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New dimensions and pattern of Geography in New Education Policy-2020 (A synthesis)

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Introduction

The term "geography" was coined by the ancient Greeks, who needed a phrase to characterise the writings and maps that were assisting them in making sense of their surroundings. Geo means "earth" in Greek, while -graphy means "to write." Greeks learned about their homeland's location in relation to other locations, what their own and other places were like, and how people and environments were distributed through geography. The Greeks, of course, were not the only ones who were interested in geography.

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Throughout human history, most communities have attempted to comprehend their place in the world and the people that inhabit it.

Unfortunately , till date ; Geography in the Indian education system as a separate subject was clearly out of favour, according to the Report of the Secondary Education Commission (Mudaliar Commission] 1953, 81). Similarly, the Kothari Commission (1966) called for the study of geography as part of the social studies curriculum as a whole, in relation to the teaching of specific topics. According to the recommendation, geography should begin in upper primary school (classes V, VI, and VII).

If qualified teachers and the necessary facilities are available, social studies may be continued as an integrated course at the upper elementary stage; otherwise, history, geography, and civics should be studied separately. These courses will be handled as independent disciplines in secondary schools and will serve as the foundation for specialised study in social sciences at the upper secondary level (Kothari Education Commission-1966, 201). As a result, geography syllabuses were created separately, just like any other subject in the social science curriculum. The spiral approach was used in the material of study in the geography curriculum. Some of the concepts and themes were covered in greater depth in the curriculum as students progressed through the various stages of schooling.

According to an assessment of NCERT approved

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geography text books released during the final quarter of the twentieth century, regional geography, systematic geography, and practical geography are the three main methods to study that predominate in India's school curriculum. The concentric approach of learning was used in regional geography at the primary and upper primary levels, with the exception of India geography, which is taught at both the secondary and higher secondary levels.

The major thrust of regional geography teaching has been to help pupils develop geographical knowledge of micro, meso, and macro regional units in terms of the elements of regional environments and the manner of life of different people, eventually leading to the study of the entire Earth.

The constitution was changed in 1976 to include education in the concurrent list, and the country as a whole had a National Policy on Education (NPE-1986) for the first time in 1986, which envisions a National Curriculum Framework as a method of modernising education. The Policy suggested a national curriculum framework as a means of developing a national education system capable of responding to India's geographical and cultural diversity while maintaining common core values and equivalent educational standards. NPE-1986 stressed a curriculum that was relevant, flexible, and learner-centered. It advocated for a common core component in all school systems across the country.It was after a long interval of about a quarter of a century that the Indian education system moved to the next level by

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initiating a marked transformation in its structure and implementation through the National Education Policy 2020.

National Education Policy 2020

The underlying principles on which the NEP 2020 rests are- recognizing, identifying, and fostering the unique capabilities of each student , achieving foundational literacy and numeracy ,no hard separations between arts and sciences ,multidisciplinary and a holistic education, creativity and critical thinking ,synergy in curriculum across all levels of education, outstanding research and a 'light but tight' regulatory framework to ensure integrity, transparency, and resource efficiency.

The NEP 2020 grants recognition to the study of geography by emphasizing its urgent need to cater to the global challenges. It states that, 'With climate change, increasing pollution, and depleting natural resources, there will be a sizeable shift in how we meet the world's energy, water, food, and sanitation needs, again resulting in the need for new skilled labour, particularly in biology, chemistry, physics, agriculture, climate science, and social science. The growing emergence of epidemics and pandemics will also call for collaborative research in infectious disease management and development of vaccines and the resultant social issues heighten the need for multidisciplinary learning. There will be a growing demand for humanities and art, as India moves towards becoming a developed country as well as among the three largest economies in the world.'

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The recommendations of NEP focus on study of geography in the context of-

Study of the Indian Cultural Heritage

NEP 2020 reinstates that cultural and natural wealth truly makes India, “Incredible India”. The preservation and promotion of India ’s cultural wealth must be considered a high priority for the country, as it is truly important for the nation ’s identity as well as for its economy.

India is a treasure trove of culture, developed over thousands of years and manifested in the form of arts, works of literature, customs, traditions, linguistic expressions, artefacts, heritage sites, and more. Crores of people from around the world partake in, enjoy, and benefit from this cultural wealth daily, in the form of visiting India for tourism, experiencing Indian hospitality, purchasing India’s handicrafts and handmade textiles, reading the classical literature of India, practicing yoga and meditation, being inspired by Indian philosophy, participating in India’s unique festivals, appreciating India’s diverse music and art, and watching Indian films, amongst many other aspects.

Education for development of character, ethical and Constitutional values

· Given the 21st century requirements, quality higher education must aim to develop good, thoughtful, well-rounded, and

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creative individuals. It must enable an individual to study one or more specialized areas of interest at a deep level, and also develop character, ethical and Constitutional values, intellectual curiosity, scientific temper, creativity and spirit of service.

. **Development of 21st Century Capabilities**

Higher Education should develop 21st century capabilities across a range of disciplines including sciences, social sciences, arts, humanities, languages, as well as professional, technical, and vocational subjects.

Geography across different levels of education

NEP 2020 has initiated a structure based on the cognitive-developmental stages of the children. The new 5+3+3+4 School Structure will comprise 12 years of school & 3 years of pre-school (or Anganwadi or Balvatika). According to NEP 2020, mother tongue will be a medium of instruction till 5th grade.

Each level of education instinctively regards different aspects of development.

Level 1 – Early Childhood Care and Education· Cultural and Artistic development

1.2 The overall aim of ECCE will be to attain optimal outcomes in the domains of: physical and motor development, cognitive development, socio-emotional-ethical development, cultural/artistic development, and the development of communication and early language, literacy, and numeracy.

Level 2- Middle School Cultural enrichment and national

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integration through language learning

4.16. They will also learn what geographical areas speak which languages, get a sense of the nature and structure of tribal languages, and learn to say commonly spoken phrases and sentences in every major language of India

4.18. In addition to Sanskrit, other classical languages and literatures of India, including Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, Odia, Pali, Persian, and Prakrit, will also be widely available in schools as options for students, possibly as online modules, through experiential and innovative approaches, to ensure that these languages and literature stay alive and vibrant. Similar efforts will be made for all Indian languages having rich oral and written literatures, cultural traditions, and knowledge

4.20. In addition to high quality offerings in Indian languages and English, foreign languages, such as Korean, Japanese, Thai, French, German, Spanish, Portuguese, and Russian, will also be offered at the secondary level, for students to learn about the cultures of the world and to enrich their global knowledge and mobility according to their own interests and aspirations.

Level 3- Higher education

11.8. Towards the attainment of such a holistic and multidisciplinary education, the flexible and innovative curricula of all HEIs shall include credit-based courses and projects in the areas of community engagement and service,

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environmental education, and value-based education. Environment education will include areas such as climate change, pollution, waste management, sanitation, conservation of biological diversity, management of biological resources and biodiversity, forest and wildlife conservation, and sustainable development and living.

11.12. HEIs will focus on research and innovation by setting up start-up incubation centres; technology development centres; centres in frontier areas of research; greater industry-academic linkages; and interdisciplinary research including humanities and social sciences research.

Pedagogy of Geography across different levels

NEP 2020 embodies a scientific approach in defining pedagogy across different levels of Education .

Level 1

1.2. ECCE ideally consists of flexible, multi-faceted, multi-level, play-based, activity-based, and inquiry-based learning, comprising of alphabets, languages, numbers, counting, colours, shapes, indoor and outdoor play, puzzles and logical thinking, problem-solving, drawing, painting and other visual art, craft, drama and puppetry, music and movement. It also includes a focus on developing social capacities, sensitivity, good behaviour, courtesy, ethics, personal and public cleanliness, teamwork, and cooperation.

Level 2

4.5. Curriculum content will be reduced in each subject to its core essentials, to make space for critical

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thinking and more holistic, inquiry-based, discovery-based, discussion-based, and analysis-based learning. The mandated content will focus on key concepts, ideas, applications, and problem-solving.

4.7. Art-integration is a cross-curricular pedagogical approach that utilizes various aspects and forms of art and culture as the basis for learning of concepts across subjects. As a part of the thrust on experiential learning, art-integrated education will be embedded in classroom transactions not only for creating joyful classrooms, but also for imbibing the Indian ethos through integration of Indian art and culture in the teaching and learning process at every level. This art-integrated approach will strengthen the linkages between education and culture.

Pedagogy at all levels

4.29. All curriculum and pedagogy, from the foundational stage onwards, will be redesigned to be strongly rooted in the Indian and local context and ethos in terms of culture, traditions, heritage, customs, language, philosophy, geography, ancient and contemporary knowledge, societal and scientific needs, indigenous and traditional ways of learning etc. – in order to ensure that education is maximally relatable, relevant, interesting, and effective for our students. Stories, arts, games, sports, examples, problems, etc. will be chosen as much as possible to be rooted in the Indian and local geographic context. Ideas, abstractions, and creativity will indeed best flourish when learning is thus rooted.

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22.12. The Policy recognizes that the knowledge of the rich diversity of India should be imbibed first hand by learners. This would mean including simple activities, like touring by students to different parts of the country, which will not only give a boost to tourism but will also lead to an understanding and appreciation of diversity, culture, traditions and knowledge of different parts of India. Towards this direction under 'Ek Bharat Shrestha Bharat', 100 tourist destinations in the country will be identified where educational institutions will send students to study these destinations and their history, scientific contributions, traditions, indigenous literature and knowledge, etc., as a part of augmenting their knowledge about these areas.

Areas to be covered at all levels

NEP 2020 has been instrumental in recommending curricular and pedagogical initiatives which portray its futuristic vision of an updated and holistic view of Education. The major recommendations in this regard are-

4.24. Concerted curricular and pedagogical initiatives, including the introduction of contemporary subjects such as Artificial Intelligence, Design Thinking, Holistic Health, Organic Living, Environmental Education, Global Citizenship Education (GCED), etc. at relevant stages will be undertaken to develop these various important skills in students at all levels.

4.27. Specific courses in tribal ethno-medicinal practices, forest management, traditional (organic) crop

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cultivation, natural farming, etc. will also be made available.

5.24. It will also appropriately integrate environmental awareness and sensitivity towards its conservation and sustainable development, so that environment education becomes an integral part of school curricula.

20.3. Agricultural education with allied disciplines will be revived. Both capacity and quality of agriculture and allied disciplines must be improved in order to increase agricultural productivity through better skilled graduates and technicians, innovative research, and market-based extension linked to technologies and practices. The preparation of professionals in agriculture and veterinary sciences through programmes integrated with general education will be increased sharply. The design of agricultural education will shift towards developing professionals with the ability to understand and use local knowledge, traditional knowledge, and emerging technologies while being cognizant of critical issues such as declining land productivity, climate change, food sufficiency for our growing population, etc. Institutions offering agricultural education must benefit the local community directly; one approach could be to set up Agricultural Technology Parks to promote technology incubation and dissemination and promote sustainable methodologies.

Conclusion

Economic forces and modes of transportation determine the placement of towns and cities, according to studies of the geographic dispersion of human settlements.

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Geographic study, for example, has pointed to the impact of the US Interstate Highway System and the rapid expansion of car ownership in spurring post-World War II suburban construction in the United States. The spatial viewpoint helped to explain where Americans were going, why they were moving there, and how their new living environments influenced their lives, relationships with others, and interactions with the environment.

Geographical studies of disease spread have identified the circumstances that allow specific diseases to emerge and spread. The cholera map by Dr. John Snow is a typical example. When cholera struck London in 1854, Snow plotted the number of deaths per home on a street map. He was able to track the outbreak's source to a water pump on the corner of Broad and Cambridge Streets using the map. The geographic perspective assisted in identifying the source of the problem (water from a particular pump) and allowing people to avoid contracting the disease (avoiding water from that pump).

Investigations on the geographic impact of human activities have expanded our understanding of people' involvement in changing the Earth's surface, revealing the spatial scope of hazards such water pollution from anthropogenic waste. According to a recent geographic research, a vast mass of microscopic particles of plastic floating in the Pacific Ocean is roughly the size of Texas. The so-called "Great Pacific Garbage Patch" was discovered using

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satellite pictures and other geographic data.

These examples of many applications of the geographic perspective assist to demonstrate why geographic study and research are critical as we face numerous 21st-century concerns such as pollution, poverty, hunger, and ethnic or political conflict.

NEP 2020 recognises the importance of commencing reform in order to meet the century's objectives. It states, " The world is undergoing rapid changes in the knowledge landscape. With various dramatic scientific and technological advances, such as the rise of big data, machine learning, and artificial intelligence, many unskilled jobs worldwide may be taken over by machines, while the need for a skilled workforce, particularly involving mathematics, computer science, and data science, in conjunction with multidisciplinary abilities across the sciences, social sciences, and humanities, will be increasingly in greater demand." ….'Finally, the modern world is connected to an international transportation and communication network. This has made it more easier to move enormous amounts of people, products, services, and information across national borders. India cannot afford to keep its populace geographically ignorant as a significant actor in the international economy and politics. Geographically literate citizenry, on the other hand, with a solid understanding of India's geographical diversity and plurality, as well as that of other regions of the world, would go a long way toward making India a better place. At all levels,

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well-planned geography instruction will aid in making young minds more aware of different countries and cultures.'

The visionary and dynamic recommendations of NEP 2020 give due emphasis to the development of knowledge, attitude and skill (KAS) aspects of the study of geography by including curricular and pedagogical initiatives like-ethno-medicinal practices, forest management, global citizenship education,etc. and Stories, arts, games, sports, examples, problems, etc. to be rooted in the Indian and local geographic context.

Overall, while the policy is not legally binding, it clearly demonstrates the government's desire to bring about significant changes in the education system. Much, as with any policy, will be determined by how transparent and timely it is implemented.

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