

GCMUN Conference 2025

Lok Sabha STUDY GUIDE

**Reforms in India's Exam-Centric Education System: Building Equity, Access, and
Mental Health Resilience**

Letter from the EB

At the outset, on behalf of the Executive Board, I extend a warm welcome to all of you and congratulate you on being a part of the Lok Sabha being simulated at GCMUN. The committee being simulated would, unlike most other simulations you must have heard of or been a part of, focus on political intellect, logical intellect, analytical application of thoughts, and strategic application of thoughts in addressing the issues at hand.

Kindly note, we are not looking for existing (impractical) solutions or statements that would be a copy-paste of what the person you are representing has already stated; instead, we seek an out-of-the-box solution from you, while knowing and understanding the impending limitations of the person you represent.

This introductory guide would be as abstract as possible and would just give you a basic perspective on what you can expect from the committee and areas wherein your research should be focused at this given point in time. Given the political and volatile nature of the agendas of the committee, your presence of mind and analytical aptitude are qualities that we at the Executive Board would be looking to test.

Kindly do not limit your research to the areas highlighted herein, but ensure that you logically deduce and push your research to areas associated with and in addition to the issues mentioned.

The objective of this background guide is to provide you with a “background” of the issue at hand; therefore, it might seem to some as not being comprehensive enough. We feel that “study guides” are detrimental to the individual growth of the delegate since they overlook a very important part of this activity, which is research. We are sure, however, that this background guide gives you a perfect launching pad to start with your research.

This guide shall deal with a skeletal overview of the agenda. The delay is intentional as we do not want to spoon-feed you with the research.

Just to let you know, the content provided in the BG is a compilation of various research and literary works of various authors and thinkers blended with the intellect of the Executive Board. It is to be noted that the content provided below in no way reflects the personal ideologies of the Executive Board and has been prepared keeping in mind a neutral point of view. Wishing you all very good luck.

Avinash Tripathy – Speaker

Hriday Adani – Deputy Speaker

Introduction

The Indian education system has placed significant importance on technical knowledge, science, and traditional academic disciplines, overlooking other areas such as sports, arts, research, and innovation. A great example of this systemic neglect is the journey of Neeraj Chopra, India's renowned javelin thrower and Olympic gold medallist. Despite his exceptional talent, Neeraj faced challenges in accessing appropriate training facilities and support from India. To fulfill his full potential, he had to seek world-class training and infrastructure in countries like South Africa and Turkey. This points toward a profound issue where non-traditional fields lack the recognition, resources, and support they rightfully deserve.

Furthermore, a similar concern exists in the field of research and innovation. The Indian education system often prioritizes rote learning and examination scores over critical thinking and creativity. This neglect of research and innovation has hindered countless opportunities for groundbreaking discoveries and technological progress. It is crucial to acknowledge that cultivating a culture of innovation can significantly contribute to the nation's economic and social development.

Emphasizing research and innovative problem-solving can clear the way for Indian startups, which have already started to redefine the economy. Companies like Swiggy, Zomato, and Hotstar are examples of how innovation and entrepreneurial thinking can create solutions that not only address societal needs but also generate employment and boost economic growth. However, these success stories are the exceptions rather than the rule, primarily because our education system fails to equip students with the skills, mindset, and support necessary for innovation and development.

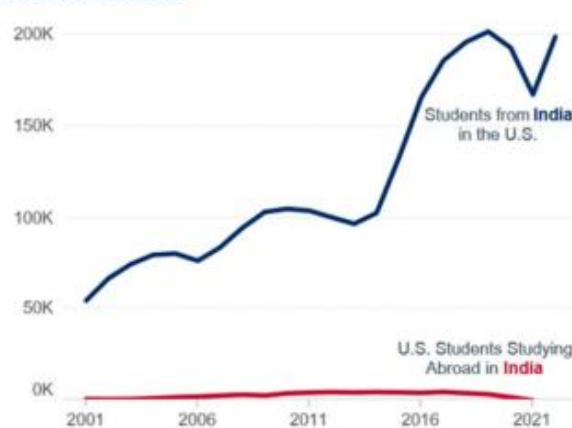
This report aims to highlight the reforms required in the Indian education system to create a more balanced, inclusive, and forward-thinking framework. By providing equal opportunities in sports, arts, and research, and by encouraging innovation and creativity, India can empower its youth to excel in diverse fields and transform challenges into opportunities. A reformed education system will not only nurture individual talent but also lay the foundation for an innovative and self-reliant nation.

Indian education, in comparison to foreign education, is more rigid and focuses more on theoretical knowledge. Foreign education provides a variety of subjects to choose from. More emphasis is given to interactive learning and student-centric methods of teaching in foreign universities. Due to a lack of proper resources for higher studies, research, and innovation, a large number of students migrate to developed countries. These developed countries not only offer good education but also better lifestyles, which lure them to settle there. The country that provided basic education to students who migrated to other countries for higher education and settled there does not get anything in return from them, and one of the main culprits is the lack of proper higher education. Mostly Indian students tend to migrate to the USA, UK, Canada, Germany, and other European countries in search of higher education. Taking the case of the USA, there has been a hike from 50K to 200K students who migrated from India for their higher education.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS BY ACADEMIC LEVEL

Academic Level	2020/21	2021/22	%Total	%Change
Undergraduate	23,734	27,545	13.8	16.1
Graduate	68,869	102,024	51.2	48.1
Non-degree	1,378	1,425	0.7	3.4
OPT	73,601	68,188	34.2	-7.4

2000/01 - 2021/22



Source: The Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange is a comprehensive information resource on international students in the United States and U.S. students studying abroad. It is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State with funding provided by the U.S. Government and is published by IIE. For more information, visit www.opendoorsdata.org.

Talking about the ranking at the global level, universities around the world are ranked based on the quality of education they provide, surveys of people considering studying in universities in a particular country, and opportunities those countries' education systems provide to students. India stands at 33rd rank according to the 2020 survey. Still, there is progressive growth in education in India. In 2018, it stood at 40th rank, and in 2019 it stood at 35th. Though the progress is slow, this consecutive change proves that India is trying to push itself up and stand among the greatest.

National Education Policy – Concerns or Criticisms

The National Education Policy (2020) has faced criticism and scrutiny from various authors for a multitude of reasons. For instance, Varma et al. (2021) highlighted numerous challenges associated with implementing NEP 2020, including the necessity for cooperation from states, the need for strong willpower to secure adequate funding, insufficient basic infrastructure, a shortage of human resources, complexities in selecting a medium of instruction in schools with diverse mother tongues, and more.

In a survey of college students, Arun et al. (2022) noted several challenges of NEP 2020, including an overburdening syllabus, lack of infrastructure, focus on regional languages, disparities in human resources between rural and urban areas, and concerns regarding ensuring quality education.

Many experts have raised concerns regarding the adequacy of financial resources and necessary infrastructure for effective implementation of the policy. K. Kumar et al. (2021) emphasized that developed nations allocate as much as 20% of their GDP toward education. To align the Indian education sector with global standards, India would also need to significantly increase its expenditure on education. However, achieving the proposed changes outlined in NEP 2020, such as constructing new physical infrastructure and developing digital and technological resources, as well as modernizing existing government structures into

contemporary higher education facilities, would be a huge task demanding substantial investments and an extended period for implementation.

Concerns about the policy's promotion of utopian aspirations, such as the establishment of digital libraries, modern digitally enabled classrooms, and the introduction of digital literacy and coding in underdeveloped rural educational institutions, have been raised. In their critical analysis of the policy, Deep and Singh (2022) highlighted that insufficient financial resources, inadequate attention to teacher welfare, and accessibility issues concerning modern technology could present significant challenges in the implementation of the policy.

Menon (2020) also noted that a drastic increase in enrolment in higher education institutions without adequate funding would not help to realize the stated objectives. In a separate study examining the emphasis of NEP on children with disabilities, Anant Athavale et al. (2021) regarded NEP 2020 as overly ambitious and utopian as it overlooks the harsh reality that many Indian schools are severely understaffed to accommodate changes necessary for students with disabilities. Additionally, they noted the lack of preparedness among instructors to undertake specialized duties and to establish individual-accessible alternative homeschooling systems.

In addition to the lack of funding and infrastructure, several authors have also questioned the absence of detailed strategic plans, noting it as a hurdle in the effective implementation of the policy. While discussing the political and economic perspective of NEP 2020, Haragopal (2020) argued that the policy lacks alignment with the vision outlined in the Constitution of India. The author highlighted the imbalance in NEP's focus on vocational education, which deviates from the previous emphasis on providing general education to students until Class 10, suggesting that a well-rounded education is essential as society necessitates individuals to be both skilled and adequately educated.

Further, Muralidharan et al. (2022) have argued that a customer-centric education system may destroy the fundamental essence of education considering the various moral, ethical, and cultural issues in it. Lindqvist et al. (2021) raised doubts about the sustainability of the 4-year degree programs proposed under NEP 2020, citing the example of the now-scrapped 4-year undergraduate program at Delhi University.

Soni (2021) proposed that the NEP 2020 framework lacks three crucial pillars: infrastructure, funding, and a well-detailed strategic plan, which contributes to the complexity of its implementation. Kannan (2021) emphasized the numerous challenges hindering the realization of NEP 2020 objectives, encompassing issues such as absence of universal access to higher education, the limited autonomy for teachers and institutions to innovate, inadequate career advancement mechanisms, the dearth of research and innovation, substandard governance and leadership at higher education institutions, compromised regulation, costly digital infrastructure development, and inadequate internet connectivity for digital learning. These obstacles collectively impede the successful implementation of NEP 2020.

A work by Govinda (2020) has criticized NEP 2020 for being immersed in abstract concepts, acronyms, and prosaic imagination, away from the real educational landscape encompassing individuals and institutions along with their limitations. The disparity between the proposed ideas and the present realities poses a hindrance for the effective implementation of the policy. The author suggested that the policy needs to focus on ensuring basic infrastructure, academic resources, and an adequate number of qualified teachers for better realization of its objectives.

There are apprehensions about the potential exacerbation of centre-state conflicts due to the policy's centralized approach. In a study, Batra (2020) observed that implementing a standardized and centrally controlled system could intensify conflicts between the central and state governments. This is particularly pertinent in a linguistically and culturally diverse nation like India, where the primary constitutional responsibility for education lies with the state governments.

The past studies expressed apprehensions regarding the shortage of skilled educators, citing it as a significant obstacle to the successful implementation of NEP. They emphasize the critical importance of well-trained teachers in realizing the objectives outlined in the policy.

Sengupta (2021) underscored that the shortage of skilled teachers, inadequate finance allocated to the education sector, and inadequate infrastructure pose significant challenges to the successful implementation of the policy. According to a survey conducted by Maji and Lohia (2023), respondents expressed concerns that the insufficiently trained staff to meet the requirements of NEP 2020 could impact the effectiveness of the policy.

Smitha (2020) highlighted the oversight of prioritizing skill enhancement programs for teachers within the policy. Observing the deficiency in teachers' skill sets necessary for implementing NEP 2020, Santmajor et al. (2022) recommended conducting workshops, seminars, conferences, and enhancing teacher education curricula.

Serious apprehensions have been raised regarding the use of regional languages, referring to it as a significant hurdle in effectively implementing the policy. Several authors have also emphasized the need for addressing language barriers to ensure the policy's successful implementation. A study by Singh Kaurav et al. (2021) criticized NEP for the prominence given to local languages, as it leads to a question of how the students will face the challenge of learning at a later stage when most of the study material is available in English. A similar view was put forward by K. Kumar et al. (2021) (Times of India report), where the author noted a possible lack of confidence among the students taught in regional languages at school while communicating with their peers who are taught in English. The author fears that this might widen the gap between the sections in society.

There are also concerns regarding the repercussions of the privatization of education. Arun et al. (2022), along with Smitha (2020), voiced apprehensions regarding the commercialization and privatization of education under the new policy, emphasizing the potential risks associated with private capital penetrating into the education sector. Menon (2020) raised apprehension regarding "private philanthropy" suggested in the policy, which, according to

the author, is a kind of oxymoron as private investments in higher education will always be linked to profits, which may not give equal access to all aspirants.

Batra (2020) also exhibited unease over the fact that privatization of elementary education encouraged by NEP 2020 could make way for regularizing low-fee-paying schools with poor infrastructure. Muralidharan et al. (2022) have expressed concerns regarding the lack of a road map in the new policy to tackle the growing malady of capitation fees imposed by private colleges, often managed by powerful politicians and religious groups.

Therefore, the concerns raised by several experts regarding NEP 2020 underscore the complex challenges facing the education sector in India. From inadequate funding and infrastructure to issues of regional language implementation and disparities in rural and urban resources, the policy faces multifaceted obstacles that hinder its effective implementation. Addressing these challenges will require comprehensive strategies that prioritize fundamental infrastructure, equitable access, skilled teaching staff, and a clear vision that encompasses the diverse realities of India's educational landscape.

National Education Policy – Benefits

Despite criticisms and concerns, NEP 2020 has received praise from several authors for its ambitious vision and comprehensive scope. Past studies have highlighted the importance of universal access to quality education, flexible education systems, and holistic approaches aligned with national development goals.

Prabu and Mookkiah (2021) underlined the significance of providing universal access to quality education as pivotal to India's progress and global leadership across various domains, including economic development, social justice, scientific advancement, equality, national integration, and cultural preservation. Similarly, D. Kumar (2020) commended NEP for its forward-thinking approach in making the education system more flexible, multidisciplinary, and aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The author emphasized that NEP's focus on pragmatic knowledge over rote learning fosters the development of scientific acumen and values-based education among students.

Likewise, Patil (2021) underscored the importance of a well-defined and futuristic education policy for a country's economic and social advancement, praising NEP 2020 for its holistic and multidisciplinary approach to education. Kalyani (2020) observed that NEP 2020 is geared toward transforming the traditional education model into a globally competitive system with increased flexibility. The policy's emphasis on multidisciplinary education is seen as a catalyst for enhancing students' capabilities and preparing them for a dynamic future.

In another study, Gupta and Choubey (2021) pointed out that the multi-entry and exit option for students will create an understanding of allied streams and interests; however, the authors pointed out that in professional streams such as engineering and allied areas, it is not a simple task. Kannan (2021) appreciated NEP's initiatives such as the Multidisciplinary Education

Research Universities (MERU) program, emphasis on research and innovation, and integration of traditional Vedic education with modern educational practices as commendable steps forward.

NEP 2020 is being praised for its emphasis on local language, vocational training, and holistic development. Kaurav et al. (2021) emphasized that NEP's focus on local languages and flexibility in the education system through vocational and skill-oriented subjects would not only reduce dropout rates but also enhance critical thinking and holistic development of students. Furthermore, they highlighted the policy's focus on nurturing students' attitudes and aptitudes, fostering industry readiness, and encouraging entrepreneurial skills among students.

Saini et al. (2021) noted that NEP 2020 aims to enhance critical thinking, cognitive learning, and skill-based learning for the betterment of the education system. In another study, Sunny (2021) praised the inclusion of vocational skill training in schools from Class 6, noting its potential to dignify the perception of labor. Additionally, Lata et al. (2022) observed that NEP 2020's efforts in promoting an art-integrated approach would strengthen the connection between education and culture, facilitating the preservation and nurturing of Indian cultural values in the teaching-learning process.

NEP is lauded by several experts for promoting the integration of technology, innovative evaluation systems, and student-centric reforms to achieve a transformative shift toward a more dynamic and inclusive education system. Anita et al. (2020) highlighted NEP 2020's emphasis on integrating technology into teaching practices, which facilitates engaging and attractive classroom experiences while fostering interdisciplinary learning by breaking down rigid subject boundaries.

Verma and Kumar (2021) appreciated the policy for several positive aspects, including its focus on assessing knowledge rather than rote memorization, leveraging artificial intelligence for student progress evaluation, and reforms in board and semester examination formats. Additionally, Wankhade (2021) noted NEP 2020's transformation of higher education from information-centric to innovation-centric, transitioning toward a student-centric approach that aligns with 21st-century educational reforms.

The study further lauded the policy's provisions for autonomy in education, administration, examinations, and evaluations, as well as its emphasis on merit-based admissions, faculty selection, and the establishment of Boards of Governors. Moreover, the author highlighted the biennial accreditation process mandated by NEP 2020 as instrumental in driving continuous improvement within the education sector.

Kurien and Chandramana (2020) emphasized the significant achievements made by NEP 2020, particularly its implementation of real-time evaluation systems and the establishment of a consultative monitoring and review framework, which enable continual self-improvement within the education system. They also acknowledged the policy's recognition of the necessity to cultivate professionals across diverse fields, spanning from agriculture to artificial intelligence, thereby equipping aspiring students with essential skill sets. However,

the authors underscored the critical importance of effective and timely implementation to ensure the policy's success.

Anita et al. (2020) also drew attention to the internationalization of education achieved through the establishment of foreign universities in India for promoting international research funding, providing international teachers and learners, and facilitating the writing of research papers with international co-authors. Furthermore, the authors also noted that the establishment of the National Research Foundation will promote quality research in higher education and encourage researchers.

Underscoring the commitment of NEP toward lifelong learning and societal development, Gandhi (2022) reviewed the role of NEP 2020 in promoting adult literacy and lifelong learning programs. The study pointed out that NEP 2020 will serve as a valuable source for the effective implementation of adult education and lifelong learning programs through the provision of appropriate infrastructures like special Adult Education Centres (AECs) and Vocational Training Centres (VTCs), and the recruitment of well-trained, skilled, and highly qualified teachers, as well as the sharing of infrastructure of educational institutes.

The praise garnered by NEP 2020 from various authors underscores its ambitious vision and wide-ranging impact on India's educational landscape. From fostering universal access to quality education to promoting multidisciplinary learning and innovative teaching methodologies, NEP 2020 has been commended for its holistic approach toward national development goals.

Conclusion:

The study guide covered the primary stakeholders — the teachers and learners — to get a glance at their hopes and fears regarding NEP 2020. The insights emerging from this study guide are intended to aid the members in charting out time-bound action plans for implementation of the policy, keeping in mind the resource constraints and the challenges expressed by the experts mentioned in this guide. Further, the study has not delved into the comparison of India's policy with that of other countries. This leaves much ground for further research on the subject.

Implementing NEP is a multi-stakeholder mammoth exercise which warrants coordination among existing bodies as well as the proposed regulatory and monitoring institutions at the state and central levels. While some of the prior research (D. Kumar, 2020) has criticized the policy for being utopian in its scale and vision, it is best to plan a phased implementation that can first prove effective action in the right direction to attract all actors to converge their efforts.

The government, however, must certainly take note of the fact that for the policy to reach its highest potential would demand greater investment in education. The emphasis on digitizing processes for monitoring programs, learning assessments, and the classroom experience itself

would also need our policies on IT protection, data privacy, and child protection and welfare against overuse and abuse of technology to be reviewed, debated over, and updated.

While there are voices captured in this study guide that express concerns over a multidisciplinary curriculum that may leave the student devoid of any specialization, one has to note the evolving job market dynamics that can insulate a generalist from drastic changes vis-à-vis a specialist relying on a single skill set. The focus on quality research is certainly welcomed by all stakeholders, as it will pave the way for cross-sectoral innovation.

The effects of enhanced exposure to cultural activities, extracurricular interests, sports, and arts on cognitive abilities, academic success, happiness, health, and wellbeing of the student can only be determined in the long run. The NEP thus presents a fertile ground for researchers to study a national experiment in the making to determine effective policies in education. The cross-utilization of existing infrastructure and facilities — for vocational training or adult education — is certainly putting the resources to good use, given the paucity of amenities.

The students particularly lauded the fact that the policy aims at leveling the opportunities through bridge courses for disadvantaged students and financial assistance for the less privileged.

There is still, however, a need to educate all students on the changes and the rationale behind them so they can make informed decisions regarding their current as well as future academic pursuits and their careers. Also, since teachers are the backbone of the education system, it is essential to build their capacities to guide, mentor, counsel, and educate their students in this regard.

Overall, the majority of the respondents found the policy to be more flexible, futuristic, inclusive, and equitable.

This study guide makes significant contributions by elucidating the perceptions and expectations of primary stakeholders regarding the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 in India. We have identified key challenges and opportunities for policy implementation, underscoring the importance of phased execution, investment in education, and capacity-building for teachers. Moreover, the study sheds light on the need for coordination among multiple stakeholders and the importance of informed decision-making in shaping the future of education in India.