

National Education Policy 2020 and Higher Education: A Comprehensive Analysis of Impact, Challenges and Opportunities

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Abstract:

The educational system forms the bedrock of a nation's progress and advancement. The National Education Policy 2020 has been reimagined as the cornerstone of this transformation, holding the potential to revamp the country's educational system and enhance its economic and social indicators. Recognizing education's role in driving societal and economic progress, a well-defined and forward-looking educational strategy is imperative for a nation's schools and colleges. Various countries adopt diverse educational frameworks, influenced by their traditions and cultures, all aimed at benefiting individuals at different stages of their academic journey, particularly in high school and college. Recently, the Indian government introduced a fresh educational blueprint, drawing from recommendations by a panel of experts. The proposed changes brought about by NEP 2020 have caught many educators off guard. While both secondary and tertiary education have felt the impact of this policy, this article primarily centers on NEP 2020 and its implications for higher education. The primary focus of this paper revolves around NEP 2020 and how it shapes higher education. The document also highlights the key aspects of NEP and examines the prospects and obstacles tied to the implementation of NEP 2020 within higher education institutions.

Keywords: HEI's, NEP, Internationalisation, empowerment, Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER)

Introduction:

"Education is a key to success and this success can be attained by the appropriate implementation of the policy,"

The National Education Policy (NEP) essentially serves as a comprehensive framework that guides the progression of education within the country. The necessity for such a framework was initially recognized in 1968 and subsequently revised in 1986. In 1992, it underwent further scrutiny and adjustments to align with the changing landscape. Subsequent to these revisions, significant transformations have taken place both within the sector and globally. As a result, in 2020, the government opted to modernize these policies to make them more appealing and pertinent within the educational context. The updated NEP was introduced with the aim of instituting systematic enhancements spanning from primary (K-12) education to the tertiary (college/university) levels. Going forward, educational content will emphasize fundamental principles, conceptual understanding, practical applications, and problem-solving approaches in response to the evolving circumstances. In line with this, NEP has introduced numerous alterations and innovative initiatives within the higher education

sphere. The nation's higher education system is poised to experience positive and enduring impacts owing to the National Education Policy. The government's decision to permit international universities to establish campuses in India is commendable. This move will offer students access to a globally benchmarked education while remaining locally situated. The advent of multidisciplinary institutions will rejuvenate the emphasis on various academic domains, encompassing not only sciences but also arts and humanities. This pedagogical approach will foster comprehensive learning and holistic development among students, thereby equipping them with a stronger foundational knowledge. New paradigms have emerged in higher education since the inception of NEP, and India aspires to solidify its status as a premier study destination by 2020, offering high-quality education at competitive costs. The NEP encompasses pivotal themes such as equitable integration of technology for enhanced educational outcomes, fostering quality research, and delivering a holistic, multidisciplinary, and forward-looking education.

Literature Review:

P. S. Aithal & Shubhra jyotsna Aithal, 2020 in his paper "The Examination of the Implementation of India's National Education Policy 2020 in the Pursuit of its Goals" uncovered that Higher education assumes a vital role in shaping a country's economy, societal position, technological integration, and overall well-being of its populace. The responsibility of enhancing the Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) for the entire population's access to advanced education lies with the nation's educational authorities. The 2020 National Education Policy of India is actively striving to realize this objective by enacting innovative measures that enhance the caliber, affordability, and availability of higher education. Simultaneously, it seeks to facilitate private sector involvement while imposing stringent quality checks across all higher education establishments.

Dr, Rahul Pratap Singh Kaurav, 2021 in his paper "With the introduction of NEP 2020, a qualitative examination of educational content and sentiment analysis through Twitter mining reveals that a transformation in the educational landscape is anticipated in the near future. This shift has the potential to propel India's trajectory towards emerging as a global superpower."

Dr. Hemlata Verma and Adarsh Kuma, 2021 in his paper "Theoretical Examination of India's New Education Policy 2020" The recently introduced National Education Policy of 2020, sanctioned by the central government to overhaul India's educational framework, necessitates adaptation to contemporary requirements. If effectively implemented, this novel system has the potential to elevate India's global standing, positioning it among the foremost nations worldwide.

Dr. Wayne B. James Dr. Cihan Cobanoglu Dr. Muhi'in Cavusoglu, 2022, NEP 2020: Paving the Way for India 2.0 through Educational Reform" The New Education Policy (NEP) of 2020 serves as a roadmap for revitalizing higher education in India. This transformation will draw upon the collective knowledge and experiences of global communities. In the post-COVID era, the higher education landscape in India, shaped by NEP 2020, will also integrate information and communication technology (ICT) to cater to the evolving educational needs. Persisting with an outdated educational paradigm is no longer tenable. The Indian government must undertake substantial revisions in higher education curricula to meet the global demand for skilled professionals. This renders the implementation of NEP

2020 a challenging endeavor. Undoubtedly, this policy will usher in novel and revolutionary advancements."

Research methodology

This study is characterized as a descriptive research project. The essential secondary information was gathered from a range of sources such as the websites of the Government of India, magazines, journals, and other published materials. Subsequently, this information underwent analysis and assessment to derive the inferences and conclusions.

Objectives:

01. To outlines the salient features of NEP
02. To study the impact of New Education Policy 2020 on higher education
03. To study the challenges and opportunities of NEP 2020 in higher education

Discussion:

Students will encounter fresh learning opportunities under the influence of the New Education Policy (NEP). The primary impacts will center around the alterations in the students' learning environment and methods. The revised educational approach will place greater importance on fostering students' competencies and enhancing their skills. The NEP is designed to equip students for their forthcoming endeavors. It encourages students to engage attentively in both academic and extracurricular pursuits while providing them with access to counseling services and additional support. The implementation of the New Education Policy is especially advantageous for students who might otherwise drop out in the midterm. These students will now have a range of alternative paths, including a one-year training program or a two-year diploma, as part of the new national education strategy.

The New Education Policy of 2020 aims to revamp India's existing educational framework, channeling it towards a more learning-centric approach. This transition will provide students with exceptional prospects to engage in research-based learning. Educators, too, will be presented with opportunities to acquire advanced teaching methodologies. To effectively navigate this new educational landscape, teachers should bolster their counseling and career guidance skills, aiding students in comprehending and adapting to the novel educational paradigm.

The salient features of NEP

Key Features of NEP The notable characteristics of the New Education Policy (NEP) encompass a comprehensive integration of professional education within the higher education system. Independent technical universities, medical schools, law schools, agricultural institutions, and similar entities will cease to exist. A uniform foundation will be established for all science graduates, who will initially undertake the same introductory phase of the MBBS program. Following this phase, students can opt for specializations such as MBBS, BDS, nursing, or other fields.

In the realm of higher education, the focus lies in cultivating a pool of young individuals with skills and ambitions to drive the nation's growth and bolster the economy. This involves integrating technological solutions and empowering higher education institutions (HEIs) through digital means. A commitment is made to allocate 6% of the GDP to accomplish these goals. Recognizing the interconnection of the information economy and society, this initiative yields several socio-economic advancements.

The policy places significant emphasis on vocational education, financial support, and incubators to facilitate entrepreneurship as a means of economic expansion. Remarkably, the internationalization of higher education (HE) is now incorporated into India's education policy for the first time. The objective is to establish India as a hub of knowledge that attracts foreign nationals. It also aims to facilitate structured endeavors for research collaboration and student exchanges between Indian institutions and global counterparts.

Degrees granted by HEIs will be acknowledged according to their respective institutions, and the exchange of credits between domestic and foreign universities will be endorsed. This crucial reform is anticipated to generate additional employment opportunities within the industrial sector and promote seamless education systems worldwide. Graduates, armed with an enriched understanding of Indian culture, socio-economic diversity, trade regulations, industrial strengths, and other relevant factors, are expected to fortify international business relationships across education, support services, and various sectors.

Analysis of impact of NEP 2020 on higher education

1. Regulatory System of Higher Education:

A notable alteration in the New Education Policy (NEP) 2020 involves the proposal to establish the Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) as a comprehensive entity overseeing higher education, excluding medical and legal fields. This development naturally raises the question of what will become of the existing UGC and AICTE. The primary objective of HECI is to reform the higher education landscape. The proposed bill intends to separate the academic and funding aspects within this sector. According to the new legislation, HECI will not wield any financial authority. The funding responsibilities previously managed by the University Grants Commission (UGC) will now fall under the purview of the Ministry of Education, previously referred to as the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD). This transition is expected to resolve the prevailing regulatory complexities within India's higher education system.

HECI is projected to consist of four distinct branches: the National Higher Education Regulatory Council (NHERC) responsible for regulation, the General Education Council (GEC) in charge of setting standards, the Higher Education Grants Council (HEGC) dedicated to funding, and the National Accreditation Council (NAC) focused on accreditation. The need for a unified governing body to establish consistent education standards has been a long-standing requirement and a vision of numerous education experts. This move is widely regarded as a step in the right direction for streamlining the education policy. However, to ensure the quality of higher education, institutions should be evaluated based on pertinent criteria like research contributions, industry affiliations, placement rates, and academic excellence, among others. If HECI can effectively manage this, the potential benefits for its principal beneficiary, the youth of India, could be substantial.

2. Graded Accreditation and Graded Autonomy:

The principle of "empowerment and autonomy for fostering innovation" stands out as a prominent element in the New Education Policy (NEP) 2020, endorsing a gradual transition from Affiliated Colleges to Autonomous Institutions. This strategy includes the provision of enhanced flexibility to autonomous institutions, fostering optimism regarding curriculum enhancement. Additionally, the policy indicates that Autonomous degree-granting Colleges, backed by appropriate accreditations, could evolve into Research-intensive or Teaching-intensive Universities, should they aspire to do so. The introduction

of Multidisciplinary Education and Research Universities (MERUs) across the nation contributes further hope. These establishments will be on par with the existing IITs and IIMs, with a focus on demonstrating multidisciplinary education opportunities for Indian students.

Another noteworthy alteration presented by NEP 2020 is the proposal for the National Testing Agency (NTA) to function as a premier, expert, independent testing body, overseeing entrance examinations for undergraduate, graduate admissions, and fellowships within Higher Education Institutions. The exceptional quality, breadth, and adaptability of NTA's testing services will enable numerous universities to adopt these standardized entrance exams. This move will considerably alleviate the burden on students, universities, colleges, and the education system as a whole by replacing the need for each university to design its own entrance exams. The decision of whether to employ NTA assessments for admissions will rest with individual universities and colleges. Moreover, this reform is set to facilitate smoother credit and degree transfers for students seeking education abroad.

3. Internationalisation at home:

NEP 2020 also introduces the provision for international universities and colleges to establish their presence in India, which presents a challenge to domestic institutions to elevate the quality of education they provide. The Indian higher education sector is abuzz with the opportunity to welcome foreign universities to establish campuses within the nation. India boasts one of the largest networks of higher education systems globally, encompassing over 900 universities and 40,000 colleges. However, the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for higher education in India stands at 26.3%, considerably lower compared to other BRICS nations like Brazil (50%) and China (51%). Moreover, it is substantially lower when contrasted with European and North American countries where the GER exceeds 80%.

India must experience substantial growth in the realm of global higher education to attain sustainable economic progress. This growth should be driven not by natural resources but by knowledge resources. As per reports, India will require over 1,500 new higher education institutions by 2030 to accommodate the significant influx of students. This is why the Indian government aims to foster Foreign Direct Investment (FDIs) and open up the External Commercial Borrowing (ECB) avenue to bolster capital investment in the education sector.

Additionally, the ministry is actively working to enhance India's reputation as an educational hub, given that a considerable number of Indian students—more than 700,000—are currently studying abroad. The intention behind this policy is to make world-class education accessible locally at a notably reduced cost, eliminating the need for overseas travel. This move is expected to substantially decrease the migration of human capital to other countries for educational and job prospects. Global surveys suggest that cross-border education yields economic benefits and fosters a heightened global awareness, cultural sensitivity, and competitiveness.

Foreign collaborations empower local institutes to tailor their curriculum in alignment with international pedagogy, offering a diverse array of subjects and specializations to students.

4. More Holistic and Multidisciplinary Education:

According to NEP 2020, a comprehensive and multidisciplinary education aims to nurture all dimensions of human potential—intellectual, aesthetic, social, physical, emotional, and ethical—in a harmonious manner. This approach seeks to cultivate well-rounded individuals who possess critical capacities relevant to the 21st century. These capacities span various domains, including arts,

humanities, languages, sciences, social sciences, and professional, technical, and vocational fields. It also encompasses an ethos of social involvement, soft skills such as communication and debate, and a rigorous specialization in chosen fields. The vision set forth by NEP 2020 is to establish large, multidisciplinary Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in or around each district by the year 2030.

To realize this holistic and multidisciplinary education, the adaptable and inventive curricula of all HEIs will include credit-based courses and projects focusing on community engagement and service, environmental education, and values-based education. The environmental education component will cover topics like climate change, pollution, waste management, conservation of biodiversity, forest and wildlife preservation, sustainable development, and more. Values-based education will instill humanistic, ethical, Constitutional, and universal values such as truth, righteous conduct, peace, love, nonviolence, scientific temper, citizenship values, and essential life skills. Emphasizing service, participation in community service initiatives will be an integral facet of this comprehensive education. Considering the increasing interconnectivity of the world, the provision of Global Citizenship Education (GCED) is a response to contemporary global challenges. It aims to empower learners to recognize and comprehend global issues while promoting more peaceful, inclusive, secure, and sustainable societies. Finally, in line with the holistic education approach, students at all HEIs will have opportunities for internships with local industries, businesses, artists, craftsmen, and research institutions. These practical experiences will allow students to actively apply their learning and, as a result, enhance their employability.

5. The structure and lengths of degree programmes:

Within the framework of the National Education Policy 2020, any undergraduate program offered by an institution will span a duration of either three or four years. Students have the option to discontinue their degree within this time frame. In accordance with this policy, educational institutions are required to confer a diploma degree upon completion of two years of study, a degree after three years of study, and a certificate to students who successfully complete one year of study in any chosen professional or vocational course.

To further facilitate this approach, the Government of India will facilitate the establishment of an Academic Bank of Credit for digitally storing academic scores. This system will allow institutions to accumulate credits over time and incorporate them into the student's final degree. This proves particularly beneficial for individuals who may need to pause their studies and resume later without starting from scratch.

While NEP 2020 grants Higher Education Institutions the autonomy to introduce PG (Postgraduate) courses, there might be challenges in crafting a One-Year PG Degree for students who have finished a 4-Year UG (Undergraduate) Degree, as well as a Two-Year PG Degree for those who have completed a 3-Year UG Degree.

6. Promoting Technological Literacy

The world is undergoing rapid and relentless transformation, largely driven by technology. To advance, we must continue to move forward, adapting to the prevailing technological landscape. Staying vigilant and adaptable is crucial; otherwise, we risk falling behind. However, the ultimate objective is not just to keep up, but to actively contribute to this progress.

Through the implementation of NEP 2020, technology is poised to assume an increasingly significant role in Indian education. It will equip the nation's future generations with technological fluency, ensuring that every student becomes adept at its utilization. This policy mandates that students will gain knowledge in coding, programming AI systems, and even creating such technologies, eventually fostering a culture of entrepreneurship.

This form of education holds immense importance for both the nation's overall advancement and individual growth and well-being. The promotion of these learning outcomes will determine the nation's success and assist in overcoming contemporary challenges. Simultaneously, it will reinforce national cohesion while preserving the diversity that defines our distinctiveness. This will enable effective competition and collaboration on a global scale, contributing to worldwide progress.

CHALLENGES TO HEIs IN IMPLEMENTING NEP 2020

Following are the challenges in front of higher educational institutions while implementing National Education Policy 2020

1. Gross Enrolment Ratio[GER]:

During the academic year 2019-20 (as per AISHE 2019-20 data): The total number of students enrolled in higher education institutions across India stands at approximately 342.5 lakh, with male enrolments comprising 50.4%, and female enrolments making up 49.6%.

In terms of the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for the year 2019-20, women account for 27.3% compared to men's 26.9%. This indicates that a greater proportion of eligible women, as compared to men, are pursuing higher education in colleges and universities throughout India.

The National Education Policy (NEP) places a significant emphasis on enhancing the GER. The Modi government's objective is to achieve a GER of 50% by the year 2035. This goal is to be realized through a series of reforms outlined in the NEP.

2. Inclusion & equity:

The foundation of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is built upon the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion. The NEP 2020 places a strong focus on providing fair and comprehensive education, ensuring that every child has the opportunity to learn and excel. Particularly significant attention will be directed towards socially and economically marginalized groups, encompassing gender identities, socio-cultural backgrounds, geographical origins, and socio-economic circumstances. To support these endeavors, a dedicated "Gender Inclusion Fund" will be established, alongside the creation of "Special Education Zones" designed to address the needs of underprivileged regions and communities. The Gender Parity Index, according to AISHE 2019-20, stands at 1.01.

3. Quality benchmark:

The principle of "quest for excellence" stands as a core value within NAAC. The National Accreditation & Assessment Council (NAAC) in Bangalore has introduced fresh standards of quality for the purpose of accreditation. Similarly, the National Education Policy (NEP) is grounded in fundamental principles including access, affordability, equity, quality, and accountability. Therefore, it is imperative to implement initiatives for quality enhancement and quality improvement in education.

4. Effective and visionary leadership in HEIs:

In the current context, there is a pressing demand for visionary leadership within the sphere of higher education and its institutions. Political involvement in education should be present only to the extent necessary for proficient policy formulation and execution. Swift and well-considered actions by the Ministry of Education, strategic investments for the future, timely allocation of grants, approvals, and related matters are crucial aspects that should be managed with efficiency and precision.

5. Lack of funds:

In the fiscal year 2019-20, approximately 3% of India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was allocated for education. However, the National Education Policy (NEP) envisions an increase to around 6%. To achieve this, it is imperative to augment the allocation from both the Central and State Government budgets, ensuring that a larger portion of funds is directed towards fortifying higher education. Notably, for the higher education department, a revenue allocation of Rs. 40,810.34 crore has been earmarked, as reported by ICNN News.

6. Capacity building, training, retraining and untraining to faculty:

Organizing regular capacity building workshops and providing consistent training to faculty members within Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) holds significant importance. These workshops should cover initial training, retraining, and un-training to eliminate obsolete content while introducing novel concepts and perspectives. Bridging the gap between industry and academia is crucial to enhance employability and encourage self-employment. The absence of specialized skill development courses or supplementary add-on courses for employability or self-employability is a notable concern.

The New Education Policy encompasses more than just the attainment of a degree. Its core objective is to adequately prepare students for either employment or self-employment opportunities. Student development programs (SDPs) should be customized based on specific needs, ensuring they address the demands of the present job market and industry requirements.

7. Mind-set of students towards education –

The implementation of multiple entry and exit options as per NEP 2020 may potentially result in an elevated dropout rate within Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). The actual impact of this change will be better understood over time. It becomes essential to bolster efforts in orienting and motivating students towards pursuing post-graduation studies. Scholarships for deserving students, fostering research aptitude, and cultivating a scientific mindset among them can contribute to sustainable development.

In the face of the rapidly changing world, studies indicate that students are grappling with emotional and mental challenges. Establishing congruence between students' emotions and behavior is imperative to foster them into socially responsible citizens. To achieve this, several strategies are recommended: nurturing key competencies in students, granting them the freedom to express their opinions, integrating moral values, enhancing essential life survival skills, and instilling a readiness for self-directed learning (Bhatnagar, 2021).

The introduction of the Choice Based Credit System (CBCS) is poised to allow students to pursue subjects of their choice, with earned credits being stored in the Academic Bank of Credit (ABC).

Furthermore, instituting handholding and mentoring cells within educational institutions can provide essential guidance to students, especially during challenging periods.

Huge number of colleges:

As per the AISHE Report 2019-20, there exist 1043 universities, 42343 colleges, and 11779 stand-alone institutions. This number continues to rise, intensifying the competition among existing educational establishments. To counter this, there must be a strong motivation and positive impetus for institutions to seek accreditation and certification from top-tier bodies.

This objective can be achieved through various measures, including the formation of institution clusters that facilitate mutual support and collaboration. Additionally, the backing of management, establishment of quality benchmarks, and participation in renowned rankings such as NIRF and Times Higher Education can serve as driving forces for institutions to strive for excellence. Regularly updating information in AISHE and adhering to guidelines outlined by RUSA is crucial for institutions to maintain compliance and foster transparency.

Institutions should put forth dedicated efforts to enhance their image and cultivate goodwill within their respective spheres. These endeavors are essential for institutions to remain competitive and establish a positive reputation in the educational landscape.

OPPORTUNITIES TO HEIs IN IMPLEMENTING NEP 2020

The NEP 2020 paves the way towards less regulation and more autonomy for institutions through an effective self-regulatory framework. New Education Policy is not just about the degree. It is all about focus on life skills and vocational courses. [Sheth 2020]

1. Education Hub:

India is having great opportunity to attract foreign students and foreign universities as India has become education hub .As compared to many countries ,the India has lesser cost on education .Education tourism is the new and emerging field today.

2. Promoting students for progression:

Institutions and universities try to motivate students to pursue graduation ,post-graduation education or professional courses

3. Handling lesser number of students:

The teacher- student ratio should be kept minimum for the purpose of close supervision on student's progress. The teacher's efficiency will definitely increase for lesser teacher -student ratio.

4. Encouraging students in classroom participation:

Due to multiple entry and exit, student will find the NEP flexible and convenient for education. Students will be more equipped with KSA-knowledge, skills and attitude in classroom with peer learning and experiential learning etc.

5. Hard internship not only for the sake of completion certificate:

The internship should be strictly observed, so that students can get practical knowledge. It will also help to create strong linkages between institution and the organizations offering the internships.

Conclusion:

Currently, the new national education policy appears to be well-designed and comprehensive. However, the true measure of its success will lie in its effective implementation within the specified timeframe. To truly harness the significant benefits that it promises, we must patiently observe how developments unfold in the coming years. The National Education Policy is expected to bring about positive and lasting transformations within the country's higher education system.

The government's decision to allow international colleges to establish campuses in India is commendable, as it will offer local students access to a globally recognized standard of education. The introduction of multidisciplinary institutions signifies a renewed focus on various academic disciplines, including the arts and humanities. This holistic approach to education is expected to bolster students' comprehensive understanding and development.

The new National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is praiseworthy for its aspiration to create a well-rounded, adaptable, and multidisciplinary education system in alignment with the requirements of the 21st century and the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. While the policy's intent seems commendable on many fronts, its ultimate success lies in its execution. The policy emphasizes the integration of professional education within Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to promote skill development and employment opportunities.

In conclusion, NEP 2020 presents a robust roadmap for India's educational transformation, referred to as "India 2.0." If effectively implemented, this policy has the potential to establish India as a global education hub by 2030.

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