentioned key NEP features

S.No.	NEP Features	Reasons for opposing
1	Implementation of three languages formula	<p>a) State is satisfactory by following two language formulas since 1968.</p> <p>b) Majority of students may choose Hindi as third language, by which Hindi will enter in TN, which may affect the Dravidian political party's present strategy.</p>
2	Common evaluation examination to be conducted for 3, 5 & 8 Standards.	<p>a) May lead to discontinuation of students in the middle of their study due to failure and unable to cope with examination load and syndrome.</p>
3	Introduction of 5+3+3+4 stages of schooling i.e., foundation, Preparatory, Middle and Secondary stage standards.	<p>a) Would like to follow the existing 10+2 system of schooling.</p> <p>b) Not willing to include Pre KG, LKG, and UKG in foundation stage as mandatory studies.</p>
4	Mother tongue or local language as medium of instruction till class 5. Also recommending its continuance till class 8.	<p>a) Implementation difficulties.</p> <p>b) May lead to opposition from some part of students / parents.</p>
5	Holistic and Multidisciplinary education with Multiple entry & exit in degree programme / options	<p>a) May lead to discontinuation of students in their middle of their study.</p> <p>b) May create lot of disarray / confusion on students mind if they face any failures.</p>
6	Introduction of four year degree programme, awarding certificate, diploma, degree, Honors etc. 1 Year – Certificate 2 Years – Diploma 3 Years – Degree 4 Years – Degree with Honors	<p>a) May lead to discontinuation of students in their middle of their study, if they are unable to cope up work load and pressure.</p> <p>b) May encourage undertaking their family business / work.</p>
7	To achieve 50% GER in higher education by 2035 and 100% GER in preschool to secondary level in 2030.	<p>a) In 2024, TN already reached 47% in higher education and 98% primary to Higher Secondary education. NEP target may not be encouraging and attractive to TN.</p>
8	Entrance examination for degree courses	<p>a) Competition will increase and students have to spend lot of time and money for attending</p>

		coaching classes. b) Poor and middle family students cannot bear on coaching class expenditure.
9	No hard separation between arts and sciences between curricular and extra-curricular activities between vocational and academic streams.	a) Discipline / field Specialization may be disturbed / hampered. b) May break present specialization structure.
10	Exposure of vocational education in School and higher education system	a) May encourage to start their family business / jobs
11	Internationalization of Education	a) Indigenous institutions survival may be affected. b) Dominance of corporate and private player's role will increase.
12	Setting up of Multidisciplinary Education and Research Universities (MERUs)	a) Universities run by State may not afford financial burden and Universities run by private players may flourish.

5. Causes for implementing NEP 2020 in Tamil Nadu

Sl. No.	Tamil Nadu opposed feature of NEP	Factual analysis of this feature	Merits and remarks
1	Implementation of three languages formula	Young brains are naturally more flexible and receptive to acquiring new languages.	One more language tool will be available with TN students for their career progression especially to enter Defence, Union Government and other north Indian state jobs.
2	Introduction of Common evaluation examination to 3, 5 & 8 Standards.	For the success any system, evaluation, feedback, analysis are essential to know their present position.	Students need not be de-promoted. Knowing their strength and weakness necessary corrective action can be implemented for further progress.
3	Introduction of 5+3+3+4 stages of schooling i.e., foundation, Preparatory, Middle and Secondary	As on date socially disadvantage and poor students are not getting foundation education. First standard begins	Implementation of foundation education through Government schools certainly beneficial to poor and socially

	stage standards.	on completion of 6 years with or without foundation standards.	disadvantage students.
4	Mother tongue or local language as medium of instruction till class 5. Also recommending its continuance till class 8.	Usage and importance of mother tongue or local language are slowly diminishing especially the medium of instruction in education (21).	Presently majority of TN students are performing very poor in Tamil language. Introduction of compulsory Tamil medium up to 8 standards definitely beneficial.
5	Holistic and Multidisciplinary education with Multiple entry & exit in degree programme / options	Present education system does not permit to students for acquiring multi-facets knowledge and skills and multiple entry and exits.	Present education system mainly concentrates subject oriented theoretical matters only. Multidisciplinary system will imbibe multi-access knowledge including values, ethics, culture etc.
6	Introduction of four year degree programme. If students complete 2 Years – Diplome 3 Years – Degree 4 Years – Degree with Honors	The present GER in higher education in TN is 47%. However no data available about how many are completing their degree at the end of the programme.	At present the discontinued student will leave empty hand. NEP 2020 will award some sort of certificate, diploma etc. after completion of 1-3 years, which will be beneficial for the dropout to enter in the job market.
7	To achieve 50% GER in higher education by 2035 and 100% GER in preschool to secondary level.	As on date TN nearer to the target value. Within 1-2 years NEP-2020 targets will be easily achieved.	Number of students are completing their degree programmes, data to be compiled for further analysis and improvement.
8	Entrance examination for degree courses	TN students are ready to face any competitive examination with true spirit.	In NEET/CUET examinations more number of TN students are enrolling and succeeding.
9	No hard separation between arts and sciences between curricular and extra-curricular activities between vocational and academic streams.	Barriers will be removed. Certainly students will demonstrate more talents in different disciplines.	Aged people are also clearing NEET examination and joining in medical courses.

10	Exposure of vocational education in School and higher education system	Presently Indian students are lagging specific technical skills, which are very much detrimental for them in job market.	Students will choose vocational course as per their will and wish. Hence they may go only to family business / job. Such statement is meaningless.
11	Internationalization of Education	World class indigenous institution and foreign institution will be established.	Indian students need not to go abroad instead foreign students may come to India.
12	Setting up of Multidisciplinary Education and Research Universities (MERUs)	Very less number of such universities are functioning,	Foreign and Private institutions may start MERUs setups.

6.DISCUSSION:

The National Education Policy 2020 has been accepted and implemented on 29 July 2020. The National Education Policy 2020 proposes various reforms in foundation, primary and secondary school education as well as higher education including technical education. A number of action points/activities for implementation in school education as well as higher education are already started by Government of India and also all state government except a few states. Government of Tamil Nadu is not interested and is opposing its implementation from its inception. Major four reasons for non-acceptance are (i) Three language formula (ii) Common examinations for 3, 5, and 8 Standards (iii) multiple entry and exit degree programmes (iv) Introduction of vocational / skill training from 6th standards onwards. Tamil Nadu Government argument against implementation of three languages is, it will destroy Tamil language also Hindi will play a dominant role. For the past 70+ years Southern states Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala and Telangana are following three language formula and their mother tongue Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam more vibrant, never diminished and people are using with true spirit. As on 2023 data, 52.62 lakh students studying in Government and Government aided schools, but 56.9 lakh students are studying in Private schools with State board, CBSE and ICSE board but majority of these schools students are studying three languages in their curriculum. It is evident that more than 50% students, who are from elite class and economically sound, are already studying three languages. Next argument is introduction of common examination at 3, 5 & 8 standards may lead to students drop out in middle of their study due their failure. NEP-2020 emphasis that common evaluation examination is conducted mainly to know about students' performance and understanding on the subject matter but never proposed detention of such students in the same standard in case if they score less marks. Hence students will not be detained in the same standard, may be promoted to next class, but necessary remedial measure can be implemented for such students studies by knowing their performance. The third major objection was for implementing multi entry and exit in degree programmes, which may lead to more drop outs during their degree studies. In 2023, TN has achieved 47% GER in higher education.

But unfortunately no data is available about how much percentage of these students completing their degree programme at the end so as to know the dropout data during middle of the programme. In the present system, if the student leave in the middle of degree programme, student will end up only with degree entry qualification. On implementation of NEP 2020, if students leave at the end first year, second year, third year and fourth year, they will be awarded with certificate, diploma, PG diploma, degree and degree with honors etc. Hence multi entry – exist in degree programme certainly a boon not bane to students. Final objection was for introduction of vocational / skill training from 6th standards onwards, which may lead students to take up their family work or business. But never advocates students should only undertake their family work / business related skill / vocational programme, they can choose whatever vocational course / skill, they like or want to learn. Hence this argument is also meaning less. In view of the above, the present stand on non-acceptance and non-implementation of NEP -2020 in TN is not a correct policy decision. Considering the future of TN students, TN government must reconsider their decision and should accept and implementation of NEP-2020 at an early date. In this regard, if required a detailed survey should be conducted from all stakeholders viz. students, teachers and parents without any political involvement and bias.

7. CONCLUSION:

National Educational policy 2020 is an essential initiative to help in the all-around development of our society and country as a whole. However, the implementation of this policy will greatly determine its success. Nonetheless, with a youth dominant population, India can truly achieve a better state with the proper implementation of this education policy. Furthermore, the hope that this policy provides to those in need is enormous. By 2030, the education system and workforce should have improved thanks to NEP 2020's student-centered concept. While NEP 2020 offers transformative potential for Tamil Nadu's education system, its successful implementation requires addressing these challenges strategically. Effective collaboration between the state and central government, along with a focus on infrastructure, teacher training, inclusivity, and cultural sensitivity, will be key to overcoming obstacles and ensuring that NEP 2020 benefits all students across the state. To implement this policy in Tamil Nadu, Union Government has to take lot of positive steps, continuous effort and dialogue with all stakeholders especially TN based regional political parties. The successful implementation NEP-2020 throughout India, certainly bring out changes in Tamil Nadu political parties attitude. Government of India should disseminate the salient features of NEP-2020 to students of Tamil Nadu through Central Government institution and also through Higher Educational Institution run by private players. Certainly day is not far away for accepting and implementing of NEP 2020 in Tamil Nadu with wholehearted support of people of Tamil Nadu.

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