

National Education Policy 2020: Potential Differences in Public vs. Private Center-Based Early Childhood Care and Education in India

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Abstract:- The New Education Policy (NEP) 2020 represents a transformative blueprint for India's education landscape, encompassing various aspects of learning, teaching methodologies, and educational infrastructure. This paper explores the intricate dynamics and implications of the NEP 2020, particularly within the context of primary education in India. The study aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the potential consequences, challenges, and benefits associated with this policy reform. Through a thorough investigation, this research seeks to understand the fundamental changes envisioned by the NEP 2020 and their direct impact on primary education. Key features of the NEP have been reviewed, drawing insights from various sources, including academic publications, reports, newspapers, and government websites. The findings indicate that overall public awareness of the NEP is below average, with variations observed based on demographic factors such as gender, location, type of institution, years of service, and family background.

Keywords:- Awareness of National Educational Policy India 2020, Secondary School Teachers Education Policy, Development, Higher Education, Teachers, and Telangana State.

I. INTRODUCTION

The National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020), endorsed by the Union Cabinet of India on July 29, 2020, outlines a transformative vision for India's education system. This policy replaces the previous National Policy on Education of 1986 and offers a comprehensive framework spanning elementary to higher education, including vocational training. It addresses the educational needs of both rural and urban areas in India, with an ambitious goal of revolutionizing the education system by 2021. The language policy outlined in NEP 2020 serves as a broad guideline and advisory, leaving the implementation details to states, institutions, and schools. The NEP 2020 introduces a 5+3+3+4 structure, segmenting education into four distinct stages that students progress through. It places significant emphasis on key aspects of the education system, advocating for reforms in the Curriculum Framework, Vocational Courses, the Right to Education Act, 2009 (RTE Act), and other areas. One of the primary focuses of the NEP 2020 is the universalization of Early Childhood Care and Education

(ECCE), with a target set for 2030 to ensure that all children are prepared for Grade 1 upon entering school. The pedagogical and curricular framework for school education has been revised to reflect this focus, with pre-schools now offering foundational education to children aged 3 to 6 years, preparing them for formal schooling starting from Grade 1. The policy document prioritizes play-based, activity-based, and inquiry-based curriculum approaches, emphasizing the overarching goal of ECCE to achieve optimal outcomes in various domains, including physical and motor development, cognitive development, socio-emotional and ethical development, cultural and artistic development, as well as communication, early language, literacy, and numeracy skills. The focus on meeting the developmental needs of children in this age group aligns with the ECCE policy of 2013. The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) has been tasked with developing a "National Curricular and Pedagogical Framework for Early Childhood Care and Education" (NCPF ECCE), targeting children up to 8 years old. Additionally, the policy proposes preparatory classes as transitional programs between Anganwadi centers and primary schools. It outlines training and certification programs for all Anganwadi and primary school staff involved in early childhood education (ECCE), primarily through digital platforms. These initiatives aim to ensure universal access to early childhood education. While the NEP 2020 recognizes the importance of substantial investment in ECCE, it does not yet address the potential role that private entities can play in achieving its 2030 objectives. Furthermore, the policy does not address the regulation of private preschools. There is a lack of a clear roadmap for the implementation of the National Education Policy 2020, including details on budget allocations and its integration into the Right to Education Act. Given the stated outcomes and the approaches outlined to achieve them, it is reasonable to anticipate that the framework for Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) developed by NCERT will align with modern international curriculum standards. Consequently, any preschool adhering to international best practices should also meet the requirements outlined in this framework. ECCE is recognized as foundational to formal schooling, with the preschool years playing a crucial role in preparing children for their educational journey. A successful ECCE program can increase enrollment rates, reduce early dropouts, and help children achieve foundational literacy and numeracy skills in the early grades. As part of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4, global indicators for early childhood education

focus on measuring the student participation rate one year prior to entering primary school. This indicator assesses the proportion of 5-year-olds engaged in structured learning activities, as outlined in the 2022 UNESCO report, which establishes commitments to National SDG 4 benchmarks for global education transformation. In India, the participation rate in organized learning at least one year before entering primary education increased from 65% in 2002 to 75% in 2020. The Government of India aims to achieve a 95% participation rate by 2025 and 100% by 2030. The 2022 annual report on the status of school education in India's states and union territories emphasizes the importance of early childhood care (ECC) and the interventions being implemented under the National Education Policy 2020. It underscores the need to develop and expand Early Childhood Education institutions, particularly targeting economically weaker sections. For the first time under the NEP, early childhood care and education have been comprehensively addressed. The NEP now emphasizes developing children's physical, motor, cognitive, socio-emotional, ethical, cultural, and artistic skills, along with fostering early language, literacy, numeracy, and artistic communication abilities. However, implementing ECCE initiatives presents several challenges. Ensuring the safety of pre-primary school children, especially in settings where Anganwadis and Balvatikas are co-located with schools, is critical. Large-scale training of schoolteachers will be necessary to deliver the Vidya Pravesh module and to mentor Anganwadi and Balvatika staff. Additionally, these teachers will need to be sensitized to various aspects of childcare. School systems must address the existing teacher shortage, as this additional ECCE work will exacerbate the issue. This will require large-scale hiring of resource persons for Anganwadis and Balvatikas. Furthermore, schools may need to construct additional classrooms and associated facilities, including child-friendly toilets and drinking water facilities. Applying the Buildings as Learning Aids (BALA) concepts, organizing child-friendly furniture, outdoor and indoor play equipment, learning materials, and preschool books will be necessary. For the hub-and-spoke model, where a school mentors nearby Anganwadis and Balvatikas, and cluster-level education department officials provide training inputs to resource persons, logistical arrangements will need to be institutionalized. As the mid-day meal scheme is extended to pre-primary children, adjustments may be necessary in terms of the food provided, as well as the timing and manner in which it is served to younger children. Similarly, incorporating vaccinations, food supplements, and other health interventions into the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) program could significantly expand the scope of work at schools. The National Policy on Education (NPE) of 1986 and the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) of 2005 both emphasized the importance of ECCE for two years, highlighting that experiences during the preschool years are crucial for the development of children's personalities and have a lasting impact on their future education. The NCF noted that ECCE involves providing care, resources, and experiences that foster children's overall development—mental, physical, social, and emotional—as well as prepare them for school (NCERT, 2021). The National Education Policy 2020 has restructured the school

education framework from the previous 10+2 system to a 5+3+3+4 model, encompassing learners aged 3 to 18 years. The first five years of schooling now include children aged 3-6 years, who were previously excluded from the 10+2 structure. This new approach integrates a strong foundation in ECCE starting at age 3, with the objective of enhancing overall learning, development, and well-being (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2020). The NEP 2020 has divided the first five years of schooling, referred to as the Foundational Stage, into two segments: three years for children aged 3-6 years who will attend Anganwadi, preschool, or Balvatika, and two years for children aged 6-8 years who will study in classes 1 and 2. Early childhood education is particularly important in addressing or mitigating the disadvantages associated with a family's socioeconomic status. The presence or absence of early childhood education has various implications, from a child's adjustment to school to their academic performance and continuity in education (Strickland & Riley Ayers, 2006; Burger, 2010; NICHD Early Child Care Research Network, 2005b; Storch & Whitehurst, 2002). According to NEP 2020, one of the major objectives is to prepare an initial cadre of high-quality ECCE teachers for Anganwadis. Current Anganwadi workers/teachers will undergo systematic training in line with the curricular and pedagogical framework developed by NCERT. Anganwadi workers/teachers with qualifications of 10+2 and above will be offered a one-year diploma program in ECCE. These programs may be delivered through digital or distance modes using DTH channels and smartphones, allowing teachers to acquire ECCE qualifications with minimal disruption to their current work. The topic of parental decisions between public and private schools in different educational policy contexts has garnered significant academic interest (Ball et al., 1996; Benson et al., 2014; Goldring & Phillips, 2008; Holmes Erikson, 2017; Morris & Perry, 2019). Research highlights the influence of family socioeconomic status (SES) and class position on these decisions. However, while there is growing interest in the choices families make between public and private services in early childhood education and care (ECEC) (Garvis & Lunneblad, 2018; Ghosh & Dey, 2020; Kampichler et al., 2018; Karlsson et al., 2013; Vamstad, 2016), this topic remains underexplored. This article addresses this research gap by examining the selection of private versus public ECEC in the Finnish context. The study extends the current understanding of how parental ECCE decisions may be influenced by national and municipal policies, as well as by family and parental characteristics, by exploring the potential differences between users of public and private center-based ECCE in India. The research investigates whether family SES or parental attitudes are associated with the choice of public or private center-based ECCE. The impact of national and local policies is also considered, particularly with regard to subsidies for private ECCE use. The National Education Policy 2020, developed by Aithal, P. S., and Aithal, S. (2019), emphasizes problem-solving skills, creativity for innovation, and a multidisciplinary and holistic approach to unity and integrity. In July 2019, Aithal, P. S., et al. published a paper analyzing higher education within India's National Education Policy and the challenges of its implementation. In August 2020,

Sunil Kumar Saroha and Uttam Anand introduced a new instructional procedure to observe movements in schools and higher education, stressing the need for more action plans and strategies for execution, and highlighting the gap between vision and required missions. They proposed appropriate measures to ensure that implementation aligns with expectations. Various implementation strategies have been proposed, including the time-bound strategy by Daugherty, P. J., and Pittman, P. H. (1995), the alternative strategy by Aithal, P. S., and Aithal, A. (2018), the project management strategy by Papke-Shields, K. E., and Boyer-Wright, K. M. (2017), accountability-based performance by Aithal, P. S., and Kumar, P. M. (2016), assignment strategy based on operations research, and the technology-based automation strategy by Dodgson, M. (1991). These strategies have been effective in implementing the National Education Policy in different contexts.

II. METHODS

In the previous chapter, the researcher provided a comprehensive review of the related literature. This chapter outlines the methods and procedures used in the research study. The methodology is discussed under the following headings: type of research, study variables, sampling method, data collection tools, data collection process, and the statistical techniques used for data analysis.

➤ *Research Design*

This study involves an analysis of the national educational policy framework, with a particular emphasis on key aspects of the NEP 2020 and its comparison to the existing education policy. The methods employed include identifying new insights that emerged from focus groups and conducting predictive analysis to assess the potential impact of the policy. The focus group analysis generated a wealth of ideas.

➤ *Population and Sample*

For this research, primary school teachers from various regions were considered the target population. The study focused on educators from government, government-aided, and self-financing schools. Data was collected using a simple random sampling method.

➤ *Questionnaire*

A questionnaire designed by the author was used to gather respondents' thoughts and opinions on the National Education Policy 2020. The survey was distributed to a wide audience via social media and email, inviting participation from students, parents, teachers, and others involved in the education sector.

➤ *Tools Used*

The researcher developed a platform to raise awareness about the National Education Policy (2020). Data was collected using a multiple-choice questionnaire, which included at least twenty-five items specifically related to the National Education Policy (2020). Experts evaluated the questionnaire to ensure its validity and reliability.

➤ *Hypothesis*

It is commonly observed that people are often unaware of the National Education Policy (2020). Factors such as gender, region, management style, years of service, and family type are not expected to have a significant impact on secondary school teachers' understanding of the National Education Policy (2020). This study is descriptive in nature. Secondary information was gathered from various websites, periodicals, journals, and publications, which were then analyzed and assessed to draw conclusions.

➤ *Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)*

ECCE encompasses play-based and activity-based learning, including activities like alphabet learning, language development, puzzles, painting, and music for young children. The Committee observed that over 85% of a child's cumulative brain development occurs before the age of six. It recommends that ECCE for children aged 3-6 should be integrated into the school structure, following the 5+3+3+4 design of the school curriculum. ECCE will be delivered through various modes, including (i) stand-alone Anganwadis, (ii) Anganwadis co-located with primary schools, (iii) pre-primary sections in existing primary schools, and (iv) stand-alone pre-schools. Additionally, a national curricular and pedagogical framework for ECCE will be developed by the National Council for Education Research and Training (NCERT). Anganwadi workers with senior secondary qualifications and above will be provided with a six-month certification program in ECCE.

➤ *The Problem: Why is Early Childhood Care and Education Important?*

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The first five years of a child's life are critical for learning and development, as the brain is especially sensitive and receptive to learning between the ages of 3 and 5. Psychologists and physiologists emphasize that early brain stimulation can have lasting effects on learning abilities. Thus, these early years are fundamental for a child's holistic growth and development. Unfortunately, quality Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) remains inaccessible to many young children in India. The current state of education for children aged three to six years varies significantly. Urban preschools often cover topics such as numbers up to 100 and letters of the alphabet, similar to Grades 1 and 2 curricula. In contrast, rural Anganwadis typically focus on storytelling and basic alphabet or rhyme learning for young children. This disparity highlights a significant gap in understanding and delivering appropriate education for this age group, reflecting a neglect of ECCE in many preschool settings. Recognizing these critical issues, the New Education Policy 2022 emphasizes ECCE by integrating it into the new 5+3+3+4 pedagogical structure as part of the Foundational Stage. The current 10+2 structure excludes children aged 3 to 6, as formal education usually begins at age 6 in Class 1. In contrast, the new 5+3+3+4 structure ensures a strong foundation in ECCE from age 3 onwards, aiming to enhance the overall learning, development, and well-being of children. However, the focus

on ECCE in the New Education Policy 2022 is overdue, considering that earlier policies and commissions have also recognized its importance. For example, the concept of ECCE was first introduced in the National Policy on Education (NPE) in 1986. However, due to rapid technological advancements, cultural changes, evolving communication methods, and increasing educational interests, NPE 1986 struggled to effectively implement ECCE.

➤ *New Education Policy 2022 - Reinvigorating ECCE*

In 2013, the Indian Government introduced the National Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) policy, aimed at providing integrated services for the holistic development of children up to the age of 6. However, the implementation of this policy across government Anganwadi centers, pre-primary schools, and private nurseries fell short of expectations. The New Education Policy 2022 represents a significant effort to institutionalize ECCE in schools, with a target for full adoption by 2030. This initiative aims to ensure that every child entering Grade 1 is well-prepared for school.

➤ *Early Childhood Care and Education – A Strong Foundation for Lifelong Learning*

According to UNICEF, early childhood spans from conception to eight years of age and is the most critical period for a child's social, emotional, cognitive, and physical development. This period establishes a solid foundation for lifelong learning and well-being. Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) extends beyond preparing children for primary school. Traditionally focused on children aged 3-6, ECCE ideally includes a comprehensive approach to programs and policies for children up to six years old, involving their teachers and parents. As outlined in the New Education Policy 2022, ECCE encompasses several types of learning.

➤ *Recommendations Related to ECCE in National Educational Policy 2020*

The universal provision of quality early childhood development, care, and education must be achieved by 2030 to ensure that all students entering Grade 1 are adequately prepared. The primary goal of ECCE is to achieve optimal outcomes in physical and motor development, cognitive development, socio-emotional and ethical development, cultural and artistic development, as well as communication, early language, literacy, and numeracy. This is to be achieved through flexible, multi-faceted, play-based, activity-based, and inquiry-based learning approaches. Additionally, ECCE emphasizes the development of social skills, sensitivity, good behavior, courtesy, ethics, personal and public cleanliness, teamwork, and cooperation. Curricular and pedagogical frameworks for ECCE will be developed. The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) will create a National Curricular and Pedagogical Framework for ECCE covering children up to the age of 8. This framework will be divided into two parts: one for children aged 0-3 years and another for children aged 3-8 years. These frameworks will adhere to the outlined guidelines, incorporate the latest research on ECCE, and integrate national and international best practices.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This review study investigates how existing empirical research addresses the National Education Policy 2020, focusing on potential differences between users of public and private center-based Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) in India, as well as teachers' perceptions of school readiness. The study explores the habits related to bioscience education among higher education teachers and offers valuable insights into the perceptions of the "School Red Line" within research contexts. It reveals specific findings and discusses the implications for policymakers and practitioners. The review examines how habits and achievements in bioscience among higher education teachers relate to perceptions of the "School Red Line," impacting power dynamics beyond individual institutions. This intersection of research, policy, and practice in education, particularly in bioscience education, highlights the shift towards a more school-like approach in higher education curricula and the associated challenges. Despite a growing trend to adopt learning goals and methods from primary education, empirical knowledge on how this shift affects higher education teacher perceptions and practices remains limited. This gap underscores the need for further research to understand the potential implications better. Educational professionals must adapt their methods and approaches to prepare children for school, aligning with evolving expectations in formal schooling contexts. This adaptation ensures that children receive relevant and effective preparation for the challenges they may face in their educational journey. The study's overarching goal was to enhance understanding of the impact of student-teacher relationships, classroom structural quality, and children's social play behavior on their adjustment and higher education outcomes. The study employed within-family analysis, specifically using sibling fixed effects to reduce the risk of omitted variable bias. It examined the association between various factors—such as structural quality, student-teacher relationships, and child outcomes—using within-family analysis to ensure internal validity and minimize the influence of confounding variables. The findings indicated that student-teacher closeness was a strong predictor of children's adjustment and higher education attainment, highlighting its significance in influencing outcomes. Additionally, the study explored indirect pathways between structural quality and child outcomes through student-teacher closeness. This discussion emphasizes the importance of relationship quality, particularly between students and teachers, in fostering positive child development outcomes. Strong relationships can significantly impact various aspects of a child's development. The New Education Policy (NEP) 2020 represents a pivotal moment in the history of India's elementary school system. It marks a concerted effort to address decades of stagnation, introducing significant policy shifts across the education sector. Changes in pedagogy, curriculum, assessment, and infrastructure are among the ways NEP 2020 aims to reshape elementary schools. It is essential to evaluate both the potential advantages and challenges that may emerge in the primary school environment as the country implements this ambitious program. The NEP 2020 signifies a major reorganization of

the curriculum, with a primary focus on fostering holistic development. One of its key changes is the emphasis on a multidisciplinary approach and the integration of vocational education from the beginning, aiming to cultivate well-rounded individuals with practical skills. The strategy prioritizes critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving over rote memorization in elementary education, aligning with the evolving needs of the modern workforce. Instead of viewing NEP 2020 as a cure-all, it should be seen as a catalyst for continuous progress. Effective implementation will require ongoing monitoring, feedback mechanisms, and a willingness to adapt based on real-world outcomes. Collaboration among communities, schools, parents, and government agencies will be crucial to achieving NEP 2020's goals and creating a more equitable future for primary education in India.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

Based on an extensive analysis of the New Education Policy (NEP) 2020's implications for elementary schools, several recommendations have emerged to improve the program's rollout and address potential challenges. These recommendations include:

- **Incremental Implementation and Phased Rollout:** Given the scale of NEP 2020's reforms, implementation should occur gradually. A phased rollout allows for iterative improvements after each testing and review phase. This approach facilitates early problem detection and enables adjustments, easing the transition for all stakeholders involved.
- **Improving Policy Implementation:** Ensuring that the policy is effectively implemented across diverse contexts requires clear guidelines and robust support systems.
- **Equitable Distribution of Resources:** Adequate and equitable distribution of resources is crucial to address disparities between different regions and types of schools.
- **Enhancing Educator Training:** Providing comprehensive training for educators will be essential to equip them with the skills and knowledge needed to deliver the new curriculum effectively.
- **Integrating Technology Effectively:** Leveraging technology in the classroom can enhance learning experiences and facilitate better access to educational resources.
- **Promoting Social Inclusion:** Measures should be taken to ensure that all students, regardless of their background, have equal opportunities to benefit from the new policy.

By adopting these recommendations, the NEP 2020 can be more effectively implemented, leading to meaningful improvements in the primary education system.

➤ *Sustainable Resource Allocation*

Significantly increasing education funding is essential for the successful implementation of NEP 2020. Both federal and state governments must prioritize and adequately fund education. Investments should focus on enhancing infrastructure, providing comprehensive teacher training programs, integrating technology into education, and

addressing socio-economic disparities in educational opportunities.

- **Teacher Training and Professional Development:** Teachers are pivotal to the education system, as acknowledged by NEP 2020. Establishing thorough teacher training programs is critical to ensuring the policy's effective execution. These programs should focus on the new curriculum, innovative classroom technology use, and strategies to address diverse student needs. Continuous professional development opportunities should be offered to keep educators updated on best practices in education.
- **Technological Infrastructure and Digital Literacy:** Significant investment in technological infrastructure is crucial due to the policy's emphasis on technology integration. This includes ensuring widespread internet access in rural areas, providing digital devices, and offering user-friendly educational platforms. Efforts should also be made to enhance digital literacy among parents, students, and educators to maximize the benefits of technology in the classroom.
- **Community Engagement and Awareness Campaigns:** Community support is vital for the successful implementation of NEP 2020. Educational institutions and governments should conduct comprehensive awareness campaigns to inform stakeholders about the policy's changes, benefits, and objectives. Addressing issues related to inclusion, linguistic diversity, and resistance to change can be managed more effectively through active community involvement.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanisms:** Robust monitoring and assessment systems are essential to evaluate NEP 2020's effectiveness. The policy adaptation process should regularly gather and incorporate feedback from stakeholders, including teachers, students, and parents. This iterative feedback loop is crucial for identifying areas needing improvement, determining appropriate solutions, and ensuring the policy evolves to meet the changing demands of the education system.
- **Addressing Linguistic Diversity:** NEP 2020 commendably promotes the use of native or regional languages as mediums of education. However, given the increasing global demand for proficiency in languages like English, a nuanced strategy is necessary to accommodate linguistic diversity. Plans should be devised to enhance regional languages while ensuring students are equipped to meet the language challenges of a competitive global economy.
- **Inclusive Education Strategies:** Techniques for inclusive education are crucial for addressing socio-economic inequality. This requires targeted efforts to ensure that underserved populations have equitable access to high-quality education. Additional support should be provided to children from marginalized communities, initiatives should promote female education, and programs should assist children with disabilities.
- **Research and Collaboration:** The success of NEP 2020 depends on ongoing collaboration among educational institutions, policymakers, and the business sector. By working together, stakeholders can develop innovative

solutions, share best practices, and create adaptable strategies that align with the policy's objectives.

- **Flexibility in Implementation:** The successful implementation of NEP 2020 requires flexibility to accommodate the diverse educational landscapes across the nation. Tailored strategies that address the specific needs of each region should be developed, considering local variations, cultural nuances, and unique challenges. A comprehensive and collaborative approach is essential for the effective execution of NEP 2020.

These recommendations cover a broad range of topics, including research, flexibility, linguistic diversity, community engagement, technology integration, teacher training, and policy implementation. By adopting these suggestions, policymakers and stakeholders can work towards achieving the goals of NEP 2020, fostering a more equitable, innovative, and effective educational system.

V. CONCLUSION

The new curricular framework for early childhood education under NEP 2020 empowers teachers to effectively engage children and foster their holistic development. By emphasizing cognitive, social, emotional, physical, and creative aspects, NEP 2020 aims to nurture well-rounded individuals through a balanced and inclusive learning experience. Support from civil society organizations and experts is crucial to enhancing the capacity of ECCE teachers and achieving the policy's goals. NEP 2020 promotes quality early childhood education and care through playful activities such as games and songs. It includes the establishment of ECCE centers, even in tribal areas, to ensure universal access to education. Training for teachers in Anganwadi Centers is also a priority under this policy. Importantly, NEP 2020 views ECCE as an extension of primary education rather than a precursor, and it outlines clear strategies to achieve the desired learning outcomes. In conclusion, NEP 2020 represents a significant initiative for the comprehensive development of our society and the nation as a whole. It highlights the importance of early childhood education in laying a strong foundation for future generations. The success of NEP 2020 largely depends on its implementation, especially in the realm of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE). ECCE plays a crucial role in a child's developmental journey, setting the stage for future learning and achievements. NEP 2020 acknowledges the critical importance of ECCE and sets ambitious goals to ensure universal access to high-quality ECCE programs for all children. Achieving these goals requires a collaborative effort among various sectors and stakeholders, including governments, communities, parents, and caregivers. By working together, we can ensure that every child receives the essential ECCE needed to thrive and succeed in school and beyond. NEP 2020 serves as a guiding policy to create a brighter future for India's children, enabling them to reach their full potential. Investing in ECCE is an investment in the nation's future, fostering a more equitable, inclusive, and prosperous society for all.

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