



Impact of the national education policy 2020 on child education

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Abstract

India's educational system is undergoing a radical change as a result of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, particularly regarding child education. The goal of the strategy is to foster holistic development and lifetime learning from the very first years by rethinking early childhood care and foundational learning. The transition from the conventional 10+2 structure to a more developmentally aligned 5+3+3+4 system—which incorporates pre primary education and emphasizes age-appropriate learning outcomes—is a key component of NEP 2020. To achieve universal mastery in these areas by Grade 3, this realignment places a high priority on core literacy and numeracy. NEP 2020 acknowledges the role of experiential learning in cognitive and socioemotional development and emphasizes the value of play-based, activity-driven pedagogy for younger children. In order to promote inclusion and facilitate learning transitions, the policy supports the use of mother tongue or local language as a medium of teaching up until Grade 5. Additionally, it encourages adaptable and interdisciplinary methods, establishing the foundation for inquiry-based and innovative learning early on.

The effectiveness and reach of education in isolated and underprivileged places are further increased by the incorporation of technology for content delivery, teacher assistance, and adaptive learning. The policy also establishes frameworks for curriculum innovation, teacher preparation, and assessments that emphasize development over memorization. However, sufficient money, capacity building, and stakeholder alignment at all levels are necessary for successful implementation. NEP 2020 is essentially a plan to modernize and democratize education for children in India. It may empower kids as inquisitive, resilient, and capable learners by promoting fair access, individualized instruction, and cultural relevance. Its long-term effects might reinterpret not only academic success but also education's fundamental goal of producing well-rounded individuals.

Keywords: NEP 2020, child education, government policies, curriculum reform, technological integration

Introduction

There are various definitions of education. Education is the creation of a healthy mind in a healthy body, according to Aristotle. According to Socrates, education seeks to uncover truth and eliminate error. According to Dewey, education is the process of redefining experience, giving it a more socialized worth through better control over one's own abilities and increasing individual experience (Monteiro, 2005: 7-9). According to John Adams, the goal of educational establishments is to fulfill the duty of fostering and allowing the values of humanity and universal kindness. Adams was acutely aware of the link between a democratic republic and virtue. John Adams contends that morality, religion, and piety are fundamental to the maintenance of civil government. Adams contends that civic education, which is tasked with fostering moral and civic character in young people, was essential and crucial to the establishment of a robust democracy. Instilling and acknowledging that the principles of humanity and general benevolence can only be attained by embracing youth and letting go of the obsession with the concept is the main goal of educational institutions (Strauss, 2011). According to John Stuart Mill, every person born into a state should be required to receive an education up to a certain level. The State should, to the extent that it is within the parents' power, ensure that this duty is met if the parent fails to do so (Kirkpatrick, 2010: 1).

A national education policy is a declaration of policy

created by the Indian government that outlines the goals, objectives, guiding principles, and plans of action for advancing education in India. The goals of the policies are to raise academic standards, encourage innovation in teaching methods, and give everyone access to high-quality education. They address important topics such as curriculum development, school infrastructure, teacher preparation, exams, postsecondary education, career training, and the use of technology in the classroom. Human progress and social growth are based on education. It encompasses human development on all levels, including intellectual, moral, emotional, and social, rather than merely learning from books or institutions. People can understand the world they live in, acquire life skills, cultivate values, and participate actively and responsibly in society when they receive an education. For a child, mastering the alphabet and numbers is the first step toward building a meaningful life and a brighter future, not education. The long-term strength of any country is in how well its younger generations are raised and educated (MHRD, 2020).

Education is an essential tool for enabling residents to take control of their destinies in a country like India, which has the second-largest youth population in the world. According to Article 21-A of the Indian Constitution, children aged 6 to 14 have the right to get an education. To ensure that high-quality education is available, inclusive, and pertinent to all, the government has consistently implemented various

programs and reforms. Over the years, several plans and initiatives have been put into place to improve the nation's educational system, close the gender and regional divide, encourage digital learning, and provide positive teaching results (GOI, 2002).

Review of Literature

After 34 years, the Indian government finally unveiled the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which embodies a revolutionary vision for the nation's educational system. A sizable amount of literature has surfaced since its release, examining its anticipated effects, implementation difficulties, and ramifications for several facets of education. With an emphasis on school education, higher education, inclusion, and the digital divide, this survey of the literature summarizes important scholarly contributions and viewpoints regarding the effects of NEP 2020.

The structural change from the current 10+2 model to a new 5+3+3+4 curricular structure is one of the most talked-about topics in the literature. According to researchers like Srivastava (2021) ^[16], this model is better in line with the stages of cognitive development and incorporates international best practices, especially the Montessori method and those of Finland. This reorganization may contribute to the universalization of early childhood education and lessen the emergence of foundational learning gaps, claim Mishra and Pandey (2021) ^[11]. Das (2022) ^[2], however, draws attention to implementation issues in under-resourced and rural areas, particularly those pertaining to qualified Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) staff and suitable infrastructure.

The NEP 2020 has received accolades from a number of scholars for encouraging critical thinking, experiential learning, and curriculum design flexibility. According to Kumar and Rajan (2022) ^[6], prioritizing the mother tongue or a regional language as the primary language of instruction up until Grade 5 can enhance foundational learning outcomes and understanding. But their analysis also highlights worries among educators and parents about access to higher education and future employability, particularly in English-dominant sectors. Gupta (2023) ^[4] assesses the transition to competency-based learning and comes to the conclusion that, despite the progressive nature of the policy framework, teachers' capacity-building is crucial to its effective execution.

The establishment of Multidisciplinary Education and Research Universities (MERUs), a single regulatory agency (the Higher Education Commission of India), and the promotion of comprehensive and adaptable degree programs are only a few of the extensive reforms in the higher education system that are envisioned by NEP 2020. Sharma (2021) ^[14] highlights the benefits of eschewing strict academic silos and highlights how interdisciplinary learning may promote creativity. However, Roy and Mehta (2022) ^[12] caution that significant investments in teacher hiring, infrastructure, and student support systems would be necessary to reach a 50% Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) by 2035. Additionally, while the Academic Bank of Credits (ABC) and other entry-exit points have been hailed for increasing flexibility, questions still surround how well they will work across a range of schools.

The NEP's ideal of inclusive and egalitarian education has been the subject of a significant body of literature. Many people have praised the policy's dedication to lowering gender gaps, assisting socioeconomically disadvantaged groups (SEDGs), and guaranteeing that children with disabilities have access to education. Joshi (2022) ^[5] analyzed how the NEP 2020 recommends special education zones and focused interventions in an effort to reduce systematic inequities. However, empirical research shows that economic limitations, digital illiteracy, and deeply ingrained societal hurdles still impede equal access, particularly in rural and tribal populations (Sen and Ghosh, 2023) ^[13].

By incorporating digital learning at all levels, NEP 2020 reflects the growing emphasis on technology's role in education in post-pandemic educational discourse. Notable projects include the establishment of digital repositories such as DIKSHA and the National Educational Technology Forum (NETF). Although academics like Rao (2021) ^[9] contend that this integration can democratize education, some critics warn that it could widen the digital divide (Banerjee and Iyer, 2022) ^[1]. Their results highlight how the policy runs the risk of escalating already existing educational inequities if it ignores differences in device access, internet connectivity, and digital competence. The concept of NEP 2020 places a strong emphasis on professional development and teacher training. Verma (2022) ^[17] says that the policy intends to promote ongoing professional development and implement a 4-year Integrated B.Ed. degree is a long-overdue change. The literature in this field emphasizes the importance of teacher autonomy, motivation, and systemic support for pedagogical improvements to be successful. However, Sharma and Nair (2023) caution that the infrastructure for teacher training in India is currently insufficient to handle the scope of the policy's suggested improvements, particularly in government schools in rural areas.

A key component of NEP 2020's vision is teacher training and professional development. The policy's idea to promote continuous professional growth and offer a 4-year Integrated B.Ed. degree is long overdue, claims Verma (2022) ^[17]. This body of literature emphasizes how important teacher autonomy, motivation, and systemic support are to the success of pedagogical innovations. However, the infrastructure for teacher training in India is currently insufficient to fulfill the scope of the policy's intended improvements, particularly in rural government schools, as Sharma and Nair (2023) ^[15] caution.

Lastly, a rising corpus of research emphasizes the disconnect between the goals of policy and the realities on the ground. Research like that of Prakash (2023) ^[8] contends that whereas NEP 2020 lays out a bold and ambitious plan, serious issues are raised by the lack of a thorough implementation plan and unclear funding. Similar to this, Reddy (2022) ^[10] urges more state-level autonomy and contextualized policy implementation, cautioning against a one-size-fits-all approach in a nation as diverse as India.

A complicated picture is painted by the literature currently available on the National Education Policy 2020. Although the policy's comprehensive vision, creative frameworks, and equity driven objectives are widely appreciated, academics

constantly stress the significance of contextual execution, consistent financial investment, and systemic reform. In order to assess the true effects of NEP 2020, especially in underrepresented and underprivileged areas, future research must concentrate on long-term studies.

Research Gap

The existing literature mostly focused on the wider impact of the National Education Policy 2020 in Indian academia. Introduction of advanced technology in pedagogy, changes in educational patterns, etc. However, it is found that there are not many studies on the impact of the National Education Policy 2020 on child education. Therefore, this study intends to examine the impact of the New Education Policy on child education.

Methodology

Both primary and secondary sources are used in the study. Both quantitative and qualitative approaches are used. A comprehensive examination of the topic was guaranteed by the combination of these approaches. A thorough examination of several government documents, policy papers, scholarly publications, and reports pertaining to NEP 2020 was part of the qualitative portion of the research. Existing statistical data and trends pertaining to early childhood education before and after NEP 2020 were analyzed quantitatively in order to bolster the conclusions. It offered data-backed support as well as a thorough comprehension of actual circumstances. A descriptive and analytical research design was used in the study (Kothari, 2004: 95-120). It sought to document the main modifications brought about by NEP 2020 and the ways in which they have impacted Indian child education. Understanding the concept, goals, and methods of implementation of the child education policy was the aim. Observe and engage with young students and teachers while working as an intern for a child-focused non-governmental organization. This experience was essential to comprehending the practical implementation of NEP 2020. The utilization of play-based learning strategies, attempts to educate in the native tongue, difficulties incorporating technology, and maintaining inclusion are some of the observations.

National Education Policy 2020

The Kothari Commission's report (1964–66) served as the basis for the first NEP. It placed particular focus on the three-language formula, equitable educational opportunity, and a common school system. It placed a strong emphasis on supporting science education and the development of regional languages. An attempt was made to end educational disparities and educate underprivileged groups, including women, minorities, SCs, and STs. Operation Blackboard, early childhood care, and the expansion of the open learning system were given a lot of attention. The 1992 edition added concrete ways to improve teacher training, promote vocational education, and put the aims into practice. India finally proposed its most extensive and ambitious policy change in 2020, after more than thirty years. Early

childhood education, a 5+3+3+4 curricular design, mother tongue-based instruction, topic flexibility, vocational training starting in Grade 6, digital pedagogy, and fundamental reading and numeracy are its main objectives. NEP 2020 places more focus on quality, critical thinking, transdisciplinary learning, and child-centered approaches than earlier NEPs, which placed more emphasis on access (NEP, 2020).

National Education Policies are policy documents that have been formally approved by the Union Cabinet rather than being legally binding laws. Following extensive talks with various stakeholders, including legislators, education experts, educators, students, and civil society organizations, these are drafted. The recommendations and requirements of NEPs are gradually implemented through new government programs, administrative adjustments, and legal revisions, such as those included in the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) and the Right to Education Act, even though they do not always become laws. Policies pertaining to education have a significant impact on the future of the nation. They determine what kids learn and how they learn it, the skills they develop, how schools are run, how teachers are trained, and how educational institutions respond to new issues like unemployment, digitalization, global competition, and climate change. Given that children are at the core of nation-building in a populous and multicultural country like India, the impact of such policies on child education is especially noteworthy (NEP, 2020).

An important turning point in India's educational history has been reached with the implementation of the National Education Policy 2020. It aims to create a learner-centric, equitable, inclusive, and future-ready educational system by radically altering what now exists rather than merely improving it. According to the policy, every child in India has the opportunity to study, grow, and thrive regardless of their background. In conclusion, even though education has always been a top priority for India's growth, shifting societal demands demand ongoing reflection and reform. The government aims to provide an inclusive and progressive roadmap for the future of child education in India through well-crafted education policies, especially the NEP 2020.

Relevance and Key Features of NEP 2020

Education is the cornerstone of both personal and societal advancement; it is not merely a means of acquiring knowledge. It is essential for developing skills, forming morals, fostering character, and enabling people to fully participate in the social, political, and economic life of their nation. A robust education strategy determines a country's development path and reflects its worldview. Education has always been significant in India. However, the need for educational reforms is growing as a result of shifting times and new demands. In response, the Indian government unveiled the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, a significant overhaul designed to adapt the country's educational system to the demands of the twenty-first century. The National Policy on Education, 1986, which was later updated in 1992, has been replaced with this, the

first education policy of the twenty-first century. By guaranteeing equitable access to high-quality education for all students, encouraging general growth, and fostering a knowledge-driven society, the NEP aims to close the gaps in the current system (NEP, 2020).

The vision of the NEP is to create an education system that:

- Contributes to transforming India into a fair and vibrant knowledge society.
- Provides quality education to all, making India a global knowledge leader.
- Builds individuals who are responsible, ethical, and capable of facing new challenges.

One ambitious and revolutionary plan that has the potential to change India's educational environment is the National Education Policy 2020. Emphasizing quality, flexibility, and diversity, it seeks to provide students the values, skills, and aptitudes they need to thrive in a world that is changing. Although all facets of education are covered by the NEP, this study will concentrate on how it affects child education. The policy's effects on curricular revisions, early education access, foundational learning, and the general development of Indian children will all be examined.

Impact of the National Education Policy 2020 on Child Education

The foundation for a person's life and the advancement of society is laid by early education. Children who receive high-quality education from an early age are more likely to grow up to be capable, responsible, and empowered adults. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, a progressive reform intended to reshape the educational system, particularly during the early years, which are critical for brain development and cognitive growth, was adopted in India in awareness of this. The first significant education reform in more than three decades, the National Education Policy 2020, includes a flexible, learner-centered curriculum that prioritizes holistic development over memorization. Restructuring the curriculum to emphasize early childhood care and education (ECCE) in a 5+3+3+4 style is a crucial component (NEP, 2020).

In order to encourage play-based, activity-based, and discovery-oriented learning, it establishes a Foundational Stage (ages 3 to 8) that consists of the first two years of primary school and three years of preschool/Anganwadi. In order to guarantee basic reading and numeracy by Grade 3, the policy also initiates national initiatives such as NIPUN Bharat. Beyond these structural adjustments, NEP 2020's real power is in how it affects young children's lives and educational opportunities across India (NEP, 2020).

1. Recognition and Integration of Early Childhood

Care and Education (ECCE) NEP 2020 officially includes pre-primary education in the formal education system. Previously, early education (ages 3–6) was often overlooked or inconsistent in quality. Now, with NEP:

- Anganwadis and pre-schools are integrated into a structured learning pathway.
- A national curriculum framework for ECCE is being created to standardize learning outcomes across the country.
- Teaching will transition from informal babysitting models to well-designed early learning environments that focus on

physical, emotional, language, and cognitive development. This change ensures that a child enters Grade 1 with a strong foundation instead of educational gaps.

2. National Mission on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (NIPUN Bharat)

One of the most transformative impacts of NEP 2020 is the launch of NIPUN Bharat, which aims to develop foundational skills (reading, writing, arithmetic) for all children by the end of Grade 3.

- a. It tackles the issue of students reaching higher grades without basic comprehension skills.
- b. Learning outcomes are now monitored through regular assessments and remedial interventions.
- c. The focus shifted from just enrolment to actual learning, addressing a major gap in the previous system.

This ensures that no child is left behind due to early learning challenges.

3. Emphasis on Learning in the Mother

Tongue/Regional Language NEP suggests that the medium of instruction up to Grade 5 (and preferably Grade 8) be the child's home language.

- a. This enhances understanding, encourages participation, and makes learning feel natural.
- b. For first-generation learners, especially in rural or tribal areas, it reduces the psychological barrier of being taught in a foreign language.
- c. Studies indicate that cognitive development is stronger when children learn in their mother tongue during the early years.

This approach makes early education more inclusive, effective, and friendly for children.

4. Activity-Based and Child-Centric Pedagogy

Instead of the traditional blackboard and textbook method, NEP promotes experiential learning, which includes:

- a. Play-based learning in pre-primary and early primary years.
- b. Use of toys, stories, puzzles, music, and games to teach foundational concepts.
- c. Personalized teaching to accommodate different learning paces.

This makes education enjoyable and meaningful for young children, boosting retention and curiosity.

5. Inclusive and Equitable Access for Disadvantaged Children

NEP 2020 pays special attention to socio-economically disadvantaged groups (SEDGs), including:

- a. Children from tribal communities, rural areas, minorities, and the urban poor.
- b. Girls, children with disabilities, and those affected by displacement or conflict. To ensure equity in child education, NEP promotes:
- c. Special Education Zones (SEZs).
- d. Increased recruitment of female teachers in rural areas.
- e. Development of infrastructure for safe, accessible, and inclusive schooling.

This helps to reduce dropout rates and ensures that every child, regardless of background, gets the support they need to succeed.

6. Reimagining Teacher Training for Early Childhood Educators

Under NEP, there is a strong push for professional training of ECCE educators:

- a. Anganwadi workers are being trained in early learning pedagogy aligned with NEP goals.
- b. Teachers are gaining skills in child psychology, inclusive teaching, and multilingual instruction.
- c. Continuous Professional Development (CPD) keeps early educators updated and motivated. As a result,

the quality of interaction between teacher and child improves, creating more nurturing and effective classrooms.

7. Use of Technology for Enhancing Foundational Learning

Digital tools under NEP have helped close learning gaps during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond:

- a. The DIKSHA portal offers free digital resources in regional languages.
- b. TV and radio programs have supported remote learning where internet access is limited.
- c. Apps and online assessments help track individual learning levels and provide focused support.

While the digital divide remains a challenge, NEP aims to ensure tech-based equity by gradually improving access and infrastructure.

8. Holistic Progress Cards and Assessment Reforms

Instead of traditional report cards, NEP introduces Holistic Progress Cards (HPCs):

- a. These evaluate cognitive, social-emotional, and physical development.
- b. The focus is on skills and values, not just academic marks.
- c. Children will not be labeled as failures early in life, reducing anxiety and promoting risk taking and creativity.

India's approach to child education has undergone a substantial and deliberate change with the National Education Policy 2020. Long-standing disparities in access, quality, and equity are addressed by NEP 2020, which centers the child in the learning process and emphasizes the early years as the foundation for lifetime learning. Classrooms and communities are undergoing radical change as a result of their emphasis on inclusive practices, multilingualism, experiential learning, and foundational literacy. NEP 2020 might revolutionize child education in India if it is carried out with sustained dedication and adequate funding, allowing kids to learn, develop, and flourish from the very beginning rather than merely enrolling them in school.

Conclusion

A significant change in India's educational system has been brought about by the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, particularly with regard to child education. It is impossible to overestimate the significance of inclusive, accessible, and comprehensive early education as India

transitions to a knowledge-driven economy. A broad and all-encompassing plan to rethink children's educational journeys from the foundational years is provided by NEP 2020. Its significant emphasis on early childhood care and education (ECCE), equal access, experiential learning, fundamental reading and numeracy, and the incorporation of local language and culture into pedagogy all demonstrate its influence on child education.

The understanding that a child's early years, especially those from birth to age eight, are crucial for brain development and learning outcomes is at the heart of NEP 2020. Restructuring the current 10+2 education system to a 5+3+3+4 curricular framework—which includes three years of preschool education followed by twelve years of formal schooling—is how the policy handles this critical stage. This structural adjustment is a significant step toward bringing Indian education into line with global best practices and insights supported by neuroscience. It recognizes that high-quality ECCE is a fundamental need rather than a luxury.

The government's dedication to child-centric learning is further demonstrated by the establishment of the National Mission on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) under NEP 2020. Through initiatives like NIPUN Bharat (National Initiative for Proficiency in Reading with Understanding and Numeracy), NEP aims to guarantee that all children have developed the fundamental abilities necessary for their age by Grade 3. In order to make learning interesting and successful, the policy places a strong emphasis on play-way techniques, storytelling, activity-based learning, and the use of technology and locally available resources. In early pilot programs and model schools across states, this kid-friendly approach has already begun to demonstrate promising results.

The National Mission on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN), which was established under NEP 2020, is another example of the government's dedication to child-centered education. By implementing initiatives like NIPUN Bharat (National Initiative for Proficiency in Reading with Understanding and Numeracy), NEP aims to guarantee that all children have acquired age-appropriate basic skills by Grade 3. The strategy places a strong emphasis on play-way approaches, storytelling, activity-based learning, and the use of technology and locally available resources to make learning interesting and successful. Early pilot projects and model schools across states have already begun to show favorable results from this kid-friendly strategy. The NEP's encouragement of multilingualism and the use of the mother tongue or regional language as a medium of education until at least Grade 5 (ideally Grade 8) had another revolutionary effect. This policy choice has immediate educational ramifications in addition to linguistic and cultural ones. When taught in a language they can comprehend, children typically learn more effectively and more quickly. It improves classroom engagement and lessens their cognitive burden. For children from tribal, rural, and disadvantaged backgrounds—who frequently experience learning obstacles in early education because of the language barrier—this phase is particularly important.

Additionally, the NEP 2020 places a new emphasis on fairness and diversity in education. It seeks to close the gap between kids from various backgrounds in terms of ability, gender, and socioeconomic status. The strategy encourages an educational system in which no kid is left behind by

attending to the needs of marginalized groups, such as girls, children with disabilities, and children from economically disadvantaged areas. The creation of gender inclusion funds, hiring female instructors in outlying areas, and setting up support networks for first-generation learners have all received particular attention. The policy's transition from rote memorization to experience and competency-based learning is among its most important contributions. NEP encourages young students to be curious, think critically, and be creative. A diversified curriculum, the incorporation of storytelling, athletics, and the arts, and activity

based learning strategies all support children's overall development. Instead of textbook-bound learning, children are increasingly encouraged to learn through hands-on activities. A truly educated person develops their emotional, social, and moral faculties in addition to their cognitive abilities in such an atmosphere.

Furthermore, a key component of NEP 2020 has been the intentional integration of technology in education, particularly for students in underprivileged and distant locations. To improve learning for kids with different needs, the policy calls for the adoption of adaptive technologies, digital learning platforms, and e-content in regional languages. This element has been more important since COVID-19 since it guarantees that education will continue even during disruptions. Initiatives such as PM eVidya, e-Pathshala, and DIKSHA have become vital instruments in this shift, promoting digital inclusivity in education for children. Reducing curriculum content to improve critical thinking and foundational learning has another noteworthy effect. The policy suggests a change in the assessment system as well as more adaptable and kid-appropriate curricula. Children will now be evaluated using formative assessments, portfolios, self-assessments, and peer reviews in place of high-stakes exams. This eliminates exam anxiety and creates a more encouraging learning atmosphere.

NEP 2020 seeks to improve family involvement, teacher preparation, and school infrastructure from a governance standpoint. The foundation of a high-quality education is a skilled teacher, and NEP places a strong emphasis on educators' ongoing professional development. In addition, it encourages community involvement in early education and acknowledges parents as co-educators. It is anticipated that these actions will establish a more responsible and supportive learning environment for kids. NEP 2020's actual success in the field of child education, despite the policy's inclusiveness and ambition, will rely on its efficient execution, sufficient funding, oversight, and interdepartmental cooperation. Teacher shortages, the digital divide, sociocultural resistance in some areas, and infrastructure deficits are still issues that require ongoing attention. The impact will only be felt in policy papers unless suggestions are implemented at the local level, particularly in rural and isolated areas.

To sum up, the National Education Policy 2020 has the power to significantly and historically change child education in India. The strategy lays the groundwork for a generation of capable, self-assured, and empowered learners by addressing children's basic needs, advancing equity, encouraging holistic development, and making learning fun

and inclusive. NEP 2020 may close the long-standing gaps in India's educational system and set the groundwork for a better, more just future for all kids if it is carried out consistently and compassionately.

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