

The Four-Year Undergraduate Programme (FYUGP) in Assam: Challenges in the Light of NEP-2020

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Abstract

Change is the constant and fundamental law of the universe. Every society is impacted by the process of change. In Indian society, this is also true. Many social, economic, political, educational, and other changes have occurred from the prehistoric to the modern era, as is known from the historical study of Indian society. By implementing the National Education Policy 2020, the Indian government will alter our educational system after a lengthy history. This policy seeks to establish "India as a global knowledge superpower" and is the first education policy of the twenty-first century. In order to create a new system that builds upon India's traditions and value systems, this policy suggests revising and revamping every element of the educational system, including its governance and regulation. The analysis of the NEP 2020 at the level of higher education and the implementation challenges of FYUGP in Assam are covered in the current paper. For the study, the investigators used both an analytical and a descriptive approach. The secondary data sources are the main focus of this study. The secondary data was gathered from a number of research papers and the Government of India's NEP 2020.

Keywords: National education policy, higher education and FYUGP

Introduction

The process of change is present in every society. This is also true of Indian society. From the primitive to the modern era, numerous social, economic, political, educational, and other changes have occurred, as is known from the historical study of Indian society. Through the implementation of the National Education Policy 2020, the Indian government plans to transform our educational system after a lengthy history. In order to create a new system that builds upon India's traditions and value systems, this policy suggests revising and revamping every element of the educational system, including its governance and regulation.

According to Wadi and Terry (1995), a policy is a decision or set of decisions that may establish guidelines for future decisions, start or stop actions, or direct the implementation of previous decisions, whether explicit or implicit. According to Owolabi (2005), a policy is a process of doing or carrying out a specific action with intention; therefore, an involuntary action cannot be a policy. He asserts that a policy needs specific components, including its agents, action, and goals. Manga (2014) also views policy as a governing body's authoritative directive to direct the accomplishment of goals. But according to Musisi (2015), a policy is a broad declaration that outlines future objectives and aspirations and offers instructions

for achieving them. To put it briefly, a policy is any action taken by a person or authority to direct the course of a particular endeavor in order to achieve the established goals (Manganesse, 2015).

Education policy includes the laws and rules that control the operation of educational systems, as well as the guiding ideals and policy decisions that affect the education sector. Educational institutions, local districts, states, and nations implement and abide by specific procedures and policies in order to meet academic goals. According to Rosha (2022), an educational policy is one that has to do with education or is specifically intended for education. All official directives or decisions made by the government to direct educational activities in order to achieve the intended outcomes are included in educational policy (Falalu, 2020). For this reason, Manga (2010) underlined that educational policies encompass all legally binding directives, tenets, or principles established by the government or authority in a rational manner to direct the educational process toward the achievement of the intended objectives. Therefore, in order to achieve their objectives, educational policies specify the dos and don'ts in educational enterprises in either explicit or implicit terms.

In order to address the issues of illiteracy in both rural and urban India, the Indian government has funded numerous initiatives since the nation's independence in 1947. To create ideas for updating India's educational system, the Union government formed the University Education Commission in 1948–1949, the Secondary Education Commission in 1952–1953, the University Grants Commission, and the Kothari Commission in 1964–1966.

The first National Policy on Education was announced in 1968 by the government led by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, based on the report and recommendations of the Kothari Commission (1964–1966). It called for a "radical restructuring" and suggested equal educational opportunities to achieve national integration, greater cultural and economic development, complete compulsory education for all children up to the age of 14, implement the "three language formula," and promote the teaching of the ancient language.

A new National Policy on Education was introduced in 1986 by the Rajiv Gandhi-led administration. Particularly for Indian women, Scheduled Tribes (ST), and Scheduled Caste (SC) communities, the new policy called for "special emphasis on the removal of disparities and to equalise educational opportunity." The policy called for the expansion of scholarships, adult education, hiring more teachers from the SCs, providing incentives for low-income families to send their children to school on a regular basis, building new institutions, and offering housing and services in order to accomplish this kind of social integration. The NPE started "Operation Blackboard" to enhance primary schools across the country and advocated for a "child-centered approach" in primary education. With the establishment of the Indira Gandhi National Open University in 1985, the policy broadened the scope of the Open University system. In order to foster social and economic development at the local level in rural India, the policy also called for the establishment of the "rural university" model, which was modeled after Mahatma Gandhi's ideas.

The 1986 National Policy on Education was modified in 1992 by the P. V. Narasimha Rao administration. In 2005, former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh introduced a new policy based on the "Common Minimum Programme" of his United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government. The Ministry of Education, formerly known as the Ministry of Human Resource Development, published a Draft New Education Policy 2019 in 2019. This was followed by several public consultations.

A new national education policy was approved by the cabinet on July 29, 2020, with the intention of making some adjustments to the current Indian educational system. These changes will be implemented in India through 2026. A comprehensive document called the National Education Policy 2020 calls for

significant changes to India's higher education system. The policy acknowledges the significance of technology use in higher education, teacher preparation, vocational education, research, and multidisciplinary education. The policy intends to draw talent from all over the world, establish India as a center for research and development, and let students choose their own courses based on their aptitude and interests. The policy's objective is to develop an all-encompassing, adaptable educational system that meets the demands of the twenty-first century.

Overview of the National Education Policy 2020 for Higher Education

- In order to replace several regulatory bodies, the policy suggests creating a single regulator for higher education, known as the Higher Education Commission of India (HECI).
- In order to support and encourage research across all fields, the policy suggests creating a National Research Foundation (NRF).
- A four-year, multidisciplinary undergraduate degree with several exit options and chances for skill development is suggested by the policy.
- To foster the use of technology in higher education, the policy suggests creating a National Educational Technology Forum (NETF).
- In order to allow students to pursue multiple degrees or programs at the same time, the policy suggests creating a credit-based system for degree programs.
- To make it easier for academic credits to be transferred and accrued across institutions, the policy suggests creating a National Academic Credit Bank (NAC-Bank).
- The NEP 2020 suggests removing strict divisions between various faculties and academic disciplines. It encourages academic institutions to provide interdisciplinary courses that let students experiment with different topics and areas of study.
- According to NEP 2020, a flexible curriculum should enable students to select from a variety of courses and subjects to suit their unique interests and professional aspirations. To increase mobility and encourage academic excellence, the policy also suggests a credit-transfer system that would allow students to transfer between institutions without losing academic credit.
- NEP 2020 seeks to boost science and technology funding and incentivize colleges to prioritize research in order to establish India as a global center for innovation and research. According to the policy, a National Research Foundation should be established in order to finance and encourage research in all fields.
- NEP 2020 acknowledges the value of skill development and vocational education in preparing students for the workforce. It suggests incorporating apprenticeships and work-integrated learning programs into regular education to help students gain practical skills.
- The NEP 2020 suggests creating a comprehensive digital infrastructure for education and recognizes the value of technology in the classroom. In order to reach a larger student body and advance educational access, it pushes colleges to provide blended learning models and online courses.
- NEP 2020 places a strong focus on advancing equity and inclusivity in education by attending to the needs of underprivileged populations, including low-income families, girls, and students with disabilities. Additionally, it aims to give pupils from all socioeconomic backgrounds equal opportunities.
- By encouraging collaborations with foreign universities, attracting international students and exchanges of faculty, NEP 2020 aims to promote internationalization. The policy also suggested the

establishment of a National Education Exchange Programme (NEEP) to promote educational exchange between states.

- The NEP 2020 proposes greater institutional autonomy and decentralization of decision-making to improve the quality and effectiveness of higher education. The policy also emphasizes the importance of accountability, transparency, and regulatory mechanisms to ensure that institutions adhere to quality standards.
- The NEP 2020 focuses on providing comprehensive teacher training and development programs that will help build an effective and competent teaching force. It also seeks to promote a culture of continuous professional development among teachers.
- NTA to offer Common Entrance Exam for Admission to HEIs;
- Multidisciplinary Education and Research Universities (MERUs), at par with IITs, IIMs, to be set up as models of best multidisciplinary education of global standards in the country
- Single overarching umbrella body for promotion of higher education sector including teacher education and excluding medical and legal education-the Higher Education Commission of India (HECI)-with independent bodies for standard setting-the General Education Council; funding-Higher Education Grants Council (HEGC); accreditation-National Accreditation Council (NAC); and regulation-National Higher Education Regulatory Council (NHERC);
- Expansion of open and distance learning to increase Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER).
- Professional Education will be an integral part of the higher education system. Stand-alone technical universities, health science universities, legal and agricultural universities, or institutions in these or other fields, will aim to become multi-disciplinary institutions.
- Establishing a National Mission for Mentoring.
- Creation of an autonomous body, the National Educational Technology Forum (NETF) to provide a platform for the free exchange of ideas on the use of technology to enhance learning, assessment, planning, administration. Appropriate integration of technology into all levels of education.
- Achieving 100% youth and adult literacy.
- Multiple mechanisms with checks and balances will combat and stop the commercialization of higher education.

Higher Education

Higher education is that which does not merely give us information but makes our life in harmony with all existence.-Rabindranath Tagore.

Higher Education is an essential instrument for facing up with the challenges faced by the modern world and it is an unavoidable element for social development, production, economic growth, strengthening the culture, maintaining social coherence, and continuing the struggle against poverty and the promotion of the culture of peace.

Higher education is the highest stage of formal education in India which includes Under-graduate and Post-graduate courses The University education which includes both Under-graduate and Post-graduate courses is conducted through regular traditional Universities and Open-Universities which functions are performed under Central and State Governments under the control of the University Grants Commission.

Four-Year Undergraduate Programme (FYUGP)

The National Education Policy (NEP), 2020 suggested a four year undergraduate programme (FYUGP)

with multiple entry and exit options to the students, allowing certificate, diploma, and degree at the end of first, second, and third year, respectively. It notes that the FYUGP allow “the opportunity to experience the full range of holistic and multidisciplinary education in addition to a focus on the chosen major and minors as per the choices of the student” (NEP 2020: 37).

Four Years Degree Course in Assam

The Chief Minister of Assam Himanta Biswa Sarma launched the National Education Policy (NEP), 2020 in all State Universities and colleges. Assam is one of the first states across the country to implement NEP 2020. With the launching of the NEP, all Higher education institutions across the state will be offering a 4-year UG programme.

The GU-FYUGP program was implemented on the University campus and all affiliated colleges of Gauhati University. To ensure the successful implementation of the new program, the university discussed the matter and received approval from various committees and forums. The Academic Council under the chairmanship of the Vice Chancellor, Gauhati University, also approved the syllabi for the Four-Year Undergraduate Programme (FYUGP). A total of 15 state universities of Assam started a 4 year undergraduate (UG) programme in the Academic year 2023. At present, All 302 colleges affiliated with Gauhati University are implementing the Four-Year Undergraduate Program (FYUGP) under the National Education Policy (NEP). This program is also being implemented within the Gauhati University campus.

Gauhati University

The Assam government passed the Gauhati University Act 1947 (Assam Act, XVI of 1947), which was passed by the State Legislature and created Gauhati University. In some temporary buildings in Guwahati, Gauhati University began operations as an affiliating, teaching, and residential university. K.K. Handique served as the first vice-chancellor, and Phanidhar Dutta, Sailandhar Rajkhowa, and Sarat Kumar Dutta were chosen to serve as the university's registrar, treasurer, and secretary, respectively. A textile designer from Ahmedabad named T. Mukherjee created the university's emblem, which was chosen from a large number of submissions. The motto of the university is indicated by two Sanskrit words engraved on it: Vidyaya Sadhayeta, which means achievement through learning. At its founding, it had eight postgraduate departments and seventeen affiliated colleges.

According to NEP 2020, Gauhati University's FYUGP regulations offer a variety of entry and exit options, such as a certificate, diploma, degree with or without a major, degree with honors, or degree with honors with research at different levels in all of the university's affiliated colleges as well as on the campus.

Dibrugarh University

Dibrugarh University, the easternmost university of India was set up in 1965 under the provisions of the Dibrugarh University Act 1965 enacted by the Assam Legislative Assembly. The University is situated at Rajabhetta at a distance of about five kilometers to the south of premier town of Dibrugarh in the eastern part of Assam as well as India. The territorial jurisdiction of Dibrugarh University covers nine districts of Upper Assam viz. Dibrugarh, Tinsukia, Sivsagar, Charaideo, Jorhat, Majuli, Golaghat, Dhemaji and Lakhimpur. In pursuance to the decision of the 127th Meeting of the Academic Council (Emergent), Dibrugarh University held on 18.05.2023 vide Resolution No. 01 approved the Dibrugarh University Regulations for the Four Year Under Graduate Programmes (FYUGP) in Choice Based Credit System (CBCS) 2023. The Regulations was started from the Academic Session, 2023-2024. The Regulations shall

be applicable to the students enrolled in UG Certificate, UG Diploma, Three Year UG Degree, Four Year UG Degree (Honours) and Four Year UG Degree (Honours with Research) conducted by the Departments/Centres for Studies of Dibrugarh University/Colleges/Institutes affiliated to/permitted by Dibrugarh University from the academic session 2023-24.

Implementing Challenges of FYUGP in Assam

The goal of the policy is admirable, and it has arrived at the ideal moment. Dibrugarh University and Gauhati University in Assam take the required actions to begin offering four-year undergraduate programs in 2023. The ability of the government, colleges, and universities to overcome the practical obstacles that the FYUGP faces will determine its success in Assam and the rate at which it is implemented. The FYUGP implementation challenges in Assam are:

- The teacher has a major role in whether the educational program succeeds or fails. An effective or perfect teacher can help ensure that the new program is implemented properly. In this case, having qualified teachers is essential. Although both universities have different NEP 2020 awareness programs, they have not yet discovered any workshops or orientation programs for their instructors on the updated FYUGP syllabus. A new syllabus cannot be implemented by the university unless it improves teacher competencies or keeps them current.
- Before implementing the FYUGP, a guidance or counseling program for all secondary level students' upcoming courses under NEP 2020 must be organized. However, the Assamese government implements NEP 2020 in all universities without a student awareness campaign. In the first year of the new curriculum, colleges and universities will prioritize student counseling more.
- It is impossible to accept student admission and evaluation without the assistance of the College Office staff. To implement FYGUP, office staff members need to be knowledgeable about the following: paper codes, subject combinations, admissions procedures, selection processes, credit systems, credit transfers, new assessment systems, etc. To date, universities have not made any notable efforts to increase the efficacy of their faculty. There are also some sections of NEP2020 that cause confusion for office workers.
- In the previous graduate programs, Commerce has been introduced as a stream, but NEP 2020 recognizes it as a subject. Accountancy, Business Management, Banking, Economics, Human Resource Management, Information and Communication Technology etc. were counted as a subject of Commerce Stream in early courses, but now it's become included in a particular paper. Parents and students with a commercial background may have difficulty selecting the subject.
- Alternative English can be chosen as a subject instead of MIL by students at school level in Assam. A four-year undergraduate programme of Dibrugarh University now requires MIL or Hindi as compulsory subjects i.e. Ability Enhancement Course. In this case, the student who has not learned Assamese and Hindi in the early stage is required to learn one of the aforementioned languages during a semester, which is a difficult task.
- Although the policy emphasizes faculty training and development, many areas of higher education are experiencing a faculty shortage, and it might take some time for institutions to build the capacity they need.
- The goal of NEP 2020 is to replace single-disciplinary higher education institutions with multidisciplinary ones. There are only a few affiliated colleges under Gauhati University and

Dibrugarh University that offer a single stream and a small selection of subjects. Teachers are likewise constrained in that situation.

- The infrastructure problem will be a major obstacle for colleges and universities.
- Additionally, the UGC has mandated that universities participate in FYUGP internships. However, not everyone has found internships to be simple.

Conclusion

The NEP 2020 was put into action through collaborative efforts among stakeholders, and its effectiveness was subsequently evaluated. The NEP 2020 marked a significant milestone in reforming India's education system to address the evolving needs of the world. Dibrugarh University and Gauhati University successfully launched FYUGP in 2023, overcoming initial hurdles.

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