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Q7(b)

"Educational development is the only Panacea for country's all ills and evils." Critically examine the above statement with reference to NEP-2020

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2025 · Sociology GS 2 · 20 marks · Perspectives on the study of Indian society
Perspectives on the study of Indian society: Indology (G.S. Ghurye); Structural functionalism (M.N. Srinivas); Marxist sociology (A.R. Desai).

Core demand of the question

- Refuse the 'education only panacea' claim
- **Use NEP 2020:** access, multilingual, vocational, HE, digital, equity
- Show what education can and cannot do without land, health, caste, jobs
- **Be critical of NEP gaps:** privatisation, English, **digital divide**, implementation

Revision summary

Education is necessary for mobility and anti-caste citizenship but not a solo panacea.

NEP 2020 reforms structure, language, vocation and equity on paper.

Without teachers, public finance and jobs, it becomes credentialism and a dual private-public system.

Caste, land and informal labour reproduce ills that schooling alone cannot dissolve.

Phule-Ambedkar were right to start with the school and wrong if we stop there.

Introduction

Education is a **necessary solvent** of many Indian ills. It is not the **only panacea**. **NEP 2020** is the latest state attempt to make schooling and higher education do too much-nation-building, skills, equity, culture-while the surrounding structure of **caste, informal labour and underfunded public systems** remains. A sociological reading must praise the ambition and refuse the magic.

Body

What NEP gets right

NEP names **foundational literacy**, mother-tongue / home-language teaching in early years, a 5+3+3+4 structure, **vocational** exposure, multiple entry-exit in higher education, and a concern for **Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups**. If implemented with teachers and buildings, this could reduce the brutal sorting that Bêteille described as the education system reproducing inequality. **Phule** and **Ambedkar** already treated the school as the first anti-caste institution. In that lineage NEP is not trivial. The four-year undergraduate design and Academic Bank of Credits try to differentiate a rigid degree into stacked skills-Singh's language of differentiation applied to the university.

Why education is not enough

Ills such as **landlessness, atrocity, gendered unpaid labour, pollution, and jobless growth** are not cured by a better textbook. A degree without employment yields credential inflation and coaching factories. **Caste endogamy** can absorb graduates. **Privatisation and philanthropy in NEP's financing imagination risk a dual system: English private for the new middle class, understaffed public for the rest-the opposite of a panacea. The digital** push meets a device-and-connectivity divide that COVID exposed. Mother-tongue policy collides with the labour market's English premium unless the state equalises both.

Yogendra Singh would treat NEP as heterogenetic state reform landing on an orthogenetic schooling culture of tuitions and honour. **Desai** would ask who owns the private university. Implementation depends on state finances and teacher unions, not on a PDF from Delhi. Elite boarding schools and under-resourced government schools will both quote NEP and remain two Indias of opportunity. Critical examination: NEP is a **necessary reform script**, not a substitute for industrial policy, health (which determines attendance), and annihilation of caste in everyday life. Treat it as one institution among others-not as a holy single lever.

Flow diagram

NEP 2020 2020 -> School and skill
 School and skill -> Some mobility
 Caste land jobs health -> Structural ill
 School and skill -> not sufficient Structural ill

Conclusion

NEP 2020 can widen learning and skill if publicly funded and fairly staffed. It cannot be the only cure for India's structural evils. Education plus land, health, jobs and anti-caste law is a programme; education alone is a slogan.

Facts & figures

NEP 2020

National Education Policy replacing NPE 1986/92; 5+3+3+4, multilingual early years, vocational and HE reform.

Foundational literacy

NEP's early-grade priority; without it later equity talk is empty.

Digital divide

COVID online schooling showed device, language and gender gaps that a digital NEP must still solve.