

Our National Education Policy could yet rescue school students

: 12/1/2021



Photo: HT

4 min read . Updated: 01 Dec 2021, 11:12 PM IST [Anurag Behar](#)

Several elements of it can be adopted by states right away to help us recover massive learning losses

The National Education Policy 2020 (NEP) is truly transformative. There have been few policies in Indian history with its sweep and depth. One parallel is the first National Education Policy that emerged from the Kothari Commission in 1968. Ten years after that policy was approved by the government, J.P. Nayak, who was member secretary of the Kothari panel, wrote a book, *Education Commission and After*. Nayak, a much-revered figure in the field, wrote it as a reflection on what got done and what did not in those first ten years. It's a nuanced book, as one would expect of Nayak. However, at its core, it was an expression of disappointment at the partial and haphazard implementation of the 1968 policy.

I think Nayak was too early in his judgement. Without doubt, the implementation of that policy was far from what it should have been. However, as the decades have passed, it has become clearer that the direction and principles set by our first education policy have shaped Indian education deeply and fundamentally. The effect of any omission or commission of specific actions under that policy has not mattered as much. It is useful to remember that experience in the context of NEP 2020.

TRENDING STORIES [See All](#)



Premium

'Do not repost any leaked video': Leaders appeal on Cha ...



Premium

Harsha Engineers IPO: Latest GMP; know more about allot ...



Premium

New rules for debit, credit card holders from next month



Premium

SBI special FD scheme with higher interest rates for a ...

The latest NEP aims to transform the basic architecture, culture and approach of Indian education. Not by jettisoning the past, but by building on the good parts of it, while squarely confronting the bad.

Undoubtedly, the NEP 2020 will leave a deep imprint on India over the long term, but there is also a short term set of effects which the policy can achieve if many of its actions are systematically and urgently implemented by Indian states. This involves the schooling part of the new policy, which is the responsibility of these states.

Our school education faces an unprecedented crisis, one of enormous learning losses for about 220 million children because schools were shut for over 18 months. Unless addressed comprehensively and quickly, this deficit will harm an entire generation of children and the country. Quick implementation of the relevant parts of the NEP by Indian states can provide some effective measures to deal with this emergency. Let me list a few of the most important ones.

First, the NEP's comprehensive and systematic response to tackle problems of basic literacy and numeracy in Indian schools that existed even before the pandemic offers us exactly the platform we require to address the covid-triggered learning crisis. The real on-the-ground measures that the policy envisions would greatly strengthen efforts at recovering deep losses on foundational literacy and

numeracy. Combined with the policy's large commitment to transforming the care and education of the youngest children, not only could we emerge from today's learning crisis, but perhaps come out ahead if the investments envisioned by the NEP are made in the 'Foundational Stage'(ages 3 to 8).

Second, the bold vision of a new National Curricular Framework (NCF), intended to develop real capacities, nurture the dispositions of good and engaged citizens, and develop constitutional values in our children, while being less burdensome and moving away from rote learning, is exactly what is needed in this time of a learning crisis. In simple terms, we must reconfigure and cut down the syllabus to the essentials that enable those curricular goals. Already, processes are underway to develop the NCF, with significant inputs from states. While this process of NCF development would take some time, as it should, the interim outputs can be used by states to appropriately reconfigure the education syllabus across classes such that lost learning can be recovered in a reasonable period of time.

Third, the complete redesign of the very approach to education in classes 9 to 12 that the policy has could be placed at the core of enabling children who are in higher classes to graduate from school without any learning deficit. This would include a fundamental re-imagination of how Board examinations are conducted and what they should be assessing.

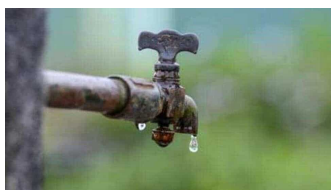
Fourth, 'school complexes' are the NEP's centrepiece of how school organization and governance should be restructured for better outcomes. At its core, this is about forming communities of schools, teachers and learners, such that they can support one another, including by the sharing of resources. Speedy formation of school complexes by various states would provide much needed educational support in the midst of this crisis, given how resource-starved some of our schools are.

MORE FROM THIS SECTION [See All](#)



[Premium](#) [Premium](#)

[Indian brands are big fish in a small pond](#)



[Premium](#) [Premium](#)

[Rethinking the use of water for economic growth](#)



[Premium](#) [Premium](#)

[Seven million mission? Maybe not](#)



Premium Premium

Mint Explainer: Can Biden bring hi-tech manufacturing b ...

Fifth, the NEP's overall thrust to empower and trust teachers, and to grant academic autonomy to institutions, is just the kind of effort that is required on the ground for us to respond with adaptiveness and flexibility, given the nature of learning losses, which vary not only across classes, but importantly across children in the same class.

As can be expected, states are at different levels of understanding and implementing the NEP. It would do all our children a world of good if, irrespective of political differences with the Union government, states were to grab the NEP 2020 and implement it energetically. In the long term, this will be transformative for education, while also providing an immediate engine that can help us deal with the learning-loss crisis that has engulfed our children.

Anurag Behar is CEO of Azim Premji Foundation

Catch all the [Business News](#), [Market News](#), [Breaking News](#) Events and [Latest News](#) Updates on Live Mint. Download The [Mint News App](#) to get Daily Market Updates.

[More](#) [Less](#)

Subscribe to **Mint Newsletters**

* Enter a valid email

* Thank you for subscribing to our newsletter.

[Post your comment](#)