

NEP 2020: Transforming Higher Education in India

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Abstract : The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, introduced by the Government of India, represents a significant overhaul of the country's educational system, with a vision to transform India into a global knowledge hub. This paper examines the key provisions of NEP 2020 and explores their potential impact on higher education in India. The policy aims to address challenges in the sector such as quality, accessibility, and inclusivity, while aligning with global educational trends. This paper outlines the policy's major reforms, discusses its challenges, and evaluates the potential outcomes for the Indian higher education system.

Keywords: NEP 2020, Higher Education, Indian Education System, Reforms, Inclusivity, Quality Education.

Introduction - Education is the basis for fully utilising human potential, creating an equitable society, and supporting the country's development. Providing quality education to all is essential for a country's progress and leadership on the world stage in terms of economic growth, quality and equality, scientific progress, national integration and cultural preservation. Promoting good education is the best way to develop and make the most of a country's talents and resources to benefit people, society, government and the world. In the next decade, India will have the world's largest youth population, and its ability to provide them with the best education will determine its future.

The global education development agenda is reflected in Goal 4 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDG4), adopted by India in 2015. It aims to "ensure quality and equity in education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" by 2030. Overhauling the entire education system to support and promote learning for the achievement of key goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda is required for Sustainable Development.

The world is changing rapidly in the field of information. With the rise of many science and technology giants such as big data, machine learning and artificial intelligence, many unskilled jobs around the world are being replaced by machines, resulting in an increased demand for skilled workers, especially in the fields of mathematics, computer science, and technology. With climate change, increased pollution, and depletion of natural resources, many changes are occurring in the way the requirements of energy, water, food, and sanitation are fulfilled, leading to the need for skilled workers. The increasing number of epidemics around the world still requires collaborative research (approach) in disease control and vaccine development, and the

challenges that arise in society arise when there is much more to learn.

As India moves towards becoming one of the world's three largest economies, the demand for humanities and arts will also increase. In this changing working environment and the global ecosystem, it has become important not only to learn but how to learn. Thus, the education system should be creative, innovative, and adaptive and assimilate new things in a new and changing environment. In addition to science and mathematics, the curriculum should include arts, crafts, humanities, games, sports and physical activity, languages, literature, cultural rules and values, supporting all types and abilities of learners; making learning and supporting learning increasingly effective. Education should build character and prepare students to be moral, conscientious, compassionate, and loving while preparing them to be successful in their jobs.

Major reforms are required to close the gap between current educational outcomes and needs, including efficiency, equity and integrity, from childhood education to higher education. National Education Policy 2020 is the first education policy of the 21st century and aims to solve many development problems in our country. While addressing India's heritage, the Act refers to reforms in various aspects of the education system, including regulations and management, to create new systems that meet the educational goals of the 21st century, including Sustainable Development Goal 4. It is based on the principle that education should develop not only cognitive skills but also social, moral and emotional.

Vision of the NEP: This National Education Policy is a policy in India that will directly help transform India (i.e. Bharat) into a nation that empowers all knowledge

communities by providing quality education, thereby making India a world-class knowledge superpower. The policy envisages that curriculum and teaching should be evolved to ensure that students respect their basic duties and constitution, and be aware of their roles and responsibilities in a changing world. The vision of the policy is to encourage students to take a deep interest in being Indian not only intellectually but also in spirit, wisdom and conduct. A true global citizen emerges from a commitment to human rights, sustainable development, livelihoods and global well-being.

The Origin: India formulated its first education policy in 1968 by former Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi. The second education policy was introduced by the Rajiv Gandhi government in 1986 and some amendments were made to it by the Narasimha Rao government in 1992. Finally, after 34 years, the present government has taken steps and launched the National Education Policy 2020.

To formulate a new education policy, the central government prepared the draft in 2017 under the chairmanship of the Kasturirangam Committee. It was approved by the government of the country in July 2020. Shri Narendra Modi intimated about NEP 2020 through a tweet and also announced that the name of the Ministry of Human Resources Development had been changed to "Ministry of National Education" (Sahu and Bahera, 2022)

NEP and Higher Education: National Education Policy, 2020 (NEP) envisages a massive transformation in the Indian education system through– "an education system rooted in Indian ethos that contributes directly to transforming India, that is Bharat, sustainably into an equitable and vibrant knowledge society, by providing high-quality education to all, thereby making India a global knowledge superpower." It focuses on five core concepts, viz Affordability, Accessibility, Quality, Equity, and Accountability to ensure lifelong learning.

In school education, the 2020 National Education Policy outlines the core values and principles that education should not only develop skills and problem-solving but also social and emotional skills, including cultural awareness (also known as "soft skills") and talent, Harmony, patience and courage, teamwork, leadership, communication and more. The 2020 NEP in higher education provided great information and advice on many aspects of education, including the transition to multi-disciplinary teaching and learning, home management, promoting good research through the establishment of the National Research Foundation, professional development of teachers, integration of technology, restructuring of regulatory systems, mixed pedagogy, reliable and blended evaluation system and comprehensive content in Indian languages. The policy is expected to have a positive impact on education and make India a global intelligence hub in the next 25 years of "Amrit Kaal". Its implementation requires the cooperation of the Centre, states, UTs, HEIs, Regulatory Bodies and all other stakeholders. (Ministry of Education,

2020)

The New Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) aimed at increasing the Gross Enrolment Ratio in higher education including vocational education from 26.3% to 50% by 2035 (Shukla, 2020). It states that all universities must become multi-university by 2040, and all universities are again expected to have 3,000 or more students. By 2030, there will be at least one major disciplinary organization in or near every region. At the same time, individual universities will be cut and all universities will switch to a multidisciplinary approach. The system of 'affiliated colleges' will eventually be phased out in 15 years.

Existing complex names of universities such as "Deemed University", "Affiliated University", "Affiliated Technical University" and "Unitary University" should be replaced with "university". The university shall be described as a multidisciplinary institution providing undergraduate and graduate courses with excellent teaching, research and community engagement. (Shukla, 2020)

One of the significant changes will be the set-up of the Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) for all higher education institutions. HECI will act as a single regulator and various responsibilities such as accreditation, financing and training organization will be carried out by a single vertical body. This entity will gradually replace other governing bodies such as the University Grants Commission (UGC) and the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE).

Key impact areas:

1. Quality Universities and colleges through large-scale consolidation.
2. A higher education system that is accessible and inclusive.
3. Equity and Inclusiveness in Higher Education.
4. A quality and well-incentivized faculty at the core of higher education transformation.
5. Promoting excellence through internationalization.
6. Accountability and transparency as levers for improved governance.

Implementation and Challenges in Implementation of

NEP 2020: In early August 2021, Karnataka became the first state to issue an order concerning implementing NEP. Three years since the National Education Policy (NEP) launch, most states have either adopted the policy wholly or picked specific parts of it for application. In July 2023, National Digital University launched. While NEP 2020 presents a progressive approach to higher education, its implementation may face several challenges.

Infrastructure and Resources: Many Indian higher education institutions face challenges in terms of outdated infrastructure, lack of resources, and limited access to cutting-edge technologies. Addressing these disparities will require significant investment in infrastructure and human resources.

Teacher Training and Development: The success of NEP

2020 will depend heavily on the capacity of teachers to adapt to new teaching methodologies and interdisciplinary approaches. A comprehensive teacher training program is essential to equip educators with the necessary skills.

Equity and Inclusivity: While the policy emphasizes inclusive education, there is a need for focused efforts to ensure that students from underrepresented communities, such as those from rural areas or economically disadvantaged backgrounds, have equal access to quality higher education.

Resistance to Change: As with any major policy reform, there is potential resistance from institutions, faculty, and other stakeholders. Overcoming institutional inertia and ensuring broad-based acceptance of the new policy will be crucial for its success.

There are many hurdles to implementing the policy as it was proposed. Some are discussed below.

(i) Multiple Exits is not a good idea: While changing the higher education model with various exit strategies is an important step in reducing the number of people leaving, questions remain over the value of such certificates. The Indians are such that they want to join the business with a degree. Therefore, to adapt to the new system, we first need to eliminate the old idea that "it is necessary to have a degree to find a job." This is a dangerous paradigm that may destroy the talent of individuals.

(ii) Multi-disciplinary approach in education: There is a need for training for college and university teachers to implement this approach. It requires a revision of the curriculum designed to make the curriculum flexible and organic so that thinking and the impact of thinking and skills can be achieved at many levels of education. The policy is required to establish multi-disciplinary institutions for higher education substituting single-disciplinary ones.

(iii) Funding: Implementation of any significant measures requires several years of adequate financing. In this regard, NEP said that the country should increase public expenditure to 6% of GDP to achieve the goals of the new policy. Government officials are understandably divided over the economic hardship experienced by much of the population in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic, but there is no clear plan on how to raise capital. The policy wants private schools to provide more scholarships to increase access to low-income students, but the NEP did not discuss how to do that. The new policy requires more public funding; merely increasing education expenditure from 3 per cent to 6 per cent of GDP is not enough to meet demand.

(iv) Technology Use: The new education Policy talks about technology use, online and digital education. There is a widespread need for internet access in remote and rural areas as well. As the pandemic has shown, e-learning is the way forward. This will continue to be one of the biggest challenges of the next decade.

The challenges outlined in Mallik's 2023 study highlight the significant hurdles faced in the implementation of NEP

2020. The policy aims to reform India's education system and address long-standing issues, but the need for substantial investment in infrastructure, teacher training, and resource allocation is critical. These elements are essential for achieving the ambitious targets set by the NEP, which include universal access to education, improving quality, and integrating technology.

India's vast size and incredible diversity create significant challenges for implementing NEP 2020. The country has a mix of urban and rural areas, varying levels of economic development, and multiple languages and cultures, all of which require tailored strategies for effective implementation. This diversity means that a one-size-fits-all approach won't work, and the policy must be adapted to local contexts, needs, and capacities. Additionally, the educational infrastructure and quality of teaching vary widely across states, making uniform implementation even more difficult. Ensuring that resources are equitably distributed and that teacher training and support are available in all regions becomes crucial to avoid deepening existing disparities (Bhandwalker, 2023).

Moreover, the cooperation between the central and state governments is fundamental to the success of NEP 2020. While the policy was developed with input from various stakeholders, its execution will require seamless collaboration across multiple levels of governance. The tension between federal authority and state autonomy is a long-standing issue in India, and it can make policy implementation tricky, especially in a country as diverse as India, where states have different priorities and needs.

The resistance from some states to key NEP policies is a reflection of the complex political, social, and economic factors at play. Some states may fear that the central government is pushing policies that don't align with their local priorities, or they might feel that they lack the resources or capacity to implement the changes effectively.

For the policy to work, the Center needs to balance its vision with the realities on the ground in each state. This could involve tailoring certain aspects of the policy to suit local needs while ensuring that core objectives are still met. Open dialogue and ongoing consultation with states, as well as providing financial and technical support, will be crucial in overcoming opposition and ensuring smoother implementation. "Creating a shared responsibility and ownership amongst key stakeholders, including the private sector, at the state and district levels that have extraordinary diversity is going to be a major challenge for the education leadership" (Sahoo, 2021).

Potential Impact on Higher Education: The successful implementation of NEP 2020 is expected to bring several positive changes to the higher education landscape in India:

Improvement in Quality: The emphasis on multidisciplinary education, research, and innovation is likely to result in a significant improvement in the overall quality of education. Institutions will be incentivized to focus on

academic excellence, and students will benefit from a more holistic learning experience.

Enhanced Access: The policy's focus on digital learning and inclusive education has the potential to democratize access to higher education. Students from remote areas or disadvantaged backgrounds can benefit from online courses and other distance learning opportunities.

Global Competitiveness: By promoting international collaborations and research, NEP 2020 is likely to increase the global visibility and competitiveness of Indian institutions, attracting international students and faculty.

Skilled Workforce: The integration of skill development and vocational training into the curriculum will help bridge the gap between academic learning and industry requirements. This is expected to produce a workforce that is better equipped for the challenges of the global job market.

Conclusion: The National Education Policy 2020 offers a comprehensive framework for transforming higher education in India. The reforms introduced by NEP 2020 have the potential to address long-standing issues such as quality, access, and inclusivity in higher education. However, the successful implementation of these reforms will depend on overcoming challenges such as infrastructure deficits, resistance to change, and ensuring equitable access for all students. With the right investments and a strategic approach, NEP 2020 could help position India as a leader in global higher education, contributing to both national development and global knowledge exchange.

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