A Comparative Study of India's Education Policy 1986 and The New Education Policy 2023 Assessing Continuities, Changes & Implications

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Abstract:

Education has been around since man first walked the earth's surface. Education is more than just reading books and earning a degree from a university; it is the physical, mental, financial, and economic development of an individual. The goal of education is to bring about an individual's overall growth and to make him an efficient participant actively contributing to the advancement of the future nation. Every country designs its education system to reflect and support its distinct socio-cultural character, while also addressing the rising demand for employment and professional opportunities. The country has reached a point in its economic and technological development when measures must be taken to ensure that the rewards of change reach all segments of society. The National Education Policy of 1986 centred on a standardised curriculum structure comprising shared core and adaptable elements. The child-centric approach is emphasised in elementary education, followed by secondary education, which emphasises girl-child education as well as the education of minorities. The National Education Policy-2023, which was modified after 34 years, emphasises a more holistic approach with multidisciplinary courses, and students are aided with a bucket system to choose subjects that align with their interests. This research focuses on a comparison of the main characteristics of the NEPs of 1986 and 2023. A Comparative Study of India's Education Policy 1986 and the New Education Policy 2023 will be discussed in this paper.

Keywords: Education, Career, Courses, Economic Growth, Scientific Advancement.

Introduction:

Education plays a crucial role in unlocking one's complete human potential, promoting equality and justice within society, and fostering national advancement. As stated in the Directive Principles of State Policy and Fundamental Duties, providing universal access to quality education is critical to India's continued ascent and leadership on the global stage in terms of economic growth, social justice and equality, scientific advancement, national integration, and cultural preservation. The previous Education Policy of India was passed and implemented in 1986. The National Education Policy (NEP) for India was updated, reviewed, and approved on July 29, 2020, after 34 years. [1]

The initiative is a significant milestone for India's education system, and it will undoubtedly make India an appealing destination for higher education around the world. The policy is founded on the concepts of "Access, Equity, Quality, Affordability & Accountability" and will transform India into a flourishing knowledge powerhouse. NEP 2020 emphasizes systematic and institutional improvements in Indian HEIs

to control, govern, and foster transdisciplinary academic and research. Surprisingly, the new education policy's main focus is to create an educational system well-resourced and multifunctional through the unification of multiple educational institutions and disciplines that are always striving to meet the needs. [2]

Brief of Policies on Education:

National Education Policy 1986:

Rajiv Gandhian government introduced a new National Education Policy in 1986. The new strategy called for a "special emphasis on eliminating disparities and equalizing educational opportunities," Particularly for women in India, as well as for Scheduled Tribes (ST) and Scheduled Castes (SC), the aim is to achieve socioeconomic inclusivity. To achieve this, the suggestion involves enlarging opportunities for scholarships and adult education.

After gaining independence in 1947, the Indian government has funded several initiatives to combat illiteracy in both rural and urban areas of the country. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, the inaugural Minister of Education in India, envisioned a comprehensive centralized control of education across the nation, aiming for a uniform educational framework. The federal government created the University Education Commission (1948-1949) and the Secondary Education Commission (1952-1953) to devise strategies for modernizing the education system in India. Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, endorsed the Science Policy Resolution.

The Nehru government financed the creation of high-quality scientific education institutions such as the Indian Institutes of Technology. In 1961, the Indian government established the National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) as an autonomous body. Its purpose is to guide both the central and state governments regarding the formulation and execution of education policies. [14]

Drawing from the recommendations of the Education Commission (1964-1966), the government led by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi introduced the initial National Education Policy in 1968. This policy aimed at achieving 'radical reform' and equal access to education, to promote national unity and foster cultural and economic advancement. The effort supported the idea of mandatory education for all youngsters up to the age of 14, in accordance with the Indian Constitution, along with an emphasis on enhanced teacher training and credentials. The strategy highlighted the importance of learning regional languages and introduced the 'three-language formula' for secondary education.

This formula consisted of English instruction, the official language of the state in which the school was located, and Hindi, the national language. Language education has been seen as essential for bridging the divide between the general population and the educated class. Although the decision to designate Hindi as the national language sparked controversy, the objective of the strategy was to extensively encourage the adoption and study of Hindi, to establish a common language for all people in India. The policy also encouraged the teaching of Sanskrit, an ancient language that was seen as an important component of India's history and legacy. The 1968 NPE proposed increasing education spending to 6% of national revenue. [15]

The National Policy on Education (1986) envisaged a national education system that would take determined efforts toward universalizing primary education and broadening the exposure and scope of adult literacy, thereby becoming an instrument for disparity reduction. Figure 2 depicts the eleven important features of the national policy on education (1986). [17]
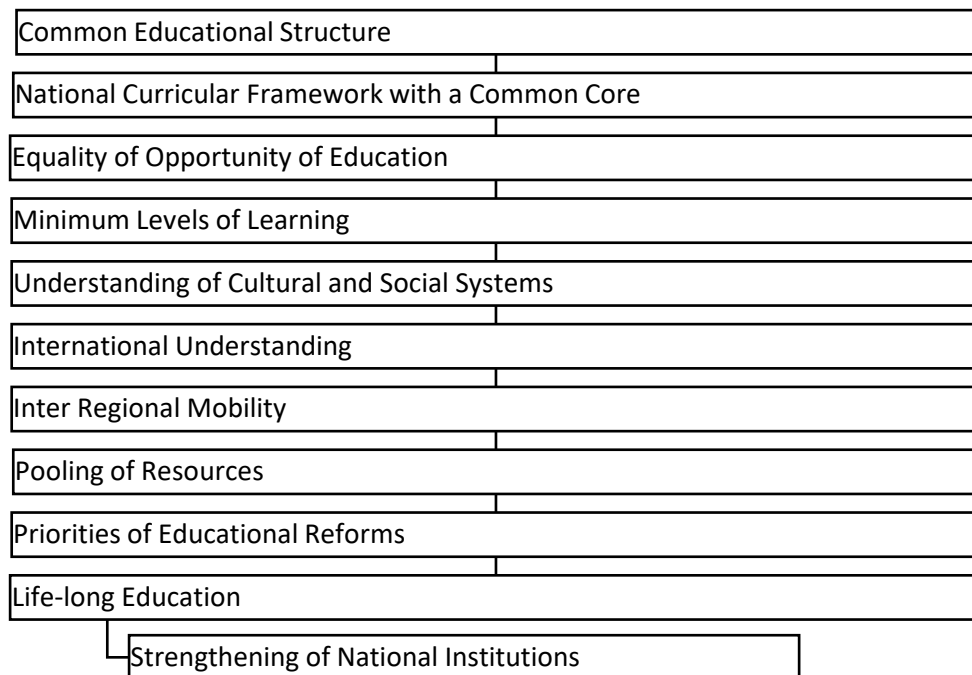
Figure 2: The eleven salient features of the national policy on education (1986)

Challenges of National Policy of Education 1986:

The education policies do not address the status of commercially administered schools across the country, operated by certain individuals or organizations. So yet, no education programs have proposed strategies to reduce the disparities in educational standards between poor and rich students. [3]

The education policy of 1986 advocated for the establishment of an All-India Educational Service. If this recommendation is implemented, the already-existing chasm between teachers and bureaucracy will grow even wider. During the British occupation of India, the All-India Educational Service was discontinued. The propriety of restarting it does not make sense. [4]

Admission to university classes is based on aptitude, according to numerous education policies. Many young people will be denied a university education as a result of these traits. Some detractors argue that the Open University can never be a good substitute for a normal university education.

The education policy of 1986 Education policy suggested the imposition of capitation fees for students admitted to technical institutes. This policy might not be regarded as a sustainable approach since it could potentially deprive deserving students of technical education if they cannot afford the charges. Graduates who obtained their technical education through capitation fees might face challenges in their chosen fields, leading to concerns about their competence and reliability as workers. [5]

New Education Policy 2023:

The New National Education Policy represents a turning point in India's educational system. On July 29, 2020, the Ministry of Education (formerly known as MHRD) made significant modifications to our education policy after 34 years of following the same guidelines. The Indian government just passed the New National Education Policy for the year 2023. [16]

Table 1: New National Education Policy 2023

Name of the Education Policy	National Education Policy 2023
Organized by	Ministry of Education, India
The motto of the Policy	Educate, Encourage and Enlighten
Launch Date	29 July 2020
Number of Editions of Education Policy in India	3 (1968, 1986, and 2020)
Major Amendment from the Last Education Policy	Replacement of 10+2 Structure by 5+3+3+4 Structure Access, Equity, Quality, and Accountability
Aim of the Policy	100% Youth and Ault Literacy

National Education Policy 2023:

The National Education Policy, which the Government of India modified in 2023, governs the development of educational policies in schools and colleges. Significant modifications have been made in the new policy to position India as a global knowledge giant.

Except for medical and law courses, education from preschool to secondary school will be universalized to reach a 100% Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) in school education by

Goals of Education Policy 2023:

- Instill excellent governance in children.
- Increase transparency in education policy.
- Highlight the utilization of technology.
- Place a premium on evaluation.
- Teach several languages.
- Foster creativity and logical thinking in children.
- Recognize and nurture each child's potential.
- Improve children's literacy and numeracy skills.

Features of National Education Policy 2023:

- The Ministry of HRM has been renamed the Ministry of Education.
- Education has been made universal under the National Education Policy (save for medical and legal studies).
- New education pattern of 5+3+3+4 (12 years of schooling and 3 years of pre-schooling)
- Vocational testing internship to begin in class VI
- Education up to class V to be taught in the mother tongue or regional language
- No science, commerce, or art streams - students can pick any topic
- Beginning with class VI, students will be taught to code.
- All schools will be digitally equipped.
- E-content will be translated into regional languages; and
- Virtual labs will be developed.

Some Highlights of Education Policy 2023:

- Three or four-year undergraduate programs with a variety of exit possibilities and certifications.
- Establishment of an academic credit bank to store and transmit digital academic credits.
- A focus on e-learning to lessen reliance on textbooks.
- A national testing agency that administers a common entrance exam for admission to higher education.
- By 2030, each district should have one multidisciplinary higher education institution.
- By 2040, all higher education institutions should be multidisciplinary.
- The Higher Education Commission of India is a centralized authority for all higher education (excluding medical and legal education).
- The Higher Education Commission of India comprises four main divisions: the National Higher Education Regulatory Council, the General Education Council, the Higher Education Council, and the National Accreditation Council.
- Equal treatment for public and private education, with modifications for special education. [6]

Review of Literature:

The policy statement emphasizes the creation of introductory, professional, and vocational courses tailored to students' needs. The aim of developing these courses is to enhance students' skills and aptitude. It also focuses on developing students' industry readiness and entrepreneurial orientation. The National Education Policy strives to enhance the use of technology in education. There is a provision in the policy that technology or e-learning is essential. (Baber, 2019) [7]

This approach also endorsed the instruction of the ancient Sanskrit language, considering it a significant element of Indian culture and heritage. This policy was also designed to encourage physical education and the culture of sports and games. The NPE of 1968 proposed increasing education spending to 6% of national income (Govt. of India, 1968). [8]

Kaul et al. (2017) have identified a notable effect of preschool attendance during the early years on children's preparedness for school in three Indian states (Assam, Rajasthan, and Telangana). Those who engaged in cognitive development activities during preschool exhibited improved performance in school readiness evaluations. Recognizing the significance of early childhood education during the foundational stage of learning, the study recommends the incorporation of preschooling within the scope of the Right to Education (RTE) Act (2009). This act guarantees the right to elementary education (grades 1-8) for every child aged 6 to 14 in India. [9]

Indeed, a notable concern highlighted in the NEP 2020 is the insufficient training of Anganwadi workers/teachers in the curriculum and teaching methods of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE). This inadequacy necessitates training in early literacy, numeracy, and other relevant aspects of ECCE. Evaluations of the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) initiatives have generally revealed subpar performance due to ineffective implementation strategies and underutilization of resources, especially in delivering early childhood education and preparing children for school. (Mohapatra et al., 2021). [10]

Research Methodology:

This study's overall design was exploratory. This research seeks to examine the Indian education system, past National Education policies, their goals, implementation, areas of shortcomings, and the necessity for a new national education policy in India. Additionally, it will address the challenges that the new policy

might encounter. This report is an attempt by the researcher to investigate and compare several policies linked to the school education system in the post-independence period. [11]

Objectives:
- To identify and compare Continuities and Changes in key elements between India's National Education Policy 1986 and the New Education Policy 2023.
- To examine Curriculum and Pedagogical Shifts between the two policies, focusing on curriculum design, teaching methods, and learning approaches.
- To analyze the Rationale for Changes introduced in the New Education Policy 2023, considering the evolution from the policy framework of 1986.

Result and Discussion:

Growth of Indian Education System Post-Independence:

Because of the widespread illiteracy in the Indian school system, India has successfully adapted its education system to global norms. We've come a long way in schooling in the 70 years since our freedom. From then on, the image of education was extremely distinct. With more colleges and educational institutions, India has made significant progress in terms of overall literacy rates. In 2001, the literacy rate was 64.8%, and it grew to 73% in 2011. In 1951, it was 18.33 percent. India's higher education industry is currently the largest in the country, with more than 70 million students enrolled in less than two decades. [12]
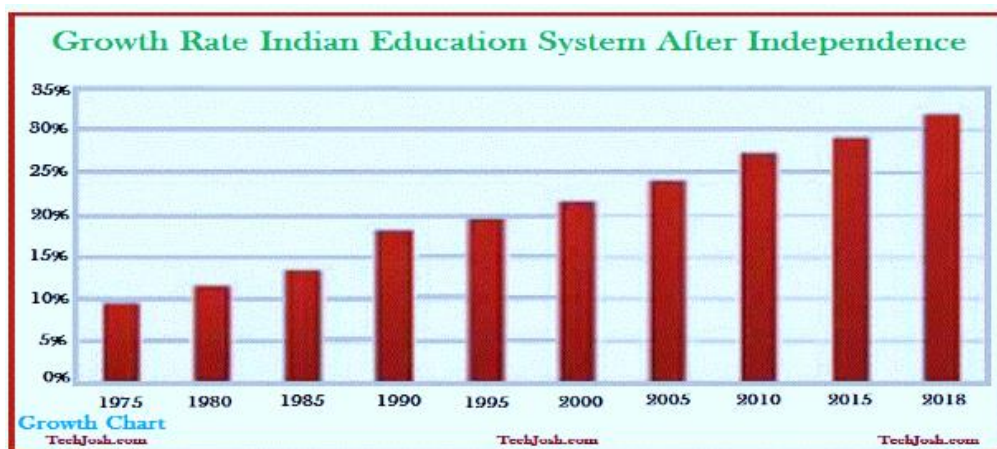
Figure 1: Growth of Indian Education System Post-Independence

In contrast to the tragic circumstances of 1947, more than 26 million students have already been admitted to the country, and there are more than 1.5 million schools, including 751 universities and 35,539 colleges. In 1947, we only had 19 colleges, 400 schools, and 5000 teachers.
- National Education Policy 1986: Action Plan 1992,
- The National Educational Policy (NEP) 2020 is the most recent education policy.

To fuel the development of the Indian education system, the current administration has committed to restructure it by enacting a comprehensive National Education Policy 2020. This aligns with the recent appeal by the Prime Minister to leverage the Fourth Industrial Revolution to drive India towards unprecedented achievements. The current implementation of the National Education Policy 2020 envisions a domestically focused education system for India. This policy aims to rapidly facilitate the

nation's transition into an equitable and dynamic information society by offering a top-notch education to all individuals. After gaining independence, the initial national education policy was issued in 1968, followed by the second policy in 1986, which was reinforced to a greater extent. [13]

Comparison of 1986 NPE And 2020 NEP:

The main comparable parameters are:

- Academic Structure
- Early Childhood Care and Education
- Curriculum
- Assessment Process
- Vocational Training

Table 2: Comparison of National Education policy 1986 & National Education policy 2023. [22]

S. No.	NEP 1986	NEP 2023
1	Education's role is to help pupils develop holistically.	The objective is to provide a broad, diverse, and interconnected liberal education.
2	It is followed a common schooling structure of 10 (5+3+2) +2+3+2.	A common education structure of 5+3++3+4+4+1 is to be followed.
3	The primary school level of education begins in a child's sixth year.	The first preliminary education begins in a child's third year as a Foundation stage.
4	Separately, two years of higher secondary education and two years of pre-university education were explored, with each having a board. Examinations.	Clubbing denotes two years of higher secondary school and two years of pre-university. Secondary education lasts four years. Except for board-level exams at the 10th and 12th grades, tests are proposed at the school level.
5	During the two years of higher secondary school, students select specialised fields and subjects, which may include scientific disciplines, commercial topics, or arts subjects.	For four years, the secondary education process comprises both standard and elective studies. The alternative emphasizes liberal educational policies.
6	Except for NITs and Medical Schools, undergraduate and postgraduate admissions are dependent on entrance exams administered at the college or state level.	All undergraduate and postgraduate admissions to public HEIs are based on National Testing Agency (NTA) scores obtained at the national level.

S. No.	NEP 1986	NEP 2023
7	Undergraduate studies last three to four years.	Undergraduate programs last four years, with the option of graduating in one year with a diploma, two years with an advanced diploma, three years with a pass degree, and four years with a project-based degree.
8	Postgraduate study lasts two years and focuses on specialization.	Postgraduate education lasts one to two years and focuses on specialization and research.
9	Many HEI institutions are linked with state universities and have no control over curriculum or testing.	Both HEIs, like schools, are autonomous, and there will be no connected colleges or state universities, as well as autonomy and evaluation.
10	The test is separate from the instruction process. Associated universities are responsible for overseeing both tests and evaluations. Teaching faculty members have a limited role in directly assessing pupils.	The test is part of a continuous assessment system. Faculty members who teach a subject are in charge of evaluation, whereas tests are handled by the department.
11	The teaching-learning strategy primarily relies on classroom instruction and fieldwork	The teaching-learning approach is primarily concerned with classroom instruction, fieldwork, and research investigations.
12	In the higher education sector, the expected student-faculty ratio is 20:1.	In the higher education sector, the expected student-faculty ratio is 30:1.
13	Members of the HEI faculty are regarded as facilitators of education to qualify students.	Faculty members at HEIs are known as partners and advisers who help students become innovators and innovative thinkers.
14	Students have the freedom to select topics within their field of study.	Students have the freedom to choose studies outside of their field of study.
15	A one-year degree program leads to the M.Phil. and provides preliminary experience in any subject, preparing students for research in various areas.	A one-year degree program leading to the M.Phil. Since learners are subjected to preliminary study in any field, it is discontinued in all undergraduate and post-graduate programs.

S. No.	NEP 1986	NEP 2023
16	Pass the NET/SLET as well as the appropriate master's degrees to become an assistant professor in any of the three types of HEIs.	To become an Assistant Professor in any of the three types of HEIs, a Ph.D. is required, as is passing the NET/SLET.
17	The support of research money provided by the UGC or other authorities is mostly for universities rather than colleges.	Research funding from the National Research Foundation and other organizations shall be allocated equally to all three types of HEIs based on a fair appraisal of the research proposal.
18	Accreditation of HEIs is required only for receiving cash and government services.	HEI certification is required to work and deliver the degree. Continuous service requires obligatory accreditation every five years.
19	The model of graded accreditation is used.	Instead of various entity classes, there would be a binary certification model that is yes or no.
20	Faculty performance and accountability are linked to advancement opportunities, but not directly tied to pay.	Promotion and remuneration are tied to faculty performance and accountability.
21	Credit system based on choice.	STEAM-based liberal education with a competency-based credit system.
22	Online distance learning (ODL) education can only be provided by licensed and authorized universities.	All three types of HEIs that are accredited to offer ODL must offer ODL.
23	Social participation is optional for all students as part of the program.	All undergraduate students must engage in social participation, which should total at least one full semester throughout their program.
24	Bachelor degree holders with four years of experience are ineligible for direct admission to Ph.D. programs unless they get a Master's degree.	Bachelor degree holders with proven research performance during the fourth year can be admitted directly to Ph.D. programs in both types of HEIs.
25	In certain programs, lateral entrance is allowed. However, there are limited provisions for multiple entry and exit options in undergraduate courses, including medical and paramedical	Even after graduation, many entrances and exits are allowed in medical and paramedical schools.

S. No.	NEP 1986	NEP 2023
	schools.	
26	Undergraduate programs range in length from three to four years, depending on the sort of program.	All undergraduate programs are four years long, with some programs allowing for a three-year exit with a degree certificate.
27	Currently, after graduation, instructors must complete a two-year B.Ed. program. As a result, high school instructors must commit 5 years following their secondary school graduation. to teach at higher the secondary level.	The suggested education for teachers is a four-year blended B.Ed. degree; this degree is a compulsory prerequisite in School Education Stages to become a faculty member.
28	Suggestions for increasing physical library facilities, such as books and periodicals.	Suggestions for increasing online library memberships, such as online books and online journals.
29	Colleges with single disciplines and colleges with many disciplines are both promoted.	Only multidisciplinary colleges and universities are supported. Both single-discipline colleges must be changed into independent multidisciplinary colleges or they will be closed and converted into autonomous interdisciplinary colleges. Monuments or public libraries, for example.
30	No foreign universities are permitted to operate directly in India.	Around 100 top-ranked international universities would be permitted to operate in India to compete with Indian universities.
31	The Ph.D. program's coursework includes research methods and in-depth study of core subjects related to the field.	The Ph.D. degree coursework consists of research methods, teaching and curriculum development, and in-depth study of core subjects related to the field.
32	There are no structured and genuine university and college science support organizations.	A new entity, the National Research Foundation (NRF), will be set up to provide funding for competitive and innovative research projects across all types and disciplines.

ECCE (Early Childhood Care and Education) Foundation of Learning:

This strategy aims to provide free, secure, and top-notch care and education that suits the developmental needs of children aged 3 to 6 years by the year 2025. Since there is a significant learning crisis in India right now since children are enrolled in pre-primary yet fail to achieve fundamental abilities. [23]

Figure 3: Ensuring Universal Access to Education at all Levels

Conclusion:

The National Education Policy 2023 is a long-overdue and comprehensive reform that intends to make the Indian education system more inclusive, flexible, and learner-centered. The new strategy is intended to address present issues and shortcomings in the education sector and to provide quality education to all students, regardless of socioeconomic background. The strategy proposes a comprehensive and integrated approach to education that focuses on skill development, multi-disciplinary learning, and encouraging creativity and critical thinking. It also emphasizes the use of technology and digital resources to improve learning. The new policy's implementation will necessitate the collaboration and support of all stakeholders, including the government, educational institutions, teachers, students, parents, and industry.

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