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NEP 2020 As A Catalyst Of Capability And Cultural Strategy

Abstract : The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 represents a transformative shift in India's post-liberalisation landscape, reimagining education as a core instrument for shaping the nation's political, cultural, and economic trajectory. This paper evaluates NEP 2020 through a dual political-economic lens, synthesising the developmental ethics of Amartya Sen's Capability Approach with the critical-political framework of Antonio Gramsci's 'War of Position'. Utilising a Qualitative Critical Policy Analysis (CPA), the study deconstructs how the policy functions as a "strategic hybrid"-simultaneously expanding individual freedoms and curating a shared national consciousness. The analysis through Sen's framework reveals that provisions for Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN), multidisciplinary, and student autonomy serve to enhance "substantive freedoms" and individual agency. Conversely, the Gramscian lens identifies the mainstreaming of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) and regional language instruction as a strategic bid for cultural hegemony, intended to build a new national "common sense" rooted in civilizational pride.

Furthermore, the paper examines the macroeconomic implications of these reforms, aligning them with Endogenous Growth Theory. It explores the

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policy's potential to unlock India's demographic dividend by bridging the employability gap and achieving a 50% Gross Enrolment Ratio by 2035. The research concludes that NEP 2020 reflects a sophisticated mode of 21st-century statecraft where democratic legitimacy is derived from the convergence of individual empowerment, cultural strategy, and economic dynamism.

Introduction : The National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020), launched by the Government of India after a 34-year hiatus, represents a watershed moment in the country's post-liberalisation policy landscape. It reimagines education not merely as an administrative sector or a social obligation, but as a core instrument in shaping India's political, cultural, and economic trajectory in the 21st century. By situating pedagogy at the intersection of individual empowerment and national transformation, the policy seeks to resolve the long-standing "learning crisis" while simultaneously preparing India for a knowledge-based global economy.

The Research Problem and Gap : Existing scholarship on Indian education often bifurcates into two distinct camps: technocratic evaluations focusing on human capital and employability, or critical critiques focusing on ideological shifts. However, this paper argues that the NEP 2020 is a "Strategic Hybrid". It functions as a complex political-economic instrument that intends to expand individual capabilities (Senian empowerment) while aligning cultural values with developmental ambitions (Gramscian strategy). There is currently a lack of literature that synthesises these two dimensions to explain how the Indian State utilises education to achieve both internal legitimacy and global competitiveness.

Theoretical and Economic Framework : This paper adopts a dual theoretical lens to deconstruct the policy:

1. **Amartya Sen's Capability Approach:** Used to evaluate how reforms like Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) and multidisciplinary enhance "substantive freedoms" and agency.
2. **Antonio Gramsci's 'War of Position':** Applied to understand the mainstreaming of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) and regional languages as a strategic bid for cultural hegemony and national consensus.

Furthermore, the paper grounds this theoretical analysis in material reality by examining the **macroeconomic implications** of the policy. It analyses how the transition to a 6% GDP spending target and the expansion of the EdTech ecosystem are designed to unlock India's demographic dividend and raise per capita income.

Research Objectives and Roadmap : The primary objective of this research is to answer: How does the Indian State use NEP 2020 to synthesise individual freedom, cultural identity, and economic growth?

The paper is organised as follows: **Sections 2 & 3** establish the Literature Review and a Qualitative Critical Policy Analysis methodology. **Section 4** analyses the policy as a mechanism for **Capability Expansion**, focusing on learner autonomy. **Section 5** explores the **Cultural-Political Strategy**, deconstructing the "War of Position" within civil society. **Section 6** evaluates the **Economic Implications**, linking reforms to human capital theory and GDP targets. **Sections 7 & 8** provide a synthesis of the State-Self-Society relationship and final concluding reflections.

Literature Review : The National Education Policy 2020 has emerged as a focal point for academic debate, with scholars evaluating its potential to redefine India's developmental trajectory. This section maps the existing discourse across four thematic pillars: the shift from human capital to human capability, the Gramscian critique of state-led cultural projects, the endogenous growth models driving the policy, and the identification of the current research gap.

The Evolution of Educational Paradigms in India : Scholars such as Jean Drèze and Amartya Sen (2013) have historically critiqued India's "uncertain glory," noting that rapid GDP growth has not translated into proportional gains in human development. Previous educational frameworks, particularly the 1986 policy, were often characterised in literature as "supply-side" interventions focused on enrollment rather than the quality of "functionings". The NEP 2020 is interpreted as a response to this critique, specifically addressing the "learning crisis" identified in the National Achievement Survey (2017), which serves as a baseline for current academic assessments of the policy's urgency.

The Capability Approach : From Credentials to Agency : Amartya Sen's Capability Approach (1999) has been widely used in educational scholarship to argue that the goal of schooling should be the expansion of an individual's "capability set"—the real freedoms they have to choose the life they value.

1. **Internal Capabilities:** Literature building on Sen, such as that by **Martha Nussbaum (2011)**, emphasises that education must foster "habits of mind" and "critical reasoning".
2. **Agency and Choice:** Recent critiques of the NEP 2020 focus on its "multidisciplinary" and "flexible" structures as mechanisms for enhancing student agency, moving away from the rigid, utilitarian silos of the past.
3. **Social Justice:** Scholars argue that the policy's focus on "equity" and "inclusion" mirrors Sen's insistence on addressing "conversion factors," where formal access alone does not guarantee substantive equality.

Gramscian Perspectives : Education as a 'War of Position' : Parallel to the developmental discourse is a robust body of critical literature using Antonio Gramsci's (1971) theories to analyse education as a site of ideological struggle.

1. **Cultural Hegemony:** Gramscian scholars argue that the state utilises education to manufacture "common sense" and secure the consent of the governed.
2. **Civilizational Reassertion:** The integration of **Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS)** and mother-tongue instruction is frequently analysed as a strategic "war of position". Critics in this field suggest that these moves are part of a "passive revolution" to construct a new national identity rooted in civilizational pride rather than colonial-era paradigms.
3. **The Role of Institutions:** Literature in this domain identifies schools and curriculum boards as "ideological state apparatuses" that facilitate the dominance of the state's hegemonic narrative.

Economic Rationality and Endogenous Growth Theory : A significant portion of the literature also evaluates the NEP 2020 through the lens of Endogenous Growth Theory, as championed by Paul Romer (1990) and Gary Becker (1993).

1. **Human Capital Formation:** Economists argue that the policy's emphasis on "skilling" and "innovation" is designed to raise India's human capital stock, thereby driving long-term GDP growth.
2. **Demographic Dividend:** Current economic research focuses on how the policy's vocational integration (starting from Grade 6) aims to rectify the mismatch between educational outcomes and market needs.
3. **Investment Targets:** Discussions often centre on the fiscal challenge of meeting the NEP-mandated **6% GDP spending target**, noting that a 1% increase in average schooling can raise per capita income by 3-6%.

Identifying the Research Gap : Strategic Hybridity : While there is substantial literature on either Senian "empowerment" or Gramscian "hegemony," there is a distinct lack of research that explores the intersection of these two processes. Most scholars treat "individual freedom" and "national ideology" as contradictory goals. This paper fills that gap by arguing that the NEP 2020 operates as a "Strategic Hybrid"—a policy that derives its legitimacy by simultaneously empowering the citizen and curating a shared national consciousness. This dual-lens approach provides a more holistic political-economic understanding of how modern states balance democratic ideals with ideological coherence.

Methodology : This research employs a Qualitative Critical Policy Analysis (CPA) framework. Unlike traditional technocratic evaluations that focus solely on implementation efficiency, CPA allows for an investigation of the power dynamics, ideological shifts, and normative values embedded within policy language. By treating the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 as a "discursive artefact," this study uncovers how the Indian State navigates the tension between globalised economic imperatives and localised cultural identity.

Research Design : Deductive Thematic Analysis and Triangulation : The study utilises a deductive thematic analysis approach. This involves pre-defining "theoretical codes" derived from the works of Amartya Sen and Antonio Gramsci and mapping them onto the policy text. To ensure the highest level of academic rigour, the research employs Theoretical Triangulation, where a single policy provision is analysed through three distinct lenses:

1. **The Developmental Lens (Sen) :** Coding for "Agency," "Freedom," and "Functionings".
2. **The Political Lens (Gramsci) :** Coding for "Hegemony," "War of Position," and "Manufactured Consent".
3. **The Economic Lens (Endogenous Growth):** Coding for "Human Capital," "Productivity," and "GDP Multipliers".

Data Corpus and Source Selection : To provide a holistic political-economic perspective, the research draws from a tripartite data corpus:

1. **Primary Policy Text:** The National Education Policy 2020 (Ministry of Education), which serves as the core unit of analysis for coding hegemonic narratives and capability frameworks.
2. **Secondary State Data:** Official reports from **NITI Aayog** (e.g., India@100) and the **Ministry of Education** (AISHE 2021-22) are utilised to provide a materialist context to the policy's aspirations.
3. **Evaluative Datasets:** Results from the **National Achievement Survey (NAS)** and the **National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC)** provide the baseline metrics for the "learning crisis" that the policy seeks to resolve.

Operationalisation of Theoretical Constructs : The methodology operationalises abstract theories into measurable "Policy Pillars":

1. **Operationalising Capability Expansion:** We identify provisions for Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) and student choice in subjects as indicators of "Substantive Freedom".
2. **Operationalising Cultural Strategy:** We analyse the emphasis on **Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS)** and mother-tongue instruction as a strategic "War of Position" aimed at redefining the "common sense" of Indian education.
3. **Operationalising Economic Growth:** We correlate the qualitative goal of becoming a "Global Knowledge Superpower" with quantitative targets, such as the 6% GDP spending goal and the 50% Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER).

Analytical Procedure: The Four-Stage Coding Process : The analysis followed a rigorous four-stage process to ensure all sections of the paper remained "in sync":

1. **Stage I (Structural Mapping):** Identifying key policy pillars (ECCE, Higher Education, Vocational Integration).

2. **Stage II (Interpretive Scaling):** Assessing the "symbolic weight" of language used to describe civilizational pride and individual autonomy.
3. **Stage III (Cross-Theoretical Correlation):** Analysing how "Individual Agency" (Sen) is balanced with "National Identity" (Gramsci) within the same policy clauses.
4. **Stage IV (Economic Verification):** Mapping these findings against the human capital theories of Paul Romer and Gary Becker to verify their macro-economic consistency.

Researcher Positionality and Critical Distance : As an analysis of a state-led document, the researcher maintains "critical distance" by weighing the policy's stated inclusionary goals against historical data of educational marginalization. This ensures that the evaluation of "Capability Justice" is grounded in the material reality of the Indian demographic dividend rather than purely pedagogical rhetoric..

Data and Analysis: The Fractal Nature of India's Demographic Transition : The primary normative pillar of NEP 2020 is its commitment to human development, which, when viewed through Amartya Sen's Capability Approach, transcends the narrow goals of literacy and numeracy to encompass the expansion of "substantive freedoms". Within this framework, education is not merely an input for economic production; it is a constitutive part of human flourishing and a fundamental enabler of agency. The policy architecture reflects a shift from a utilitarian focus on job-readiness to a broader commitment to individual autonomy and social mobility.

Foundational Literacy and the "Baseline" of Freedom : The NEP 2020 identifies Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) as the most urgent and transformative element in capability formation. By introducing missions like NIPUN Bharat, the state aims to ensure that every child attains basic literacy and numeracy by Grade 3. This intervention is critical because, as Sen (1992) argues, the inability to read or comprehend is a severe restriction on one's substantive freedoms, regardless of formal access to a school building.

From a capability perspective, FLN is treated as the "gateway" functioning:

1. **The Cognitive Minimum:** Literacy is framed not just as a school subject but as a prerequisite for participation, expression, and social inclusion in a democratic society.
2. **Addressing Capability Failure:** Data from the National Achievement Survey (2017) highlighted that nearly 50% of Class 5 students lacked grade-level proficiency in reading and arithmetic, representing a massive "capability failure" that the NEP 2020 seeks to rectify.
3. **Empowerment and Dignity:** Early childhood focus directly enhances foundational capabilities that form the basis for a dignified and empowered life, allowing individuals to convert resources into real-world achievements.

4. Pedagogical Shift: The policy emphasizes a move toward holistic, learner-centric education that prioritizes critical thinking over rote learning, thereby shaping a person's ability to reason and engage socially.

Multidisciplinarity: Expanding the "Capability Set" and Learner Agency : A central innovation of NEP 2020 is the dismantling of rigid academic silos between Science, Arts, and Commerce. By allowing students to pair coding with music or physics with history, the policy facilitates what Sen (2009) describes as the freedom to pursue goals an individual has reason to value.

- 1. The Freedom of Choice:** Sen's framework insists that development is not just about fulfilling needs but about expanding choices; the introduction of multidisciplinarity represents a move toward radical learner autonomy.
- 2. Structural Flexibility:** Mechanisms such as the Academic Bank of Credits (ABC) and multiple entry-exit points serve as the material infrastructure for this freedom, enabling students to design their own academic journeys.
- 3. Holistic Development:** By breaking away from rigid silos, the policy aims to foster individual creativity and expression, which were previously curtailed by traditional instruction models.
- 4. The National Research Foundation (NRF):** This institution is designed to support a multidisciplinary research culture, fostering the "ethical capacities" and "public reasoning" that Sen identifies as essential for democratic citizenship.
- 5. Agency in Higher Education:** The move toward large, multidisciplinary universities is intended to provide a diverse "capability set" to students, ensuring they are not just technically skilled but critically aware and globally competent.

Equity, Inclusion, and the Radical Potential of 'Conversion Capabilities' : A fundamental tenet of Sen's Capability Approach is the distinction between "formal access" and "substantive opportunity." Sen (1999) argues that providing a resource (like a school) is insufficient if the individual lacks the "conversion factors"—personal, social, or environmental—to utilise that resource effectively. NEP 2020 addresses this by introducing structural correctives aimed at Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs).

- 1. Gender Inclusion Fund (GIF):** The policy moves beyond mere enrollment targets for girls by establishing a dedicated fund to tackle the social and environmental barriers that prevent women from completing education. From a Senian perspective, this is an attempt to address "social conversion factors" such as safety, sanitation, and societal norms that historically curtailed female agency.
- 2. Special Education Zones (SEZs):** By identifying regions with significant populations of marginalised communities (SCs, STs, OBCs, and minorities), the state targets "environmental conversion factors". These zones are designed to provide the necessary

infrastructure and targeted scholarships to ensure that geography does not dictate capability.

3. **Capability Justice:** The policy envisions inclusive education as a structural corrective rather than a symbolic gesture. By involving the community and creating a "Gender-Inclusion" mindset among teachers, the NEP aims to create a "justice of capabilities" where every learner, irrespective of their birth lottery, has the actual ability to lead a life they value.
4. **Multilingualism as Inclusion:** By advocating for the mother tongue as the medium of instruction, the policy eases the "cognitive conversion" process for children whose first language is not the dominant medium of the classroom, thereby enhancing their foundational capability to learn.

Vocational Integration as Economic and Social Agency : Recognising that economic capability is a cornerstone of individual freedom, NEP 2020 mandates the integration of vocational education starting from Grade 6. This shift is significant because it reframes "labour" not as a repetitive task, but as a form of "economic agency".

1. **Redefining Social Recognition:** Historically, vocational training in India carried a social stigma. By exposing all students—not just those from lower-income backgrounds—to agriculture, carpentry, and coding, the policy attempts to build what Sen (1999) calls "social recognition". This fosters a sense of dignity in manual work and parity among different types of knowledge.
2. **Empirical Targets and the Demographic Dividend:** The policy sets a goal to integrate at least 50% of learners into formal vocational streams by 2025. This is an essential economic intervention given that only ~4.7% of the Indian workforce is currently formally skilled. From an endogenous growth perspective (Romer, 1990), this raises the "stock of knowledge" and increases the productivity of the demographic dividend.
3. **Internships and "Life Preparedness":** The provision for a 10-day "bagless" period to intern with local vocational experts (potters, gardeners, etc.) bridges the gap between theoretical schooling and "life-preparedness". This hands-on exposure is a critical "functioning" that allows students to test their capabilities in the real-world market.
4. **Entrepreneurial Agency:** Vocational exposure is linked to fostering an entrepreneurial mindset. This aligns with Sen's view that development should empower people to be "agents" of their own lives, rather than just "recipients" of state-provided jobs.

NEP 2020 as Cultural-Political Strategy: The Gramscian 'War of Position' : While the Senian lens highlights individual empowerment, the framework of Antonio Gramsci reveals education as a deeply contested terrain of ideological struggle. Gramsci (1971) posits that

the State maintains dominance not merely through coercion, but through cultural hegemony—securing the consent of the governed via institutions like schools and universities. Within this context, NEP 2020 emerges as a strategic "war of position". This involves a slow, deliberate reconfiguration of the cultural and intellectual vocabulary of the nation to align with a vision of civilizational pride and national regeneration.

Epistemic Sovereignty and Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) : A pivotal element of this Gramscian strategy is the mainstreaming of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS). By integrating classical texts, ancient mathematics, and traditional medicine into the formal curriculum, the policy seeks to reclaim what can be termed "epistemic sovereignty".

1. **Challenging the Eurocentric Canon:** Gramsci identified that hegemony is maintained when the worldview of the dominant group becomes the "universal" standard. By positioning Indic intellectual traditions as globally relevant, the NEP 2020 attempts to shift the epistemological centre of gravity away from colonial and Westernised frameworks.
2. **The Manufacture of Consent:** This reassertion of indigenous knowledge is not merely symbolic; it is an effort to produce a "cultural consensus". It seeks to forge a sense of belonging and "civilizational rootedness" among future citizens, ensuring that the personal act of learning is inextricably linked to the political project of national unity.
3. **A "Passive Revolution" from Within:** This integration represents a "reforming of social consciousness" from within the existing structures of civil society. Rather than a sudden upheaval, it is a strategic repositioning of the moral and intellectual leadership of the State.

Language Policy as a Medium of National Identity : The policy's emphasis on mother tongue or regional language instruction—at least until Grade 5—is a central component of this cultural strategy. While pedagogical literature emphasises the cognitive benefits of learning in a first language, the Gramscian perspective highlights its role in identity formation.

1. **Deepening Cultural Embeddedness:** For Gramsci, language is never neutral; it carries the weight of a specific culture's history and values. By "nationalising" education through local languages, the State strengthens the emotional and cultural ties between the learner and the nation-state.
2. **Establishing "Common Sense":** Promoting regional languages helps in establishing a new "common sense" that prioritises local rootedness over globalised, detached educational models. It serves as a mechanism to align individual identity with the State's broader ideological vision of "Viksit Bharat".

3. **Institutional Alignment:** By mandating these changes across curriculum boards and teacher training centres, the State ensures that the "hegemonic narrative" is consistently reproduced throughout the educational apparatus.

Value-Based Education and the Construction of Moral Consensus : For Gramsci, a successful hegemonic project must transcend material dominance to establish "moral and intellectual leadership". The NEP 2020 facilitates this by integrating a specific set of ethics, constitutional values, and "civilizational anchors" into the curricular fabric.

1. **Anchoring the Public Sphere:** In an era characterised by rapid social change and digital fragmentation, the State utilises value-based education to create "moral anchors". By emphasising "unity in diversity" alongside spiritual-cultural rootedness, the policy seeks to consolidate a national consensus that offers stability and order.
2. **The "National" Character:** These values are not framed as mere civic duties but as essential components of a patriotic identity. This aligns with Gramsci's observation that the State acts as an "educator," shaping the "common sense" of the masses to ensure they perceive the State's interests as their own.
3. **Ethical Capacities as Hegemonic Tools:** While Sen views ethical capacities as tools for democratic reasoning, the Gramscian lens interprets them as a means of "manufacturing consent". By training future citizens in the nation's preferred moral idioms, the State ensures long-term ideological stability.

Educational Institutions as Ideological State Apparatuses : The structural reforms proposed in the NEP 2020—such as the **National Curriculum Framework (NCF)**, the **National Research Foundation (NRF)**, and the **Higher Education Commission of India (HECI)**—represent more than administrative streamlining. They are the institutional machinery for a "war of position".

1. **Centralisation of Narrative:** Through these bodies, the State gains the ability to harmonise content, pedagogy, and values under a unified national vision. This centralising tendency ensures that the hegemonic narrative is not diluted by regional or institutional variations.
2. **The Role of the Intellectual:** Gramsci emphasised the role of "organic intellectuals" in maintaining hegemony. By reconfiguring teacher training and academic research through the NRF, the NEP 2020 seeks to produce a new class of educators and researchers who are "culturally aligned" with the nation's civilizational project.
3. **Passive Revolution in Action:** This structural overhaul functions as a "passive revolution"—a top-down reform of social consciousness that utilises the existing structures of civil society to prevent radical upheavals and ensure the continuity of the State's legitimacy.

Economic Implications of NEP 2020: Human Capital and Global Competitiveness :

Beyond its developmental and ideological goals, the NEP 2020 functions as a strategic macroeconomic instrument designed to enhance India's long-term growth potential. By aligning educational reform with the imperatives of a 21st-century knowledge economy, the policy attempts to operationalize the belief that education is both an enabler of individual dignity and a primary driver of economic dynamism.

Human Capital Theory and Endogenous Growth : The economic logic of the NEP 2020 is deeply rooted in **Endogenous Growth Theory**, particularly the work of **Paul Romer (1990)**, which posits that sustained economic growth is a result of increasing the stock of knowledge and skill within a society. Similarly, it aligns with **Gary Becker's (1993) Human Capital Theory**, treating education as an economic investment with measurable returns in productivity and national income.

1. **Productivity through Skill-Building:** The policy's focus on vocational integration and flexible higher education is designed to raise the "output potential" of the labour force.
2. **Innovation Ecosystems:** The creation of the **National Research Foundation (NRF)** is a deliberate strategy to foster university-industry linkages and support start-up ecosystems, thereby increasing India's global research output.
3. **Institutional Autonomy:** By liberalising international collaborations—such as allowing foreign universities into GIFT City—the state aims to attract foreign student investment and improve India's standing in global academic rankings.

Unlocking the Demographic Dividend : India possesses the world's largest youth population, with over 65% under the age of 35. However, the policy acknowledges a significant "capability-market gap" where educational outcomes do not match industry needs.

1. **Bridging the Employability Gap:** By introducing vocational training from Grade 6 and expanding internship opportunities, the NEP 2020 seeks to turn "demographic weight" into a "productive economic force".
2. **Entrepreneurial Agency:** The promotion of entrepreneurship education is intended to shift the youth from being "job seekers" to "job creators," a move essential for sustainable employment in a knowledge-based economy.
3. **Targeted Skill Development:** The goal to integrate 50% of learners into vocational education by 2025 is a direct response to the current low levels of formal skilling (~4.7% as of 2022).

GDP Targets and the Digital EdTech Ecosystem : The fiscal commitments of the NEP 2020 represent a significant departure from historical spending patterns. The policy mandates an increase in public spending on education to **6% of GDP**, up from the current ~2.9%.

1. **The Multiplier Effect:** Effective implementation of this investment is expected to create a multiplier effect across infrastructure, technology, and employment sectors.
2. **Contribution to National Income:** According to **NITI Aayog (2023)**, the education sector's contribution to GDP is projected to reach over **\$313 billion by 2030**, compared to approximately \$210 billion in 2022.
3. **The EdTech Surge:** The digitalisation drive—comprising the **Digital University** and platforms like **DIKSHA**—supports an EdTech market projected to reach **\$10 billion by 2025**. This not only modernises pedagogy but also opens new digital employment channels.

Synthesis: The State, the Self, and the Society : The National Education Policy 2020 transcends traditional administrative boundaries to function as a holistic movement of state-reimagining. By integrating individual aspirations with the imperatives of a globalised political economy, the policy presents a vision where development and discourse are no longer separate silos. This synthesis is characterised by the convergence of Sen's developmental ethics and Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony, creating a multidimensional framework for 21st-century statecraft.

The State as Architect of Capability and Facilitator of Agency : From a Senian standpoint, the Indian State, through the NEP 2020, is repositioning itself from a passive service provider to an active facilitator of human agency.

1. **Beyond Resource Provision:** The state recognises that providing educational resources is insufficient; it must ensure "conversion capabilities" that allow individuals to lead lives they have reason to value.
2. **Democratic Pragmatism:** By investing in foundational literacy (FLN) and inclusive education, the state extends substantive freedoms to its citizens, fulfilling its normative obligation to foster individual flourishing.
3. **Plurality of Choice:** The policy's emphasis on multidisciplinary and flexible academic banks reflects Sen's conviction that development should be measured by the expansion of human choices rather than the uniformity of outcomes.

The State as Hegemon: Strategic Hybridity in Action : Simultaneously, the framework of Antonio Gramsci illuminates how the NEP 2020 serves as a "hegemonic project" aimed at reshaping the ideological grammar of Indian society.

1. **The War of Position:** Through the valorisation of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) and the promotion of mother-tongue education, the state enters a strategic "war of position" to reassert indigenous epistemologies.
2. **Manufactured Consensus:** This cultural reorientation is not merely symbolic; it is a bid for legitimacy and continuity by embedding the state's vision into the "common sense" of future generations.

3. **Passive Revolution:** The centralisation of content through the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) ensures that the hegemonic narrative is consistently reproduced across the educational apparatus, securing the "soft power" of the state.

The Tripartite Transformation of the Self : The true strength of the NEP 2020 lies in its ability to integrate capability enhancement with cultural engineering. In this framework, the "Self" is not a passive recipient of policy but a dynamic site of transformation where the following three roles converge:

Dimension	Philosophical Lens	Policy Goal
The Capable Agent	Sen (Capability Approach)	Achieving personal autonomy, dignity, and social inclusion.
The Productive Worker	Human Capital Theory	Enhancing economic productivity and global competitiveness.
The Patriotic Citizen	Gramsci (Hegemony)	Internalising a unifying national ideology and civilizational pride.

Implications for Political Economy and Global Strategy : This synthesis has profound implications for how public policy is understood in the Indian context. NEP 2020 showcases a new mode of policymaking that is ideologically conscious, economically grounded, and civically participatory.

1. **Global Leadership:** By reclaiming its intellectual heritage (IKS) while simultaneously pushing for high-tech EdTech ecosystems, India seeks to position itself as a "global knowledge superpower".
2. **Economic Ascendance:** The blurring of lines between developmental planning and cultural politics suggests that the state views education as the "master key" to unlocking India's tryst with modernity.
3. **Institutional Cohesion:** The policy ensures that educational institutions—from primary schools to research foundations—are not neutral spaces but are aligned with the state's broader aspirations for legitimacy and prosperity.

Conclusion: Education as the Grammar of Nationhood : The National Education Policy 2020 represents far more than a structural overhaul of the Indian schooling and higher education apparatus; it is a visionary document that attempts to reweave the fabric of Indian democracy, economy, and cultural identity for the 21st century. Through the

integrated lenses of Amartya Sen's Capability Approach and Antonio Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony, this paper has demonstrated how the NEP 2020 functions as a dual-purpose roadmap for developmental empowerment and cultural-political strategy.

The Legacy of Capability and Freedom : Sen's framework illuminates the policy's success in reimagining the learner as a capable agent of change. By prioritising foundational literacy, inclusive education for marginalised groups, and a flexible, multidisciplinary curriculum, the NEP 2020 constructs the enabling conditions for every individual to lead a life characterised by dignity and choice. It marks a departure from "education as instruction" to "education as capability formation," where the expansion of human freedoms is viewed as both the means and the end of national progress.

The Strategic War of Position : Simultaneously, the Gramscian perspective allows us to decode the symbolic and ideological depth of the reform. By reintegrating Indian Knowledge Systems, emphasising local languages, and promoting a value-based moral consensus, the policy subtly reorganises the "cultural common sense" of Indian society. This constitutes a strategic "war of position," wherein the Indian State seeks not mere administrative control, but long-term legitimacy and continuity by embedding its vision into the intellectual life of its future citizens.

The Macroeconomic Imperative : Crucially, the paper has highlighted that modern policy-making cannot afford to separate development from discourse. The NEP 2020 treats education as an essential investment in human capital that directly impacts GDP growth, global competitiveness, and labour market optimisation. From the creation of the National Research Foundation to the expansion of a \$10 billion EdTech ecosystem, the policy is as much an economic blueprint as it is a pedagogical one.

Final Reflections : As India approaches its centenary of independence, the NEP 2020 stands as a testament to the belief that nation-building is fundamentally a pedagogical enterprise. In the classrooms of today, the citizens of tomorrow are being shaped—not only in skill but in thought; not only for the global market but for the Indian republic. The ultimate success of this ambitious vision will depend not on the elegance of its theoretical synthesis but on its equitable implementation and its ability to responsively evolve alongside the needs of a diverse and dynamic society.

By bridging the gap between capability and consensus, the Indian State has reimagined education as a civilizational cornerstone—a unified field where development, culture, and power converge.

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