

## RESHAPING GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING IN SCHOOLS WITH REFERENCE TO NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY (NEP 2020)

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### Abstract

From past couple of decades, in the era of Globalization, the rapidly growing urbanization has led to remarkable change in family structure, from combined to nuclear. The alarming complexity of the modern society, characterized by a gap between family members, loss of sharing of feelings and problems with each other, is one of the root causes for enhancing mental stresses in school students. Furthermore, the availability and affordability of information technology gadgets followed by their excessive and undue uses has noticeably decreased the spontaneous participation of students in physical activities/games, affecting their physical fitness. As a result, many schools are witnessing noticeable increase in students possessing physical and mental stresses, restricting their holistic development. To overcome this, use of counselling and guidance has been considered as an effective and efficient approach and accordingly as an integral part of school education. It plays a crucial role in creating an inclusive environment, where every student feels to be special and supported. In every National Education Policy due importance has been given to guidance and counselling. Very recently, Central Government of India has introduced the National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020), which is expected to bring radical changes in entire education sector, from schools to institutes of higher education. Recognizing the essentiality of guidance and counseling services, it has been included as a fundamental component of NEP 2020. Being a teacher in education, an important mediator between schools and institutes of higher education, herein an attempt is made to critically analyze the proposed aspirations of guidance and counseling in school education, along with the challenges and strategies for its effective implementation, with reference to NEP 2020.

**Key Words:** Guidance and Counseling, School Education, National Education Policy 2020.



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### Introduction:

School education is the foremost step in introducing a child to the world of formal education system. Some of the objectives of school education can be narrated as (i) acquire literacy, numeracy, creativity, and communication skills, (ii) enjoy learning and develop desire to continue learning, (iii) develop ability for critical thinking and logical judgment, (iv) develop

desirable social standards, inculcate moral and values, (v) develop into a self-disciplined and healthy personality, (vi) appreciate own and other personalities, (vii) develop awareness and appreciation of the environment. To achieve these objectives, few essential requirements are (i) a secure, humble, caring, and inspiring learning environment, (ii) a comprehensive, balanced and stimulating curriculum, sensitive to the requirements of the individual, (iii) innovative and investigative teaching approach towards learning, (iv) good amount, and up to date range of learning resources, accessible to every student, (v) an uplifting programme of extra-curricular activities, (vi) an attitude of support, reassurance and challenge to succeed, (vii) learning partnerships between school, home and the broader community. Although, all these requirements are entangled with each other, the role played separately in holistic development of a child cannot be disregarded. To exemplify, requirement of comprehensive, balanced and stimulating curriculum is must to develop intellect of each and every student. However, for some students (slow learners, or belonging deprived socioeconomic families) it may act as demotivating, and lead to adverse results. Such cases can be overcome with the help of guidance and counselling

Guidance and counselling play an important role in the holistic development of students within the educational ecosystem. As schools have evolved into more complex and diverse environments, the need for effective guidance and counseling services has become increasingly important. Mental health of student is directly linked to the educational outcomes. Many a times, students fall victim to the stressful academic environment, as well as unrealistic expectations of their parents. To justify their stand, school managements and parents provide with justification based on “*Survival of the Fittest*”, unless you become “*fit*” it is difficult to ‘*survive*’. Although psychological researches have shown that, ‘growth and/or development’ is more under deprived conditions, as compared to privileged environment, it cannot be universally accepted for every student, as they come from diverse socio-economic status and have different mental as well as physical strengths. Psychologically, the school students are immature, and do not understand how to react the circumstances that are prone to stress generation. Moreover, considering their age group, in adolescent stage, emotional development including curiosity, enthusiasm, tenderness, apathy, etc. is taking place, so the students fail to critically analyze the situations and suffer from stress. To help students in such situation, counselling and guidance is very much required. From several researches it is observed that guidance and counselling definitely bring out performance anxiety in them. The UNESCO module on guidance and counselling mentions that guidance is a programme of services to an

individual, designed as per his/her interests, achievement, capability, adaptability, and influence of environment/surrounding.

Schools can enhance the nature and scope of mental health interventions, fill gaps, enhance effectiveness, address problems early, and reduce stigma. As per the data made available by World Health Organization, there are only three psychologists per million peoples. Psychologists R. Venkatesan and Shyam S. have conducted survey in 101 national and international schools in Karnataka. The authors are observed that there are only 19 counselors for the students . In another study, Dr. Anjana Dogre has reported that, the change in lifestyle, up-bringing of kids, medical conditions, growth of technology, nuclear family and lack of guidance from grandparents has led to a vacuum in children's lives and they need someone to confide their problems . Rinku Mishra and Preeti Chaudhary has summarized a brief review on guidance and counselling at secondary schools in India. *Guidance and Counselling at Secondary School. Samagra Shiksha (2018-19)* suggested career guidance and counselling provisions for adolescents. For development of maximum potential, students be guided according to their abilities and learning needs. A study on the current scenario of guidance and counselling services in 35 secondary schools of Delhi (where guidance and counselling services are offered) was carried out by Hanisha Batra and Dayal Pyari The authors have used descriptive survey research design for the study, where a self prepared questionnaire was administered on 35 school counsellors, selected using convenience and purposive sampling technique. It was found that a separate counselling room has been provided in most of the schools, whereas certain schools which lack adequate resources needed for delivery of counselling service. In most of the schools, group counselling was preferred than individual counselling. Elizabeth Thomas and Anjali M. Dey have studied the role of school counselors and the factors that affect their practice in India. The researchers have analyzed responses of forty-five Indian school-based counselors, most of whom had a Master's degree in counseling psychology. For analysis, counseling services; advocacy and systemic improvement; preventive programs; and educational and career planning; were considered important components, neglecting the administrative role. It was observed that, there are discrepancies in role definition in school counseling. The term 'counseling' is often misinterpreted by the school system. The parents and teachers want the school counselor to focus on "academic advising, student discipline, conflict resolution, crises intervention, and career choice and guidance" whereas the counselors wanted to focus on student problems and issues.

In this paper an attempt is made to review the guidance and counselling documented in earlier educational policies, expectations with reference to NEP 2020, opportunities and challenges in implementation. For sake of readership, a brief account of historical background of guidance and counselling is presented.

### **Historical background of Guidance and Counselling**

Education policies and commissions established in India have been emphasizing the importance of counseling in school set up. The first education commission known as the Secondary Education Commission or Mudaliar Commission (1952-53) recognized guidance in school as an integral part of education and consequently, the government established the Central Bureau of Educational and Vocational Guidance (CBEVGE) in 1954. Similarly, All India Educational and Vocational Guidance Association was established in 1956. However, the limited focus on vocational guidance was changed when the next Education Commission called as the Kothari Commission (1964-66) highlighted the adjustive and developmental functions of guidance along with academic and career guidance. *Education Commission (1964-66)* expanded the scope of guidance services and emphasis that guidance is an integral part of education. It suggested guidance at the *Primary Stage* to begin from the lowest class of the primary school to help pupils make satisfactory transition from home to school. Guidance at the *Secondary Stage* intent to identification and development of the abilities and interests of the adolescent pupils. It also suggested need of trained counsellor to provide effective guidance services in all secondary schools.

National Policy of Education (NPE, 1986) connected guidance services with the vocational education while the Programme of Action (POA, 1992) focused on vocational guidance to the students, parents and teachers for suitable educational and vocational choices. The guidance programme provides information about job opportunities in various courses, facilities for on-the-job training and placement by working in collaboration with employees. Vocationalisation of Secondary Education (1993) suggested that Vocational Guidance Teacher be appointed in each school for the outlined purpose.

National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCFSE, 2000) mentioned students required guidance for course choices as well as career selection. Accordingly, NCFSE laid stress on provision of a guidance counsellor for every higher secondary school and one visiting school counsellor for a cluster of 3 to 4 secondary schools. National Curriculum Framework (NCF, 2005) promoted the teacher's guidance approach. In Primary level teacher having knowledge/background of guidance and counselling, should design activities for the

developmental needs of children, this will help students for the foundation of necessary attitudes and perceptions towards self. While at secondary stage, creating an awareness of the various disciplines will introduce the students to opportunities and scope of study. Furthermore, in Higher Secondary stage students are in adolescence stage and to cop up with personal, social and emotional crises situation, they should be provided guidance and counselling from trained counsellor. NCF emphasizes to introduce counseling skills and competencies in teacher education so that the teachers will play role of 'facilitator' to help the students in finding solutions of education, social, and/or personal problems. In this regard, the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) started Diploma in Guidance and Counselling course.

### **Guidelines of guidance and counselling in NEP2020**

The NEP 2020 emphasizes on flexible and multidisciplinary approach to school education. Accordingly, the responsibility of Schools will increase to help students for choosing subject and areas of interest from a wide range. Guidance and counseling work is expected to play an important role in helping students for selecting these choices. According to NEP2020, leading to more fulfillment of educational experiences, students' interest, aptitudes, setting realistic goals etc. are considered. The inclusion of guidance and counseling services as a fundamental component of NEP 2020 underscores the policy's commitment to nurturing the emotional, social, and psychological well-being of students. By inclusion of guidance and counselling within schools NEP2020 intend to shift educational approach of country, focusing on holistic development, fostering critical thinking, and aligning education with the evolving needs of the 21st century to fulfill commitment to nurturing the emotional, social, and psychological well being of students. Through counseling, students can explore their interests, identify their strengths, and develop a better understanding of themselves, which in turn helps them make more informed choices about their academic and career trajectories.

One of the key principles of the NEP 2020 is the shift from a content centric education system to a competency-based one. It implies that education should not solely be focused on the accumulation of information, but also on the development of critical thinking, problem-solving skills, creativity, and socio-emotional intelligence. The NEP 2020 has recognized the importance of guidance and counseling in shaping students' overall growth and success. Moreover, the policy acknowledges that academic excellence alone is insufficient to prepare students for the challenges of modern life. The guidance and counseling services play a crucial role in creating inclusive environment where every student feels to be special and supported.

For implementation of effective guidance and counselling, formation of devoted counselling units within school be initiated and the member of counselling unit should be qualified and trained person to handle divers needs of the student. The counselors should develop individualized plans for special need of students that address their specific demand, helping them overcome challenges and achieve their full potential.

Thus, it can be seen that the need for guidance and counseling, and focus on mental health and all round development of school children has always been recognized and emphasized at the policy level. However, acceptance of counseling services by the general population has been very slow (Gladding & Batra, 2018). It points at the gap between policies and guidelines, and the actual implementation of these in the field. It indicates a requirement for an attitudinal change in accepting and approaching guidance and counseling services for all students. An all school approach to guidance and counseling program will help fight the hesitation, resistance and stigma attached to it. Advocacy is also required to highlight the psychological health of students as being equally important as physical health. The need for counselling in schools in India is surely seen to be on the rise, with an increase in the number of suicides of school children, incidences of bullying, drug abuse, and decline in academic performance.

The policy also highlights the importance of early childhood care and education (ECCE) as the foundation of learning. It recognizes that children's emotional and psychological development in the early years plays a crucial role in their overall growth. To this end, guidance and counseling services can be introduced at the ECCE stage to promote emotional well-being, develop social skills, and create a positive learning environment. Early intervention through counseling can address behavioral issues, provide emotional support, and ensure that children enter formal schooling with a strong foundation of socio-emotional skills.

#### **Challenges in implementing Guidance and Counseling:**

1. Limited Resources: Many schools lack adequate funding, trained personnel, and dedicated spaces for counseling services, hindering effective implementation.
2. Stigma: Negative perceptions surrounding counseling may discourage students from seeking help due to concerns about being labeled as "troubled."
3. Time Constraints: Schools often prioritize academic subjects, leaving limited time for counseling activities within the curriculum.
4. Training: Not all educators possess the necessary training to provide effective guidance and counseling, leading to inconsistent support for students.

5. **Parental Involvement:** In some cultures, parental involvement in a child's personal and emotional matters is discouraged, making it difficult to implement comprehensive counseling programs.

**Strategies for Effective Implementation:**

1. **Professional Development:** Schools should invest in ongoing training for guidance counselors and educators, equipping them with the skills to address various student needs.
2. **Integration into Curriculum:** Infuse counseling concepts into subjects like life skills, social studies, and even mathematics, ensuring that guidance is seamlessly integrated.
3. **Awareness Campaigns:** Schools should conduct campaigns that destigmatize counseling and promote its benefits among students, parents, and staff.
4. **Collaborative Approach:** Establish partnerships with parents, community organizations, and mental health professionals to provide comprehensive support.
5. **Student-Centered Approach:** Customize counseling plans based on individual student needs, focusing on strengths and areas of development.
6. **Early Intervention:** Identify and address challenges early on, preventing issues from escalating and affecting students' overall well-being.
7. **Developing exemplar/prototype plan of Guidance Program for schools in the every states**
8. **Strengthening Guidance and Counselling component in preservice and in-service teacher education curriculum**
9. **Conducting of training /enrichment program for teacher educators in Guidance and Counselling**

**Conclusion:**

Guidance and counselling is integral components of a comprehensive school education system. It contributes to holistic development of students, assisting in students' academic success, personal growth, and emotional well-being. While number of challenges exist, the implementation of effective strategies can help schools to provide the necessary support for students to navigate the complexities of their educational journey successfully. As society evolves, the role of guidance and counseling becomes even more critical in shaping well-rounded individuals self-confident for success in both their personal and professional lives. Despite efforts from policy makers and government making it mandatory for schools to have counsellors on board, per report by Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India

only three percent of private schools have actual appointment records of counsellors, needless to state that, for the government school the situation is far worse.

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