A Study on Influence of New Education Policy 2020 on Higher Education

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Abstract

The New Education Policy (NEP) was announced by the Government of India in 2020. Amidst the global pandemic, this new initiative by the Government came as a welcoming change as it unfolded several new changes to the conventional education system and promised quality education to all prospects, ensuring a continuous ascent of the country. Of course, when the NEP was first introduced by the officials, it came across as a surprise for the entire nation, considering no one was expecting it amidst the COVID-19 outbreak. However, the outlines introduced with this new policy seemed revolutionary and promised equal education opportunities to students across schools and colleges. This paper outlines the significance of the NEP, its salient features, and how it has affected the traditional education system.

Keywords: New Education Policy, Covid-19, Higher Education

INTRODUCTION

The National Policy of Education (NPE) is a policy compiled by the Government of India to provide quality education to people in the country. The policy includes elementary education to college students in rural as well as Urban India. NPE was first introduced by our former Prime Minister - Indira Gandhi in 1968. Following her footsteps, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and Narendra Modi, made new amendments to the education policy in 1986 and 2020 respectively.

The NEP 2020 was approved by the Union Cabinet of India on July 29, 2020. It outlines an updated vision towards India's new education system, with a goal to embrace India's leadership at the global stage, resulting in economic and scientific advancement. The new policy completely replaces the traditional NPE 1986 and provides a comprehensive framework for both elementary and higher education in rural and urban India. The policy is aimed at transforming the country's education system by 2021, providing quality education to everyone and maximizing the nation's talent. The NEP 2020 has introduced multiple changes to the education policy while also promising an overall state expenditure rise from 4% to 6% of India's GDP on education.

While the NEP was intrdouced in 2020, its inception began in January 2015 - by a committe under former Cabinet Secretary T. S. R. Subramanian. The committee initiated the consultation process for NEP, which was followed by a comprehensive report submission in June 2017. Two years later, an initial draft of the NEP was submitted by a panel led by former Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) chief Krishnaswamy Kasturirangan in 2019. Later on, the Ministry of Human Resource Development, issued the Draft New Education Policy (DNEP), which further receieved many public

consultations. Initially, the draft NEP had 484 pages. However, the ministry followed a robust consultation process to make further changes to the fraft policy. These changes were formulated based on nearly two lakh suggestions received from 2.5 lakh gram panchayats, 6,600 blocks, 6,000 Urban Local Bodies (ULBs), 676 districts were

received." The vision of NEP includes:

"National Education Policy 2020 envisions an India-centric education system that contributes directly to transforming our nation sustainably into an equitable and vibrant knowledge society by providing high-quality education to all."

Quality higher education aims at nourishing individuals who hold excellence, creative mindsets, thoughtfulness, and willingness to gain well-rounded expertise. It aims at enabling people to study subjects in their preferred are of interest and gain in-depth knowledge to develop character, ethical, and constitutional values. It also envisions the development of intellectual

curiosity, scientific temper, creativity, service spirit, and the several other essential skills required to lead a productive life in the 21st century. The NEP focuses on a diverse range of fields including sciences, social sciences, the arts, humanities, languages, personal,

technological the vocational subjects.

With the new education policy, the conventional education system has witnessed many fundamental changes. The key highlights of the NEP include establishment of multidisciplinary universities and colleges in every (or nearby) districts, modifying student curriculum, updating evaluation system, and establishing an enhanced support to boost the student experience.

As far as the higher education is concerned, it faces many primary issues, which restrict an overall development of a young student. These issues include enforced separation of qualifications, early specialization and student streaming into restricted research areas, less focus on research at most universities and schools, and the lack of competitive peer-reviewed academic research funding and large affiliated universities leading to low levels of undergraduate education.

Institutional restructuring and consolidation focuses on ending the fragmentation in higher education, promising to transform higher education institutions into well-established multidisciplinary places that deliver well-rounded and innovative individuals. The new curriculum aims at increasing the gross enrolment ratio for vocational training from 26.3% (2018) to 50% by 2035.

An holistic and multidisciplinary education is projected to strive and provide an integrated way to boost all human capacities-mental, cultural, social, physical, emotional, and moral. It's further projected that such comprehensive education system shall become the basis for all undergraduate programs across all fields including medical, technical, vocational, etc.

Objectives of the study

The primary objective of this research paper is to analyze the inflence of New Education Policy 2020 on India's higher education along with the exclusive features of NEP that separate it from conventional education systems.

Research methodology

Being a descriptive study, the required data was collected from a variety of third-party platforms, which include the Government of India, online magazines, journals, daily publications, etc. This data was then analysed and reviewed to arrive at the inferences and conclusions.

IMPORTANT DEFINING ELEMENTS OF NEP IN CONTEXT OF HIGHER EDUCATION

The new NEP has been introduced with a goal to establish multiple changed in education system, starting from the school level to the higher education in colleges and universities. With overall development in mind, the new NEP will focus on key-concepts, ideas, applications, and various problem-solving tactics. It's projected to enforce a positive and long-lasting impact on the higher education system of the nation. For instance, with NEP in place, foreign universities will be allowed to open their campuses within the country. It'll help students to experience global and high-level education without leaving their own country. Moreover, the establishment of multi-disciplinary institutes will retarget the focus on all fields such as arts, science, sociology, and, humanities. This form of education will help students learn holistically and lead a better lifestyle more conveniently.

The NEP has also introduced single common entrance test, which acts as a positive step in the development of our education system. It'll reduce the stress among students as they won't have to prepare for multiple competitive exams, relieving the entire pressure. This will also provide an equal opportunity to all students.

Establishing Academic Bank of Credit (ABC) is a revolutionary idea to maintain academic credits that students can acquire by undergoing multiple courses under the higher education program. Students can sign up for a course and earn scores by completing it. The acquired points will directly go to their ABC account. These credits can then be transferred in case the student decides to switch colleges. Another advantage of ABC is that they'll remain intact even if a student decides to drop-out in between. Consequently, the student will have the liberty to come back years later and pick up from where he left off the curriculum.

The new higher education regulatory structure will further ensure that distinct administrative, accreditation, financing, and academic standard-setting roles are managed by dedicated autonomous, and empowered bodies. Of course, these four structures will act as different verticals and will perform under the same umbrella organization - India's Higher Education Commission (HECI). As mentioned above, the NEP has introduced several reforms and developments in the traditional higher education system. A few of these features and modifications include:

• The NEP will establish a dedicated Higher Education Commission of India, which will act as the sole regulatory body, except for legal and medical education.

• Multiple entry and exit options will be provided to the students, allowing them to leave the curriculum whenever they want. However, this will not affect their credits maintained in the Academic Bank of Credits.

•The NEP will also incorporate technology-based learning to establish interactive learning sessions for the students through TV channels, online books, and libraries.

•Focusing on Multilinguism & With technology coming into the picture, all e-courses and e-books will be available to students in regional language, allowing them to kick start their learning without any hassle. The 8 major languages will include – Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, Gujarati, Marathi, Oriya, Bengali among others to join the e-courses available in Hindi and English.

•The NEP will also ensure establishment of world's top 100 foreign universities in India under a new law. According to the HRD Ministry document, "such (foreign) universities will be given special dispensation regarding regulatory, governance, and content norms on par with other autonomous institutions of India."

•An optional common entrance exam will be conducted for all higher education institutes that'll be overlooked by National Testing Agency (NTA).

• A Higher Education Council of India (HECI) will be set up to regulate higher education. The council's goal target a 100% gross enrollment ratio by 2030. The HECI will have 4 Parameters for the same:

a) National Higher Education Regulatory Council (NHERC) will overlook and regulate higher education including teacher education, medical, as well as legal education.

b) National Accreditation Council (NAC) will act as the "meta-accrediting body" for higher education in the country.

c) Higher Education Grants Council (HEGC), will play a significant role for funding and financing of universities and colleges by replacing the existing National Council for Teacher Education, All India Council for Technical Education and the University Grants Commission.

d) General Education Council (GEC) will frame, "graduate attributes", we call them as learning outcomes expected. It will also be responsible in framing a National Higher Education Qualification Framework (NHEQF). The National Council for Teacher Education will come under the GEC, as a professional standard setting body (PSSB).

ANALYSIS OF INFLUENCE OF NEP ON HIGHER EDUCATION
Amendment in the Regulatory System of Higher Education:
One of the significant changes in NEP 2020 is an introduction of a proposal to set up the Higher Education Commission of India (HECI). It's projected to act as an umbrella body for higher education, except for medical and legal education. Of course, this establishment triggers a common question among many people that what will happen to the present UGC and AICTE? HECI is aiming at reforming the higher education sector as the Bill will fragment the Academic and funding aspects of the sector. With this Bill coming into the picture, the HECI will be revoked of any financial powers. And, all the funding

processes will be managed by the University Grants Commission (UGC). With this change, the regulatory mess in the higher education system will be eliminated, establishing a transparent system.

HECI will have four different independent verticals - National Higher Education Regulatory Council (NHERC) for regulation, General Education Council (GEC) for standard-setting, Higher Education Grants Council (HEGC) for funding, and National Accreditation Council (NAC) for accreditation.

A single umbrella body will bring uniformity in Indian education standards, which has always been the vision of many educationists. This initiatives will streamline India's education policy. But, for this to deliver the desired effectiveness, higher education institutes will have to be measured on the basis of multiple parameters including research, industry linkages, placements and academic excellence, etc. If the HECI can manage this, the benefits to its biggest stakeholder, the youth of India, might be significant.

Graded Accreditation and Graded Autonomy

The conception of "commission and autonomy to introduce" is one of the crucial features in NEP 2020 which supports a "phasing out" strategy from Affiliated Colleges to Autonomous Institutions. The increased inflexibility offered to independent institutions also gives stopgap in class enrichment. It also says that with applicable commissions, Autonomous degree- granting Colleges could evolve into Research- ferocious or tutoring- ferocious Universities, if they so aspire. The advertisement of setting up Multidisciplinary Education and Research Universities (MERUs) in the country gives further stopgap. These institutions will be at par with the being IITs and IIMs and will aim to show multidisciplinary education for the Indian scholars. The high quality, range, and inflexibility of the NTA testing services will enable utmost universities to use these common entrance examinations rather than having hundreds of universities each contriving their own entrance examinations thereby drastically reducing the burden on scholars, universities and sodalities, and the entire education system. Individual universities and sodalities are left with their own discretionary powers to use NTA assessments for their admissions. It also surely helps the scholars to fluently transfer their degrees and credits to universities abroad

Global Quality Education at Home:

The NEP 2020 allows foreign universities and colleges to establish their branches in India, allowing students access to quality education at home. This will automatically encourage native colleges and universities to improve the quality of education they offer. The Indian higher education sector is buzzing all around as the opportunity of paving the way for foreign universities to set up campuses in the country. As of 2023, India has the largest network of higher education system in the world, with 900 universities and 40,000 different colleges.

But GER (Gross Enrolment Ratio) of India in higher education is 26.3%, which is relatively lower than other BRICS countries, be it Brazil or China, which possess a GER of 50% and 51% respectively. Moreover, when compared to European and North American nations, India's GER is way lower as they reside at a GER of more than 80%.

To ensure overall development of the students, India must attain a higher GER by incorporating growth in higher education of the nation. As per the reports, India will need another more than 1,500 new higher education institutions by 2030 to accommodate a huge inflow of students, that's why the Indian government wants to promote FDIs (Foreign Direct Investment) and open up the ECB (External Commercial Borrowing) route to strengthen the capital investment for the education sector.

The ministry is also working towards improving India's place as an education center, considering more than 7 lakhs of Indian students choose to study abroad. So, the intention of this policy will allow foreign universities to establish world-class education locally at a significantly lower cost. It'll also give students access to world-class education without having to leave the comfort and culture of their own country. According to the different global surveys, cross-border education is beneficial for the economy and brings a wider level of global awareness, culturally perceptive, and competitiveness. Foreign collaborations enable local institutes to design their curriculum in alignment with international pedagogy and offer a diverse portfolio of subjects and specialization to students.

Comprehensive and Multifaceted Education:
The NEP 2020 will establish a holistic and multidisciplinary education that would aim to develop all human capacities -intellectual, aesthetic, social, physical, emotional, and moral in an integrated manner.

Such an education will help develop well-rounded individuals who possess critical capacities in fields across the arts, humanities, languages, sciences, social sciences, and professional, technical, and vocational fields; an ethic of social engagement; soft skills, such as communication, discussion and debate; and rigorous specialization in their preferred fields. The NEP 2020 envisions one large multidisciplinary Higher Education Institution (HEI) in or near every district, by 2030.

Towards the establishment of such a holistic and multidisciplinary education, the flexible and innovative curricula will include credit-based courses. Moreover, there will be addition of projects in the areas of community engagement and service, environment education, and value-based education.

As the name implies, environment education will include areas such as climate change, pollution, waste management, sanitation, conservation of biological diversity, management of biological resources and biodiversity, forest and wildlife conservation, and sustainable development and living. Value-based education will include the development of humanistic, ethical, Constitutional, and universal human values.

It's also important to understand that as the world is constantly becoming interconnected, Global Citizenship Education (GCED) will empower learners to gain awareness regarding different global issues and promote peaceful, tolerant, inclusive, secure, and sustainable societies. Finally, as part of a holistic education, students at all HEIs will be provided with opportunities for internships with local industry, businesses, artists, crafts persons, etc., as well as research internships with faculty and researchers at their own or other HEIs/research institutions, so that students may actively engage with the practical side of their learning and, as a by-product, further improve their employability.

Duration and the structure of degree programmes:

With NEP 2020 coming into place, all undergraduate degrees in any college will be of a duration 3-4 years. And, the students will have the liberty to leave the degree within this period without any hassle.

If a student completes 2 years of the study in an institution, they'll be obliged to receive a diploma degree from the college. Moreover, students who complete a year within the institute will be authorized to receive a certificate for the same. And, as mentioned earlier, students' credits will be recorded within the Academic Bank of Credit, which means they'll be able to leave the course mid way as well.

They can start the course later on from where they left off, saving them from the requirement of starting from scratch. Even though NEP 2020 says that Higher education institutions will be given the freedom to start PG courses there may be some difficulty in designing One Year PG Degree for students who have completed 4 Year UG Degree and a Two Year PG Degree for students who have completed 3 Year UG Degree.

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CONCLUSION

The NEP 2020 introduces a myriad of fundamental changes in a comprehensive and very progressive documentation, with primary focus on enhancing the socio-economic development fo the country. While conventional education had its merits, the drawbacks made it less par with today's tech-savvy world. Education for a new generation of learners has to essentially engage with the increasing dematerialisation and digitalisation of economies, which requires a completely new set of capabilities in order to be able to keep up with the global trends. And, with digitalization booming in every corner of the world, this pursuit has become more necessary than ever. Overall, the NEP 2020 addresses the need to develop professionals in a variety of fields ranging from Agriculture to Artificial Intelligence, while also providing comprehensive set of rules on how to embrace this transition. India needs to be ready for the future. And the NEP 2020 definitely paves a way for young aspirants to grow in their respective fields.

The new education policy has a an applaudable vision, but its strength will depend on whether it is able to effectively incorporate the other policy initiatives of government like Digital India, Skill India and the New Industrial Policy to name a few, in order to effect a coherent structural transformation.

Policy linkages will ensure that students learn in a more engaging, dynamic, and interactive environment, resulting in developing a positive image of the country in the near future. NEP has reassuringly provisioned for real-time evaluation systems and a consultative monitoring and review framework. This shall empower the education system to constantly reform itself, instead of expecting for a new education policy every decade for a shift in curriculum. This, in itself, will be a remarkable achievement. The NEP 2020 is a defining moment for higher education. Effective and time-bound implementation is what will make it truly path-breaking.

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