

An Overview of the new
National Curriculum Framework 2023

June 25, 2024

The NEP and the NCF

The [National Education Policy 2020 \(NEP 2020\)](#) was an ambitious policy document that called for an overhaul of India's education system to make it holistic, experiential, enjoyable, rooted in India, and of the very highest quality for all students.

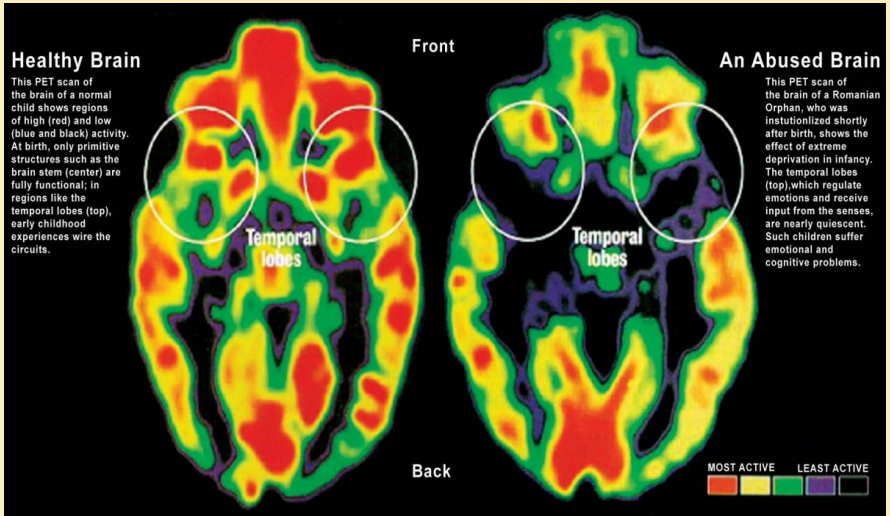
The [National Curriculum Framework \(NCF\)](#) was finalized on July 29. Its aim was to bring about the changes recommended by the NEP by effecting corresponding positive transformations in India's school curriculum.

Major paradigm shifts recommended by the NEP and NCF

- ▶ Access to quality Early Childhood Care and Education for *all* children.
- ▶ A more multidisciplinary and holistic education.
- ▶ An emphasis on experiential, activity-based, and discussion-based learning, and analytical and creative thinking, rather than on rote learning.
- ▶ A new curricular/pedagogical structure (5+3+3+4).

The Importance of Early Childhood Education

- ▶ PET scans reveal great differences in brain development between those children below the age of 6 years who have received cognitive stimulation versus those who have not.



The Importance of Early Childhood Education

- ▶ PET scans reveal great differences in brain development between those children below the age of 6 years who have received cognitive stimulation versus those who have not.
- ▶ Students who start out behind tend to stay behind.
- ▶ Play-based education during a child's early years is considered extremely important to build skills of teamwork, social interaction, compassion, communication, cultural appreciation, and creativity.
- ▶ This is also the best period for a child to learn, through play, about alphabets, languages, numbers, counting, colours, shapes, indoor and outdoor play, puzzles and logical thinking, arts, crafts, music, and movement.

There must be an excellent play-based curriculum and pedagogy in place for children 3–6 years old, delivered through a significantly expanded system of early-childhood educational institutions, particularly CBSE-affiliated institutions. ⇒ NCF-FS

Major paradigm shifts recommended by the NEP and NCF

- ▶ A more multidisciplinary and holistic education.

Holistic development of the child in all capacities – intellectual, social, physical, ethical, and emotional.

The goal is to develop good human beings, capable of independent rational thought and action, with compassion and humaneness, with courage and creative imagination, based on sound ethical moorings and a rootedness in India.

- ▶ An emphasis on experiential, activity-based, and discussion-based learning, and analytical and creative thinking, rather than on rote learning.

Students must develop the ability to think analytically and creatively, participate in discussions, and become adept at speaking, writing, and other 21st century skills; and “learn how to learn”.

- ▶ A new curricular/pedagogical structure (5+3+3+4).

Curriculum and pedagogical approaches should be in line with the developmental stages of the child.

Other key paradigm shifts

Other key paradigm shifts include:

- ▶ Ensuring high-quality **early childhood care and education (ECCE)** for all children;
- ▶ Ensuring **Foundational Literacy and Numeracy** for all children;
- ▶ Emphasis on the **mother tongue** as the primary medium of instruction, particularly in the early years, along with high-quality teaching-learning of all languages;
- ▶ Emphasis on **holistic education** for all, including integration of **vocational education**, **art education**, and **physical education** in all stages of education; no more 'hard separations' or 'streaming';
- ▶ **Reduction of content in each subject** to the core essentials;
- ▶ **Rootedness in India**, including the integration of **Indian Knowledge**;
- ▶ Criticality of the **culture of schools** for attaining educational goals;
- ▶ Centrality of the **role of the teacher**, and the transformation of the teacher education system; and
- ▶ **Equity and inclusion** as a cornerstone.

Design of the Foundational, Preparatory, Middle, and Secondary Stages

School education from the ages of 3 to 18 in **Four Stages**:

▶ **Foundational Stage (Ages 3–8)**

- ▶ **Play-based pedagogy** to develop children across all domains (physical, socio-emotional-ethical, cognitive, aesthetic-cultural, and language)
- ▶ Emphasis on **Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN)**
- ▶ **No textbooks or formal assessment**, only observation and guidance primarily through play with **toys and other teaching-learning materials and activities**

▶ **Preparatory Stage (Ages 8–11, Grades 3-5)**

- ▶ Subjects: **two Languages, Mathematics, Art, Physical Education, and “The World Around Us”** (an interdisciplinary subject involving Science, Social Science, and Environmental Education)
- ▶ **Vocational exposure**
- ▶ Light textbooks but still very experiential with significant play
- ▶ Some formal assessment, particularly to ensure that FLN has been achieved

Design of the Foundational, Preparatory, Middle, and Secondary Stages (cont'd)

- ▶ **Middle Stage (Ages 11–14, Grades 6–8)**
 - ▶ Subjects: **three Languages** (at least two of which must be native to India), **Mathematics, Art Education, Physical Education, Vocational Education, Science, and Social Science**
 - ▶ **Subject teachers** are introduced for more specialized learning with introduction of more abstract concepts
 - ▶ Formative assessment throughout, Summative assessment at the end of each year to ensure readiness to enter next grade
- ▶ **Secondary Stage Phase 1 (Ages 14–16, Grades 9–10)**
 - ▶ All the Curricular Areas as in the Middle Stage + **Interdisciplinary Areas** (**Ethics** - Individual in Society in Grade 9, **Environmental Education** in Grade 10)
 - ▶ Board exams are 'easier' in each subject, but all students take Board exams in every subject.

Design of the Foundational, Preparatory, Middle, and Secondary Stages (cont'd)

- ▶ **Secondary Stage Phase 2 (Ages 16–18, Grades 11–12)**
 - ▶ Choice-based courses to enable flexibility for students and to remove hard separations between academic areas.
 - ▶ Students need to study two Language / Literature courses, at least one of which must be in a language native to India.
 - ▶ Students choose four subjects (with an optional fifth subject) from at least two of the following three groups:
 - ▶ Group 2: Art Education, Physical Education, Vocational Education
 - ▶ Group 3: Social Science, Humanities, Interdisciplinary Areas
 - ▶ Group 4: Science, Mathematics and Computational Thinking
 - ▶ This design ensures both breadth and depth.
 - ▶ Board exams in these six subjects will again be 'easier' in the sense of testing less content, with greater emphasis on conceptual understanding and competencies.

Some of the key deliverables of the new curriculum

Through the new curriculum, all students will develop:

- ▶ **Foundational literacy and numeracy** (the highest priority must be given to achieving foundational literacy and numeracy by Grade 3, which is a prerequisite to all learning).
 - ▶ Constitutional and other **human values** such as gender equality.
 - ▶ **A rootedness and pride in India.**
 - ▶ **A sense of service (seva)** to others in need, to one's country, and to the world.
 - ▶ **21st century capacities**, including speaking, writing, multi-lingualism, problem-solving, sustainable living, cultural literacy, socio-emotional capacities, and, perhaps most importantly, the ability to continue to learn on one's own over a lifetime.
- **Preparedness for higher education and gainful employment** (a true multidisciplinary and holistic education will prepare students not just for their first job, but their second and their third!).