

Q.1) NEP 2020 aims to transform school education through quality and inclusivity. Critically examine its key provisions, implications, and implementation challenges. Suggest measures for effective implementation. (150 words, 10 marks)

Introduction

The **National Education Policy 2020**, based on the **Kasturirangan Committee**, aims to transform school education through conceptual, inclusive, and flexible learning. It strives to enhance both quality and equity across India's diverse educational landscape.

Body

Key Provisions of NEP 2020 Relevant to School Education

1. **5+3+3+4 Curricular Structure:** replaces the 10+2 system, aligning education with the cognitive development stages of children.
2. **Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN):** prioritizes universal attainment of FLN by Grade 3 through the NIPUN Bharat mission.
3. **Multilingualism:** promotes mother tongue/regional language as the medium of instruction at least up to **Grade 5**.
4. **Assessment Reforms:** focuses on competency-based assessments instead of rote memorization.
5. **Equitable and Inclusive Education:** emphasizes gender inclusion, socio-economically disadvantaged groups (SEDGs), and children with special needs (CWSN).

A robust framework like **NEP** must be assessed based on how effectively it can address both quality and inclusivity in school education.

Implications for Quality in School Education

1. **Shift to Conceptual Learning:** curriculum revisions encourage critical thinking and creativity over memorization.
2. **Strengthened Teacher Capacity:** structured professional development and performance tracking improve pedagogy quality.
3. **Digital Integration:** platforms like **PM eVidya** and **DIKSHA** promote interactive and technology-driven learning.

Implications for Inclusivity in School Education

1. **Focus on SEDGs:** targeted strategies improve access for girls, SC/ST, OBC, minorities, and CWSN.
2. **Multilingual Access:** education in local languages reduces early dropouts and improves comprehension.
3. **Flexible Learning Options:** open schooling and modular curriculum promote re-entry for dropouts and working children.

Despite its transformative potential, NEP 2020 faces several structural and implementation-level barriers that need urgent attention.

Major Challenges in NEP 2020 Implementation

1. **Shortage of Teachers:** Over 10 lakh vacancies exist across government schools as per the 2022 Parliamentary Standing Committee report.
2. **Digital Divide:** Only 29% of rural households have access to internet, limiting e-learning effectiveness (NSO, 2021).
3. **Learning Gaps:** ASER 2023 showed that over 40% of Class 5 students still cannot read basic text.
4. **Low State Capacity:** Many states lack resources and institutional strength to adapt curricular and pedagogical reforms uniformly.
5. **Inadequate Monitoring:** NITI Aayog flagged the absence of robust mechanisms to track NEP targets and outcomes at grassroots.

Way Forward

1. **Effective Implementation:** ensure coordinated efforts among Centre, States, and local bodies for timely execution of NEP provisions.
2. **Infrastructure Strengthening:** provide adequate ICT infrastructure and multilingual content for equitable access in rural and remote areas.
3. **Monitoring and Evaluation:** set up performance indicators and independent review mechanisms for assessing learning outcomes.
4. **TSR Subramanian Committee:** especially on curriculum overhaul, regulation of private schools, and strengthening early childhood care.
5. **Allocate 6% of GDP to Education:** as envisioned by both NEP 2020 and earlier education commissions to ensure adequate funding and equity.

Conclusion

NEP 2020, if implemented in true spirit, can realize the constitutional vision of inclusive, quality education. **Article 21** ensures the right to education, which NEP strengthens by focusing on dignity, equity, and lifelong learning.

Q.2) How far do you agree that focusing solely on food availability as a cause of hunger diverts attention from failures in human development policy? Illustrate with examples from India's recent experience. (150 words, 10 marks)

Introduction

India produces **surplus food**, yet ranks poorly on the **Global Hunger Index**. This paradox shows that hunger is less about availability and more about human development failures in health, sanitation, income, and education.

Body

Why Focusing Solely on Food Availability is Misleading

1. **India's Food Surplus Paradox:** India has enough food in stock, but still performs poorly in the Global Hunger Index, ranking **105 out of 127 countries in 2024**.
2. **Invisible Hunger and Malnutrition:** Many children are still malnourished because of poor health, lack of clean surroundings, and low-quality diets.

3. Ineffective Targeting and Leakages: Many people like migrants and the homeless are still left out of food distribution systems.

These instances show that food is available but not always accessible or nutritiously adequate, pointing to deeper governance issues.

Failures in Human Development Policy Worsening Hunger

- 1. Lack of Nutritional Awareness:** Many women don't have proper information about what makes a healthy diet.
- 2. Poor Sanitation and Health Services:** Dirty surroundings and lack of health care cause diseases, which prevent the body from using food properly.
- 3. Income Poverty and Livelihood Deficits:** People without stable jobs or income struggle to afford food.
- 4. Education and Gender Gaps:** Educated mothers are more likely to care better for their children's nutrition and hygiene.
- 5. Underfunding of Nutrition Schemes:** Government nutrition programs often don't get enough funds or staff to work effectively.

These failures highlight that hunger is multidimensional and tied to the broader human development ecosystem.

Way Forward

- 1. Holistic Nutrition Approach:** Integrate food security with **WASH** (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene), maternal care, and health infrastructure.
- 2. Strengthen POSHAN 2.0:** Improve monitoring and coordination between ministries to ensure timely delivery and impact.
- 3. Social Safety Nets for Migrants:** Implement One Nation One Ration Card (**ONORC**) and mobile PDS units effectively.
- 4. Enhance Livelihood Security:** Expand **MGNREGA** and urban employment schemes to strengthen food access through income.
- 5. Invest in Behavioural Change:** Launch awareness campaigns on nutrition, hygiene, and feeding practices.
- 6. Monitor Multidimensional Indicators:** Adopt a Hunger Index tailored to Indian states tracking sanitation, gender, health, and education alongside food intake.

Conclusion

Hunger in India is not just about food—it reflects a **failure in holistic human development**. Addressing it requires multi-sectoral interventions beyond food availability, aligned with **SDG 2** and other interlinked Sustainable Development Goals.

Q.3) “The NITI Aayog’s Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) offers a more holistic assessment of poverty than income-based measures.” In this context, critically evaluate India’s recent progress in poverty reduction. (150 marks, 10 marks)

Introduction

India’s official adoption of the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) by **NITI Aayog** marks a shift from monetary poverty metrics to a broader framework encompassing education, health, and living standards, enabling a more comprehensive poverty analysis.

Body

What is MPI and How It Differs from Income-Based Measures

1. **Multidimensional Approach:** MPI evaluates poverty across **three dimensions**—health, education, and standard of living—using **12 indicators** such as nutrition, years of schooling, sanitation, housing, etc.
2. **Non-Monetary Indicators:** Unlike traditional income/consumption-based measures, MPI captures **deprivations in basic human capabilities**.
3. **Household-Centric:** Identifies poor households based on multiple deprivations simultaneously, offering granular insights.
4. **Focus on Outcomes:** Reflects the **quality of life** rather than just income levels.

India’s Recent Progress in Poverty Reduction (as per MPI)

1. **Sharp Decline in MPI:** NITI Aayog’s 2023 report shows **13.5 crore people** exited multidimensional poverty between 2015-16 and 2019-21.
2. **Improvement Across States:** Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Madhya Pradesh registered the highest decline in MPI value and headcount ratio.
3. **Health & Sanitation Gains:** Nutrition deprivation fell from 44% to 33%; access to clean cooking fuel rose from 44% to 59%.
4. **Education Indicators:** School attendance improved, and the years of schooling indicator saw notable progress.
5. **Housing and Assets:** Access to electricity, improved housing, and asset ownership significantly increased due to schemes like PMAY, Saubhagya, and Ujjwala.

Critical Evaluation: Limitations of MPI Approach

1. **Data Lag:** MPI is based on NFHS data, which may not reflect **real-time conditions**, especially post-COVID.
2. **Lack of Urban Focus:** MPI underrepresents **urban poverty** and informal work-related vulnerabilities.
3. **Exclusion of Income Dimension:** While MPI captures capabilities, it omits **direct income/consumption** information, which is still essential.
4. **Inequality and Depth Overlooked:** MPI does not account for **intensity of deprivation** among the poor or intra-household disparities.
5. **Fragmented Data Systems:** Dependence on household surveys with infrequent cycles limits **policy responsiveness**.

Way Forward

1. **Combine MPI with Income Metrics:** Create a **composite index** integrating monetary and multidimensional aspects for balanced poverty tracking.
2. **More Frequent Data Collection:** Establish **real-time poverty monitoring systems** through digital platforms.
3. **Urban MPI Inclusion:** Develop urban-specific MPI frameworks reflecting challenges like **housing, healthcare access, and informal employment**.
4. **Use MPI for Targeted Schemes:** Leverage MPI findings to **prioritize districts** and households under poverty alleviation programs.
5. **Independent Audits:** Third-party evaluations and cross-verification of MPI data to enhance credibility and usability.

Conclusion

India's progress in multidimensional poverty reduction is commendable and aligns with **Article 21 and SDG-1**. However, a **hybrid, dynamic approach** integrating MPI and income-based indicators will ensure more inclusive and responsive policymaking.

Q.4) "India's demographic dividend risks becoming a demographic burden unless skill development is aligned with emerging economic opportunities." Discuss the efficacy of Skill India Mission. (250 words, 15 marks)

Introduction

With over 65% of the population under 35, India holds vast demographic potential. The Skill India Mission, launched in 2015, aims to transform this into a dividend by enhancing employability and aligning youth skills with market demands.

Body

When Demographic Dividend Becomes a Burden

1. **Unemployment and Underemployment:** Youth unemployment remains high at over 17% (PLFS 2022–23), indicating failure to absorb the growing workforce into productive jobs.
2. **Low Skill Levels:** As per recent estimates, only about 3.7% of the working population has formal vocational training, reducing productivity and employability.
3. **Social and Economic Strain:** Idle youth population leads to increased economic dependency, rising crime, and social unrest, negating the dividend's benefits.

These concerns make skill development the cornerstone of harnessing India's youth power.

Major Features of Skill India Mission

1. **Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY):** Provides short-term training and Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) to youth for industry-relevant skills.
2. **National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC):** Acts as a public-private partnership to promote skill training institutions and fund skill initiatives.

- 3. National Policy for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (2015):** Provides an integrated roadmap for skilling with focus on quality and market relevance.
- 4. Industrial and Sectoral Skill Councils:** Create occupational standards and curricula to ensure alignment with industry needs.
- 5. Digital Initiatives:** PM-DAKSH portal, Skill India Digital, and eSkill India promote digital learning and certification.

These provisions aim to create a structured and inclusive skilling ecosystem in India.

Efficacy of Skill India Mission

Successes

- 1. Massive Reach:** Over 1.6 crore candidates trained under PMKVY since its inception.
- 2. Industry Collaboration:** 37 Sector Skill Councils ensure training content aligns with market needs.
- 3. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL):** Enabled formal certification for workers in informal sectors.
- 4. Focus on Marginalized Groups:** Special programs target SCs, STs, women, and differently-abled individuals.
- 5. Digital Push:** Use of platforms like Skill India Digital widened access, especially during COVID-19.

Challenges

- 1. Low Placement Rates:** PMKVY-3 reported placement rates below 20% in many sectors, with overall placement under STT hovering around 43%.
- 2. Mismatch with Market Needs:** Training not always aligned with evolving sectors like AI, green economy, and gig work.
- 3. Quality Issues:** Variations in training standards and lack of practical exposure affect employability.
- 4. Drop-out and Certification Issues:** Many candidates fail to complete training or get certified.
- 5. Limited Private Sector Participation:** Industry involvement remains patchy outside select high-growth sectors.

These issues need urgent redressal to ensure that the mission's potential translates into real outcomes.

Way Forward

- 1. Demand-Driven Training:** Align skill programs with regional industry clusters and futuristic sectors like green energy, robotics, and health tech.
- 2. Strengthen Apprenticeship Model:** Scale up the National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme to integrate skilling with real-world work experience.
- 3. Tracking and Monitoring:** Use Aadhaar-linked dashboards for real-time tracking of training, certification, and employment outcomes.
- 4. Public-Private Partnerships:** Deepen industry collaboration through outcome-linked incentives and curriculum co-design.
- 5. Integration with Formal Education:** Embed vocational training within school and college systems under NEP 2020.

6. **Mobile Skill Labs:** Replicate **Brazil's "Skill Trucks" model** to take mobile vocational training units to remote and underserved areas.
Only a multi-pronged approach can bridge the gaps in skilling and employment linkage.

Conclusion

To emerge as the **skill capital of the world**, India must convert its youth bulge into a trained workforce. A robust **Skill India Mission** is essential to avoid wasted potential and ensure inclusive development.

Q.5) "Ayushman Bharat aims to move India towards universal health coverage, yet challenges remain in its implementation." Critically examine the strengths and limitations of the scheme. (250 words, 15 marks)

Introduction

Launched in **2018**, **Ayushman Bharat** aims to achieve Universal Health Coverage by providing preventive and curative services through Health and Wellness Centres and financial protection via the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana.

Body

Key Features of Ayushman Bharat

1. **Health and Wellness Centres (HWCs):** Targeting 1.5 lakh HWCs to deliver comprehensive primary healthcare including maternal, child, and non-communicable disease services. As of July 2023, over **1.6 lakh HWCs** are operational.
2. **PM-JAY:** Provides ₹5 lakh per family per year for secondary and tertiary hospitalization for 50 crore beneficiaries. As of November 2023, over **6 crore hospital admissions** worth more than **₹77,000 crore** have been authorised.
3. **Portability:** Pan-India portability of services through empaneled public and private hospitals. As of 2023, around **26,800 hospitals**, including **11,700+ private institutions**, are empaneled.
4. **Cashless and Paperless:** Empowers beneficiaries with Aadhaar-linked access without any out-of-pocket expenditure.
5. **IT Platform:** National Health Authority manages the IT system for beneficiary identification, hospital empanelment, and claim settlement.

A critical assessment of the scheme reveals its transformative potential alongside significant implementation challenges.

Strengths of Ayushman Bharat

1. **Financial Risk Protection:** As of 2023, over **6 crore** hospital admissions and **₹77,000+ crore** in claims were processed under PM-JAY, reducing catastrophic health expenditure.
2. **Access Expansion:** Around **26,800 hospitals**, including many private institutions, have been empaneled under the scheme, broadening access to quality care.
3. **Equity and Inclusion:** Prioritizes vulnerable groups, with nearly 49% of beneficiaries being women and a focus on SC/ST households.

4. **Digital Health Infrastructure:** The use of IT for real-time monitoring and fraud detection improves transparency.
5. **Boost to Public Health Infrastructure:** HWCs enhance grassroots-level preventive care and reduce tertiary care burden.

Limitations and Challenges

1. **Coverage Gaps:** Excludes outpatient care and diagnostics not linked to hospitalization; actual health expenses remain high for many beneficiaries.
2. **Awareness and Enrolment Issues:** NFHS-5 revealed low health insurance awareness in several regions, indirectly reflecting PM-JAY outreach challenges.
3. **Regional Disparities:** States like Tamil Nadu and Kerala have their own schemes and show limited integration with PM-JAY.
4. **Infrastructure Constraints:** Shortage of specialists and diagnostics in rural areas undermines HWC effectiveness.
5. **Fraud and Abuse:** As of 2025, fraudulent claims worth ₹582 crore have been detected under PM-JAY, with over 1,080 hospitals de-empaneled for misuse.

Way Forward

1. **Strengthen Primary Healthcare:** Ensure adequate human resources and diagnostics at HWCs to prevent disease escalation.
2. **Expand Coverage:** Include outpatient care and more disease categories under PM-JAY to reduce out-of-pocket costs.
3. **Robust Monitoring Systems:** Deploy AI tools and independent audits to prevent fraud and track health outcomes.
4. **Capacity Building:** Train health workers and administrators to ensure better scheme implementation.
5. **Incorporate Committee Recommendations:** Adopt insights from the High-Level Expert Group (HLEG) on UHC and NITI Aayog's health strategy for phased reform.

Conclusion

Ayushman Bharat marks a significant step toward universal health coverage, echoing the spirit of the **Alma-Ata Declaration** and aligning with **Article 47** of the Constitution, but its success depends on robust, equitable implementation.