

## UPSC EDITORIAL ANALYSIS 23 JUL 2021

### EDITORIAL 1: HOW OPEN NETWORK FOR DIGITAL COMMERCE COULD DISRUPT INDIA'S E-COMMERCE SPACE

**Topic: General Studies Paper 3 (Indian Economy)**

#### Context:

- The advisory council for Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC) was opened to digitise e-commerce value chains, standardise operations, promote inclusion of suppliers, and derive efficiencies in logistics by the Central government.
- To facilitate the creation of shared digital infrastructure this is an addition to already created identity (Aadhaar) and payments (Unified Payments Interface).
- For standardising the digital infrastructure layer India's approach, either as its creator or facilitator, is unique and offers learnings for other countries.
- This approach can level the playing field and create value for users wherein the e-commerce sector is ripe for such disruption.



#### System design:

- The market is dominated by a few big players who are facing investigations for unfair trade practices in many countries and also is characterised by many small players who

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individually do not have the muscle to have an equitable bargain with e-commerce companies.

- The situation is a “market failure”, as it represents a legitimate case for intervention. However, this approach also comes with risks and we should tread with caution.
- In general, governments should only intervene in markets when there is an identifiable market failure or massive societal benefits from creating shared infrastructure.
- The system should be designed to have success wherein the three “layers” of an open digital ecosystem — tech, governance and community, which would provide a useful conceptual framework to think of both adoption and safeguards.

### **Tech Layer:**

- It should be designed to focus on minimalism and decentralisation.
- The government should restrict its role to facilitating standards and protocols that provide open access.
- An entire tech platform should be built only if a standards-based approach doesn’t suffice.
- The tech-based platform if the build should be based on “privacy by design” principles.
- There should be minimal data collected and decentralised so that there is no honeypot for hackers.
- There should be clear rules for Data exchange protocols that aim at the consumer interest. Blockchain technology could be used to build technical safeguards that cannot be overridden without active consent.

### **Governance Layer:**

- There should not be excessive state intervention in e-commerce.
- Any tech implemented should be accompanied by a law or regulation that lays out the scope of the project.
- If personal data is required, first the data protection bill has to be passed and creating an independent regulator should be a precondition.
- To assure fairness, the standards can be enforced by an independent society or non-profit.

### **Community Layer:**

- It aims at making the process inclusive and participatory by making civil society and the public active contributors.
- For example, making recordings or minutes of the meetings or seeking wide feedback on drafts of the proposal.
- The framework should also provide for quick and time-bound redressal of grievances which would help to build trust in the system.
- Along with open-source technology for digital commerce, other open-source movements such as transparency, collaboration, release early and inclusive meritocracy, and community should also be encouraged by the Government.
- Further, Only an infrastructure-led approach may not be sufficient. For example, although UPI was set up to provide a level playing field, only the top two service providers at the present process more than 80 per cent of transactions.
- Hence, along with infrastructure, there must be tightly-tailored regulation.

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- Also, the concept of “interoperability”, mandating that private digital platforms enable their users and suppliers to seamlessly solicit business on other platforms should be explored.
- Adoption of an open e-commerce platform or standards in a sector with entrenched incumbents that have a dominant market share is difficult.
- There is a need to create non-mandatory “reference applications”, along with financial and non-financial incentives.
- Experience in the adoption of UPI can be used like how The government supported the rollout of BHIM as a reference app and offered financial rewards through a lottery scheme to drive early adoption.

### Conclusion:

- ✓ India trying to explore innovative ways to bridge the gaps in e-commerce markets is a good initiative, But the boldness of this vision must be matched by the thoughtfulness of the approach.

### Reference:

<https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/how-open-network-for-digital-commerce-could-disrupt-indias-e-commerce-space-7417683/lite/>

## EDITORIAL 2: THE DIRECTION THAT THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK NEEDS TO TAKE

### Topic: General Studies Paper 2 (Issues related to Education)

### Context:

- Recently, As per the recommendations of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) has asked the State Councils of Educational Research and Training (SCERTs) to develop four State Curriculum Frameworks (SCFs).
- The framework should pertain to School Education, Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), Teacher Education (TE) and Adult Education (AE).

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### NCF& SCF

- States will have to develop draft SCF based on the Templates provided by NCERT, then the drafts will feed into formulating the National Curriculum Frameworks and the final version of the NCFs will be used as guiding documents to finalise the SCFs.
- The SCERTs must also develop 25 position papers, which shall be used to develop national position papers.
- NCF aims to take suggestions from all States, to make NCF an inclusive document.
- The NCERT shall provide support to the SCERTs in terms of guidance, training of personnel, and technology platforms to develop these documents.

### Much data collection

- NCERT shall provide e-templates for various tasks which have to be filled up by the States/UTs [Union Territories]
- Survey questionnaires/multiple-choice questions are also provided by NCERT to conduct surveys among various stakeholders.
- Surveys aim to collect views from all sections of the population regarding the aims, the objectives, and the content of the curriculum.
- However, gathering such data based on questionnaires and template that one develops may lead to an emphasis on certain kinds of recommendations while muting some others. Also, while cleaning and organising the data, a data analyst may pick up what is already in the minds of the people handling such data and filter out what does not fit within their thinking. There is also a problem of what the majority 'wants' and what 'ought to be done. For

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example, if one asks about public opinion on the medium of instruction for the ECCE, the majority would be in favour of English, but whether this would be in the best interest of the children and society is doubtful.

### Some valid questions

- There was a huge gathering for the framework of NEP 2020 as the policy was words for values, capabilities and skills, all justified as needed for emerging market requirements.
- NEP Policy has just heaps of words, without any organising principle to decide priorities, inter-relationships and deriving curricular content and pedagogy from them.
- NEP policy fails to provide appropriate criteria to choose pedagogy at different stages and for different curricular areas.

### Foundational stage:

- The ECCE plus Classes one and two (first five years of education, for the age group three years to eight years) is considered as the first stage.
- The so-called foundational stage when scrutinized was crumbled both under the organisational as well as pedagogical grounds. Both ECCE and Classes one and two have separate institutions; their teachers' qualifications, salaries, and training, curriculum frameworks are different; then how could they be under a single block.
- On pedagogical grounds, the capabilities of self-restraint, responsible behaviour, dealing with adults and people outside the family, concentration span, self-directed activities and understanding the value of completing a task is different for a four-year-old and a six-year-old. These are the capabilities that determine the nature of pedagogy and formal learning; doesn't help in growth.
- While formulating the NCFs along with finding a method of making proper sense of gathered public opinion even the above issues have to be dealt with.
- National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCFSE) if developed purely based on NEP 2020, there may not be sound development of our schoolchildren.
- NCF and the SCFs can at least mitigate, if not completely solve the problems created by the NEP 2020 and board public opinion in an appropriate manner.
- NCFSE framework may pick up what is good in NEP Policy and implement them.
- For example, flexibility in secondary education, examination reform, more exposure to Indian languages, and taking on board traditional Indian knowledge systems can make our education system better.

### Documents of value

- While framing NCF, guidance can be taken from the Secondary Education Commission Report (SECR) and Zakir Hussain's Basic National Education (BNE) report.
- The survey is conducted to create a public consensus on basic values, and the vision and the direction our education system should take.
- The SERC collected and analysed huge data on basis of individual, society, and education consisting of all the three necessary elements: the overall framework of values and future direction, current issues and problems of the education system, and public opinion.

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- The SECR has set aims based on democratic values it works out rigorously to set education, pedagogy and content to achieve those aims.

### **BNE REPORT:**

- BNE Report too has a rigorous derivation of educational aims from the vision of society, curricular objectives from the aims, and content from the objectives are starkly clear. The documents are coherent and rigorous because they place the values and principles of democracy and a morally, aesthetically and intellectually rich individual life as the first point and then try to resolve current economic problems in alignment with them which is opposite to the current policy order.
- Not the content, but the approach they take is rigorous, rational, and very sound which has to be adopted.
- The first edition of the BNE was in 1938 and SECR was written in the 1950s.
- In 1973, Patricia White, a British philosopher worked out the school curriculum on basis of democracy.
- In 1998, John White worked out a rigorous method for the same.
- The BNE and the SECR provide practical use of the educational approaches.
- However, our country's current educational framework is hardly based on the pedagogical ideals of child-centrism and has vague assumptions about the democratic ideals and instead focuses on fashionable or political issues.

### **Placing the debate**

- It is high time that the democratic ideal is placed at the centre of our education and provide the framework of values and principles to judge and justify all other aspects.

### **Conclusion:**

- ✓ If the education curriculum is not focussed on democratic ideals, then education would just become a mere business.
- ✓ The curriculum should thus be based on public opinion, otherwise, the judgment from the hands of the powerful may take away the democratic values in education.

### **Reference:**

<https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/the-direction-that-the-ncf-needs-to-take/article35478369.ece/amp/>

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