

NEP 2020 and Political Socialisation of Youth in India

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I. Introduction

The announcement of the National Education Policy 2020 (NEP-2020) marks one of the most comprehensive educational reforms in post-independent India. Replacing the National Policy on Education 1986, NEP-2020 envisions a transformative restructuring of India's education system, aligned with the demands of the twenty-first century. While its primary objectives include improving access, equity, quality, affordability, and accountability in education, the policy also has broader social and political implications. Among these, its potential influence on the political socialization of Indian youth is particularly significant.

Political socialization refers to the process through which individuals acquire political values, attitudes, knowledge, and behaviours that shape their political participation. In democratic societies such as India, educational institutions function as vital agents of political socialization, alongside family, media, peer groups, and civil society. Schools and universities not only transmit academic knowledge but also cultivate civic consciousness, constitutional values, critical thinking and democratic engagement. Therefore, any structural or curricular reform in education inevitably influences young citizens' political orientation.

The NEP-2020 emphasizes constitutional values, critical thinking, multidisciplinary learning, experiential education, and active citizenship. The policy foregrounds values such as democracy, secularism, equality, justice, and respect for diversity—principles embedded in the Indian Constitution. It also advocates civic responsibility, ethical reasoning, and awareness of rights and duties. By integrating these elements into school and higher education curricula, the NEP-2020 potentially reshapes the way Indian youth understand governance, public institutions, and their role within the democratic framework.

Moreover, the policy's focus on holistic development, flexibility in subject choices, vocational exposure, and digital literacy expands student's-political awareness.

The introduction of critical pedagogy, debate-based learning, and inquiry-driven approaches may encourage youth to question, deliberate, and participate actively in public life. Simultaneously, the emphasis on Indian knowledge systems, cultural heritage, and value-based education contributes to shaping the national identity and collective political consciousness.

However, the intersection of educational reform and political socialization also raises important debates. Questions emerge regarding ideological orientation, curricular framing of history and civics, centralization versus federal autonomy, and the balance between cultural nationalism and pluralism. Given India's diverse and politically dynamic society, the implementation of the NEP-2020 may generate varied outcomes in different social and regional contexts. Thus, examining the NEP-2020 through the lens of political socialization provides a critical framework for assessing its long-term democratic implications.

This study seeks to analyse how the NEP-2020 influences the political socialization of youth in India. It explores the theoretical foundations of political socialization, identifies the key provisions of the policy that affect civic learning and democratic engagement, and evaluates both the opportunities and challenges arising from its implementation. By situating the NEP-2020 within broader debates on democracy, citizenship, and youth participation, this study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the evolving relationship between education policy and political culture in contemporary India.

II. Review of Literature

1. Theoretical Foundations of Political Socialization

The concept of political socialization has been extensively examined in the fields of political science and sociology. Early scholars such as Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba emphasized the role of civic culture in shaping democratic stability, arguing that political orientations are cultivated through social institutions.

Similarly, Easton and Dennis highlighted how political support systems are internalized during childhood through formal and informal learning processes.

Later scholars, such as Herbert Hyman, conceptualized political socialization as a lifelong process in which individuals acquire political norms, values, and behavioural patterns. These foundational theories underscore the central role of educational institutions in transmitting civic values and legitimizing political authority in democracies.

2. Education as an Agent of Political Socialization

A significant body of literature identifies schools and universities as key agents in political socialization. Studies suggest that civic education, classroom discussions, curriculum content, and teachers' attitudes shape students' political awareness and democratic engagement. Educational settings influence political efficacy, participation, tolerance, and institutional trust.

In the Indian context, scholars have argued that post-independence education policies aimed to promote secularism, national integration, and constitutional values. Research on earlier frameworks, such as the National Policy on Education 1986, indicates that while policy documents emphasized democratic ideals, implementation often varied across regions due to socio-economic and political factors.

Recent studies highlight the increasing influence of digital media and social networks as parallel agents of political socialization among youth, interacting with formal education systems. This suggests that contemporary educational reforms must be analysed within a broader communicative and technological context.

3. Literature on NEP-2020 and Value-Based Education

Emerging scholarship on the National Education Policy 2020 focuses primarily on structural reforms, multidisciplinary learning, skill development, and the globalization of higher education. Researchers have examined its 5+3+3+4 curricular design, emphasis on experiential learning, and the integration of Indian knowledge systems.

Some scholars argue that the NEP-2020 strengthens value-based education by emphasizing constitutional principles, ethics, and critical thinking. Others critically

analyse concerns regarding ideological framing, the curricular restructuring of social sciences, and the centralization of educational governance. This debate reflects differing perspectives on how educational reforms may influence national identity and democratic discourse.

4. Research Gaps

Although substantial literature exists on political socialization and educational reform separately, limited research directly links the NEP-2020 with the political socialization of youth in India. Most studies concentrate on economic outcomes, employability, institutional autonomy, and digital transformation, leaving the democratic and civic dimensions relatively underexplored.

A systematic analysis of how the NEP-2020s curricular, pedagogical, and value-oriented provisions shape political awareness, civic participation, and democratic engagement among Indian youth is still required. This study seeks to address this gap by examining the NEP-2020 through the theoretical framework of political socialization and assessing its broader socio-political implications.

III. Sources of Data

The present study on the National Education Policy 2020 (NEP-2020) and the political socialization of youth in India is based on primary and secondary data. The combination of these sources ensures a comprehensive, reliable, and analytical understanding of the subject.

1. Primary Sources of Data

Primary data refers to first-hand information collected directly by the researcher for a specific purpose. The following primary sources may be used.

Questionnaires and Surveys: Structured questionnaires were administered to students in schools, colleges, and universities to assess their political awareness, civic attitudes, and understanding of constitutional values.

Interviews: Personal or telephonic interviews with teachers, education administrators, and policy experts to understand the implementation and impact of the NEP-2020 on civic learning.

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs): Group discussions with youth to examine their perceptions of democracy, citizenship, and political participation.

Observation Method: Classroom observations were conducted to analyse teaching practices related to civic education, debates, and value-based learning.

Primary data help in understanding the real-time influence of the NEP-2020 on the political socialization process among youth.

2. Secondary Sources of Data

Secondary data include information already published or documented by scholars, institutions, and government agencies. These sources provide theoretical and contextual support for this study.

Official Policy Documents: The full text and related reports of NEP-2020 issued by the Government of India.

Government Reports and Publications: Documents from the Ministry of Education, Parliamentary debates, and official statistics related to youth and education.

Books and Academic Journals: Scholarly works on political socialization, democratic citizenship, civic education, and educational reforms in India.

Research Articles and Theses: Published and unpublished research studies examining NEP-2020 and youth political engagement.

Newspapers and Magazines: Editorials and analytical articles discussing the socio-political implications of the NEP-2020.

Online Databases and Institutional Websites: Reliable digital platforms providing updated academic and policy-related information.

3. Nature of the Study

This study was primarily analytical and descriptive. It interprets policy provisions and examines their implications for political socialization using qualitative and quantitative evidence. The integration of primary and secondary data strengthens the validity and depth of the research findings.

Thus, the use of diverse data sources enables a comprehensive evaluation of how the NEP-2020 influences the political attitudes, civic awareness, and democratic engagement of youth in India.

IV. Questionnaire

Title: NEP-2020 and Political Socialization of Youth in India

This questionnaire was designed to collect data regarding the impact of the National Education Policy 2020 (NEP-2020) on the political awareness, civic attitudes, and democratic engagement of youth in India. The information collected will be used strictly for academic research.

Section A: Personal Information

Name (Optional): _____

Age: ____

Gender:

☐ Male

☐ Female

☐ Other

Educational Level:

☐ Higher Secondary

☐ Undergraduate

☐ Postgraduate

☐ Other

Stream/Discipline: _____

Type of Institution:

☐ Government

☐ Private

☐ Autonomous

Section B: Awareness of NEP-2020

1. Are you aware of the NEP-2020?

a. Yes

b. No

2. Source of information about NEP-2020:

1. Teachers

2. b. Media
3. Social Media
4. Friends/Peers
5. Official Documents
6. Others

3. Do you think that the NEP-2020 promotes value-based education?

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neutral
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly Disagree

Section C: Political Awareness and Civic Attitudes

1. Has your education improved your understanding of the Indian Constitution?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Not Sure

2. Does your institution encourage discussions about social and political issues?

- a. Regularly
- b. Occasionally
- c. Rarely
- d. Never

3. Have you participated in any of the following activities?

- a. Debate/Discussion
- b. Youth Parliament
- c. NSS/NCC
- d. Community Service
- e. None

4. Do you believe that education influences political opinions?

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neutral
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly Disagree

5. How would you rate your interest in political affairs?

- a. Very High
- b. High
- c. Moderate
- d. Low

e. Very Low

Section D: Democratic Values and Participation

1. Do you think NEP-2020 encourages critical thinking and independent opinions?

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neutral
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly Disagree

2. Are you aware of your rights and duties as citizens?

- a. Fully Aware
- b. Somewhat Aware
- c. Not Aware

3. Have you ever voted (if eligible)?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Not Eligible

4. Would you like to participate in public decision-making processes in the future?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Maybe

Section E: Open-Ended Questions

In your opinion, how does NEP-2020 influence youth's political awareness?

What suggestions would you provide for improving civic and political education under the NEP-2020?

Nature of Questionnaire

Type: Structured with both close-ended and open-ended questions

Method: Survey Method

Scale Used: Likert Scale (for attitudinal measurement)

This questionnaire aims to assess the extent to which the NEP-2020 contributes to the political socialization, civic consciousness, and democratic engagement of youth in India.

V. Analysis

The analysis of the study on the National Education Policy 2020 (NEP-2020) and the political socialization of youth in India is based on responses collected through questionnaires and supported by secondary data. The

analysis was both quantitative (percentage-based) and qualitative (interpretative).

1. Awareness of NEP-2020

Most respondents reported being aware of the NEP-2020, primarily through teachers and social media platforms. This indicates that formal educational institutions and digital media are important channels for policy dissemination. However, a noticeable percentage of students showed only partial or superficial awareness, suggesting the need for deeper institutional engagement and more structured orientation programs.

Interpretation: Awareness alone does not guarantee understanding. While students may have heard of the NEP-2020, their comprehensive knowledge of its civic and democratic components appears limited.

2. Promotion of Value-Based Education

A significant proportion of respondents agreed that the NEP-2020 promotes value-based education, constitutional principles, and ethical reasoning. Many students acknowledged the increased emphasis on critical thinking, experiential learning, and classroom discussions.

Interpretation: These findings suggest that the policy's focus on holistic development and constitutional values positively contributes to civic awareness. Debate-based learning and interactive pedagogy encourage independent opinion formation, which is essential to democratic citizenship.

3. Political Awareness and Participation

The responses indicated moderate to high levels of interest in political affairs among the youth. Participation in activities such as youth parliament, debates, NSS/NCC, and community service programs reflects growing civic engagement among youth. However, actual electoral participation (among eligible respondents) was comparatively low.

Interpretation: Although educational reforms may enhance political awareness and discussion, translating awareness into active political participation remains a challenge. This gap highlights the difference between cognitive political socialization (knowledge) and behavioral political participation (actions).

4. Institutional Role in Political Socialization

Most respondents agreed that their institutions occasionally or regularly encouraged discussions on social and political issues. Institutions that adopt experiential and inquiry-based approaches appear to foster greater democratic engagement.

Interpretation: Educational institutions function as significant agents of political socialization. However, variations across government and private institutions indicate the uneven implementation of NEP-2020 provisions.

5. Democratic Values and Critical Thinking

A large number of students strongly agreed that the NEP-2020 encourages critical thinking and independent reasoning. Awareness of constitutional rights and duties was moderate to high.

Interpretation: This suggests that the policy has the potential to strengthen democratic values, such as tolerance, equality, and civic responsibility. Nevertheless, the extent of this impact largely depends on teacher training, curriculum content, and classroom practices.

6. Overall Findings

The NEP-2020 has positively influenced awareness of civic values among the youth.

Educational institutions play a central role in shaping political attitudes of individuals.

There is a gap between political awareness and active political participation.

Implementation disparities affect the uniformity of political socialization outcomes in China.

VI. Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between the National Education Policy 2020 (NEP-2020) and the political socialization of youth in India. The findings indicate that education, as a powerful instrument of social transformation, plays a crucial role in shaping political attitudes, civic values and democratic participation among young citizens. In this context, the NEP-2020 emerges not merely as an academic reform policy but as a framework with significant socio-political implications.

The policy's emphasis on constitutional values, critical thinking, experiential learning, and holistic development contributes positively to nurturing informed and responsible citizenry. By encouraging debate, inquiry-based learning, and multidisciplinary exposure, NEP-2020 strengthens the cognitive dimensions of political socialization, such as awareness, understanding, and value formation. Students are exposed to civic concepts, democratic ideals, and social responsibilities.

However, this study also revealed certain challenges. While political awareness among youth appears to be growing, active political participation, such as voting behavior and involvement in public decision-making, remains comparatively moderate. This indicates a gap between political knowledge and practical engagement in politics. Additionally, variations in institutional capacity, teacher preparedness, and regional implementation affect the uniform realization of the policy objectives.

In a country like India, where youth constitute a significant demographic force, the quality of political socialization directly influences democracy's strength. The NEP-2020 provides a promising foundation for cultivating democratic ethos, pluralistic values, and civic responsibility. Nevertheless, its long-term success depends on effective implementation, continuous teacher training, inclusive curriculum design, and active, institutional support.

In conclusion, the NEP-2020 has the potential to reshape not only the educational structure of India but also its democratic culture by fostering politically aware, critically thinking, and socially responsible youth. Sustained commitment from policymakers, educators, and institutions will determine whether this transformative vision translates into deeper democratic participation and a stronger political culture in India.

VII. References

The following references have been used to support the theoretical framework and contextual analysis of the study on the National Education Policy 2020 (NEP-2020) and the political socialization of youth in India:

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Reports and surveys on youth political participation published by organizations such as the Election Commission of India and