New Education Policy 2020

Why in news?

The Union Cabinet cleared a new National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.

What purpose does an NEP serve?

- **Purpose** - An NEP is a comprehensive framework to guide the development of education in the country.
- In 1964, Kothari Commission was constituted to draft a national and coordinated policy on education.
- Based on the suggestions of this Commission, Parliament passed the first NEP in 1968.
- **NEPs till now** - In 1968, the first NEP came under the Prime Ministership of Indira Gandhi.
- In 1986, the second NEP came under Rajiv Gandhi (Revised in 1992).
- The third one is the NEP 2020 under Narendra Modi.

What are the key takeaways of NEP 2020?

- **School education** - The new NEP focuses on overhauling the curriculum and easier Board exams.
- It also focused on a reduction in the syllabus to retain core essentials and thrust on experiential learning and critical thinking.
- It pitches for a “5+3+3+4” design of school education in the place of a “10+2” structure.
- This design will be corresponding to age groups 3-8 years (foundational stage), 8-11 (preparatory), 11-14 (middle), and 14-18 (secondary).
- This brings early childhood education (pre-school education for children of ages 3 to 5) under the ambit of formal schooling.
- The mid-day meal programme will be extended to pre-school children.
- The NEP says students until Class 5 should be taught in their mother tongue or regional language.
- **Higher education** - The NEP proposes to open up Indian higher education to foreign universities.
- It proposes to dismantle the UGC and the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE).
- It proposes to introduce a 4-year multidisciplinary UG programme with

multiple exit options, and discontinuation of the M Phil programme.
- It also proposes phasing out of all institutions offering single streams.
- It says that all universities and colleges must aim to become multidisciplinary by 2040.

How will these reforms be implemented?

- The NEP only provides a broad direction and is not mandatory to follow.
- Since education is a concurrent subject, the reforms proposed can only be implemented collaboratively by the Centre and the states.
- The government has set a target of 2040 to implement the entire policy.
- The government plans to set up subject-wise committees with members from relevant ministries at both the central and state levels.
- These committees will help in developing implementation plans for each aspect of the NEP.
- Planning will be followed by a yearly joint review of progress against targets set.

What does the emphasis on mother tongue/regional language mean?

- Such an emphasis is not new: Most government schools in the country are doing this already.
- As for private schools, it is unlikely that they will be asked to change their medium of instruction.
- The provision on mother tongue as medium of instruction was not compulsory for states.
- As education is concurrent subject, the policy clearly states that kids will be taught in their mother tongue/regional language wherever possible.

What about the children of multilingual parents?

- The NEP said that the teachers will be encouraged to use a bilingual approach.
- This approach will help those students whose home language may be different from the medium of instruction.

How will the higher education be opened to foreign players?

- The document states universities from among the top 100 in the world will be able to set up campuses in India.
- But the document doesn't elaborate the parameters to define the top 100.
- The government may use the 'QS World University Rankings'.
- However, the HRD Ministry needs to bring in a new law that includes details of how foreign universities will operate in India.

- It is not clear if a new law would enthuse the best universities abroad to set up campuses in India.

How will the 4-year multidisciplinary bachelor's programme work?

- Under this proposed 4-year programme, students can exit,
    1. After one year with a certificate,
    2. After two years with a diploma, and
    3. After three years with a bachelor's degree.
- Four-year bachelor's programmes generally include a certain amount of research work.
- Therefore, the student will get deeper knowledge in the subject s/he decides to major in.
- After four years, a UG student could enter a research degree programme directly depending on how well s/he has performed.
- However, master's degree programmes will continue to function as they do, following which student may do a PhD.

What impact will doing away with the M Phil programme have?

- This would not affect the higher education trajectory at all.
- In normal course, after a master's degree a student can register for a PhD programme.
- This is the current practice almost all over the world.
- In most universities, M Phil was a middle research degree between a master's and a PhD.
- MPhil degrees have slowly been phased out in favour of a direct PhD programme.

Source: The Indian Express

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