International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research (IJFMR)
E-ISSN: 2582-2160 ● Website: www.ijfmr.com ● Email: editor@ijfmr.com

The Role of Students in the Effective Implementation of NEP 2020

Dr. Dhanaji Thore

Associate Professor
Dept. of English, Bharat Shikshan Sanstha's Arts, Science and Commerce College, Makni

Abstract:
The present paper examines the changing role of students in higher education in the context of NEP 2020. It explores the student as an active learner, critical thinker, researcher, innovator, technology-enabled learner, skilled professional, entrepreneur, responsible citizen and lifelong learner. The paper also discusses the importance of student participation in institutional and community activities and examines the challenges associated with the implementation of the policy, including the digital divide, inadequate awareness, financial constraints, lack of academic counselling, unequal institutional resources and variations in research opportunities. The paper argues that the successful implementation of NEP 2020 requires a collaborative relationship between students, teachers, institutions, government, industry and society. While NEP 2020 provides students with greater freedom and opportunities, it simultaneously places greater responsibility upon them to make informed academic choices, acquire appropriate skills, engage in research and contribute meaningfully to society.

Keywords: Multidisciplinary Education, Research, Innovation, Skill Development.

1. Introduction

Education has always been regarded as an important instrument of individual development and social transformation. In contemporary society, however, the purpose of higher education has expanded considerably. Universities and colleges are no longer expected merely to transmit established knowledge to students. They are increasingly expected to cultivate creativity, critical thinking, research ability, innovation, employability, ethical awareness, leadership and social responsibility. The rapidly changing nature of technology, employment, communication and knowledge production has further increased the need for a higher-education system capable of preparing students for an uncertain and dynamic future.
It is against this background that the National Education Policy 2020 assumes considerable importance. Approved by the Government of India in July 2020, the policy proposes extensive reforms in school and higher education. In higher education, NEP 2020 seeks to create an education system that is multidisciplinary, flexible, inclusive, research-oriented and capable of developing well-rounded individuals. The policy emphasizes conceptual understanding, critical thinking, creativity, communication, collaboration, ethical values and the development of a scientific temper rather than an excessive dependence on rote learning and examination performance.

One of the most important consequences of this transformation is the changing role of the student. The traditional student generally operated within a predetermined academic structure in which the

curriculum, subjects, examinations and progression patterns were largely fixed. NEP 2020 introduces greater flexibility and choice. Students are expected to participate actively in deciding their academic pathways, selecting courses, developing skills, undertaking research, participating in internships and engaging with technology and society.

The student therefore becomes an important agent in the implementation of NEP 2020. The success of curricular reform cannot be achieved merely through changes in government regulations or institutional structures. It also depends upon the capacity and willingness of students to utilize the opportunities provided by the new system. Consequently, understanding the role of students is essential for understanding the broader implications of NEP 2020.

Students as Active Learners:

One of the fundamental implications of NEP 2020 is the strengthening of learner-centered education. In a traditional classroom, the teacher frequently occupies the central position while students primarily receive information. NEP 2020 seeks to encourage pedagogies that involve students more actively in the learning process.

An active student does not depend exclusively on classroom lectures. The student reads additional material, participates in discussions, raises questions, undertakes projects, explores digital resources and attempts to relate theoretical knowledge to practical situations. Such learning encourages intellectual curiosity and independent thinking.

The role of the teacher also changes in this context. Instead of functioning exclusively as a transmitter of information, the teacher increasingly becomes a facilitator, mentor and academic guide. Students consequently acquire greater responsibility for their own learning.

This responsibility is particularly important in higher education because university students are expected to develop the capacity for independent learning. The ability to identify a problem, locate relevant information, evaluate evidence and formulate an informed conclusion is essential not only for academic success but also for professional and social life.

Students and Multidisciplinary Education

Multidisciplinary education is one of the most significant features of NEP 2020. The policy seeks to overcome rigid boundaries between disciplines and encourages students to develop broader intellectual perspectives. It recognizes that many contemporary problems cannot be understood through a single academic discipline. For instance, climate change requires knowledge of environmental science, economics, sociology, political science and technology. Similarly, artificial intelligence has implications for computer science, philosophy, ethics, economics, law and society. A multidisciplinary approach enables students to understand such complex issues from different perspectives.

Under this framework, students are encouraged to explore subjects beyond their principal area of specialization. A student of commerce may develop an interest in data analytics or psychology; a humanities student may study digital technology; and a science student may explore entrepreneurship or communication. Such flexibility can contribute to the development of intellectually versatile graduates. At the same time, it places a greater responsibility on students. They must understand their interests and

career objectives and make informed academic choices rather than selecting courses without adequate consideration.

Academic Flexibility and Student Choice

NEP 2020 introduces significant flexibility into undergraduate education. The policy supports multiple entry and exit options and the accumulation and transfer of academic credits. The Academic Bank of Credits is intended to facilitate the storage, transfer and redemption of academic credits earned by students across recognized higher-education institutions.

Such a system has important implications for students. It recognizes that educational journeys may not always follow a single uninterrupted path. Students may experience economic difficulties, family responsibilities, health-related circumstances or changing career interests. A flexible academic system can provide opportunities to continue education at different stages.

However, flexibility also requires informed decision-making. Students need to understand credit requirements, course structures, progression rules and the implications of different academic choices. Academic counselling therefore becomes extremely important. The new system consequently **combines** greater academic freedom with greater academic responsibility**.**

Students as Researchers

Research occupies an important place in NEP 2020's vision of higher education. The policy recognizes research and innovation as essential for the development of a knowledge society and seeks to strengthen research culture in universities and colleges.

This creates opportunities for students to participate in research from an earlier stage of their academic careers. Undergraduate students can undertake projects, field studies, surveys, laboratory experiments, dissertations and interdisciplinary research.

Student research is valuable because it develops a different relationship with knowledge. Instead of simply accepting information presented in textbooks, students learn to ask questions and investigate them systematically. They develop skills in literature review, data collection, analysis, interpretation and academic writing. Research participation can also encourage students to identify problems within their local communities and develop evidence-based solutions. Thus, research becomes not merely an academic requirement but a means of developing intellectual independence.

Students as Innovators

Innovation is closely associated with research and problem-solving. NEP 2020 promotes an educational environment in which creativity and innovation can flourish. Students can contribute to innovation in numerous areas, including technology, agriculture, education, environment, business and social development. Innovation need not always involve sophisticated technological inventions. A new method of teaching, an improved community service, a local environmental solution or a new entrepreneurial idea may also represent meaningful innovation.

Colleges and universities can support student innovation through innovation clubs, incubation centers, laboratories, competitions, mentoring and collaboration with industry.
The student consequently becomes not only a learner of existing knowledge but also a potential creator of new ideas.

Students and Skill Development

The contemporary employment environment requires more than disciplinary knowledge. Employers increasingly value communication, teamwork, adaptability, problem-solving, digital literacy and leadership. NEP 2020 places considerable emphasis on vocational education, practical learning and skill development. The integration of academic and vocational education seeks to reduce the traditional separation between theoretical knowledge and practical competence. For students, this means that a degree should be viewed as one component of a broader educational experience. Students need to develop professional and transferable skills alongside subject knowledge.

Communication skills are particularly important. A student may possess strong academic knowledge but may face difficulties in professional life if unable to communicate ideas effectively. Similarly, teamwork, leadership and problem-solving are developed through participation in projects, clubs, internships and community activities.
The role of the student therefore extends beyond studying prescribed subjects to actively developing a portfolio of competencies.

Students and Internship-Based Learning

Internships provide an important bridge between academic learning and professional experience. They enable students to understand how theoretical concepts operate in actual workplaces and communities. NEP 2020 encourages greater integration of vocational exposure, practical learning and internships into higher education. For students, internship experience can provide opportunities to understand professional expectations, develop workplace communication, observe organizational practices and identify areas of career interest.

The educational value of an internship depends largely upon the student's active participation. Students should not treat internships merely as formal requirements for obtaining academic credits. They should observe, question, document, reflect and connect their practical experiences with academic knowledge. A meaningful internship can therefore become an extension of the classroom.

Students and Multilingual Learning

India's linguistic diversity presents both challenges and opportunities for higher education. NEP 2020 recognizes the importance of Indian languages and encourages greater use and development of learning resources in Indian languages.
For students, multilingual competence can strengthen educational participation and communication. Students who can work effectively in their regional language, Hindi and English, for example, may be able to access a wider range of academic and professional resources. Multilingualism also helps students understand India's cultural diversity and communicate with different communities. Consequently,

language should not be viewed merely as a medium of instruction. It can become an important academic and professional resource.

Students as Entrepreneurs

The changing employment environment requires students to consider diverse career possibilities. NEP 2020's emphasis on creativity, innovation and skill development creates space for entrepreneurship within higher education. Students can transform academic knowledge into entrepreneurial opportunities by identifying social or market needs and developing appropriate solutions. Entrepreneurship education can also help students understand financial planning, management, marketing, innovation and risk assessment.

The entrepreneurial student is therefore not defined simply as someone who establishes a business. Entrepreneurship also involves initiative, creativity, problem-solving and the willingness to develop new approaches. Such qualities are valuable even for students who ultimately pursue conventional employment.

Students as Responsible Citizens

The objectives of higher education extend beyond employment. NEP 2020 emphasizes ethical and constitutional values, including empathy, equality, justice, democratic spirit, responsibility and respect for others. Students therefore have an important social responsibility.

Participation in community service, environmental programs, literacy initiatives, cultural activities, social awareness programs and institutional extension activities can help students understand the relationship between education and society. A well-educated student should be able to use knowledge not merely for individual advancement but also for constructive social contribution. Higher education thus has the potential to develop both competent professionals and responsible citizens.

Students and Community Engagement

The university or college cannot remain isolated from its surrounding society. NEP 2020 recognizes community engagement as an important dimension of higher education.

Students can connect their academic knowledge with local issues through fieldwork and extension activities. For example, students of sociology can study local social conditions; commerce students can conduct financial-literacy programs; science students can undertake environmental-awareness activities; language students can document local cultural traditions; and computer students can contribute to digital-literacy initiatives. Such activities make education socially relevant.

Community engagement also provides students with opportunities to understand social realities that may not be adequately represented in textbooks. It develops empathy, communication skills and problem-solving abilities while simultaneously allowing students to contribute to community development.

Students and Institutional Participation

NEP 2020's student-centered philosophy also encourages students to participate actively in the broader institutional environment. Students can contribute through student councils, academic associations,

cultural organizations, sports, innovation clubs, research groups, National Service Scheme activities and other extension programs. Such participation provides practical opportunities to develop leadership and democratic values. A student, who organizes an academic event, participates in a community project or works within a student organization develops organizational and interpersonal abilities that may not be acquired through classroom learning alone. Student participation can therefore strengthen both individual development and institutional culture.

Challenges Faced by Students

Although NEP 2020 provides considerable opportunities, students may encounter several difficulties in adapting to the new system. The first challenge is lack of awareness. Students may not fully understand the implications of academic credits, multiple entry and exit options, multidisciplinary programs and new assessment systems.

The second challenge is digital inequality. Students from economically disadvantaged and geographically remote backgrounds may have limited access to devices, high-speed internet and digital learning resources. The third challenge is academic decision-making. Greater flexibility can be beneficial, but students may require professional academic counselling to make appropriate choices. Another challenge is the development of research skills. Students accustomed primarily to examination-oriented learning may initially find research, independent reading and project-based learning difficult. Financial constraints may also affect students' participation in additional courses, internships, certifications and other educational opportunities. Finally, the effectiveness of NEP 2020 may vary across institutions because colleges and universities differ in infrastructure, faculty strength, technological facilities and research capacity.

Role of Teachers and Institutions in Supporting Students

Although this paper focuses on students, student transformation cannot occur without institutional support. Greater student responsibility must be accompanied by greater institutional guidance. Teachers need to function increasingly as mentors and facilitators. They should encourage questioning, discussion, research and independent learning rather than relying exclusively on lecture-based instruction.

Institutions should provide academic counselling, digital resources, research facilities, internship opportunities, career guidance and student support services. Academic flexibility is meaningful only when students have access to accurate information and appropriate guidance. Similarly, research-oriented education requires laboratories, libraries, databases, trained supervisors and opportunities for scholarly interaction. Thus, the student-centered approach of NEP 2020 should be understood as a partnership rather than as a transfer of responsibility from teachers to students.

Conclusion

The National Education Policy 2020 represents a significant shift in the philosophy of higher education in India. Its emphasis on multidisciplinary learning, academic flexibility, research, innovation, skill development, technology, vocational education and social responsibility creates a new environment in which students occupy a central position.

The student under NEP 2020 is expected to become an active participant in education. The student must learn independently, think critically, explore different disciplines, conduct research, acquire practical skills, use technology responsibly, participate in internships, develop entrepreneurial abilities and contribute to society. The policy therefore transforms the student from a passive recipient of knowledge into an active creator and user of knowledge**.**

However, this transformation requires appropriate institutional support. Students cannot be expected to navigate a complex and flexible educational system without academic counselling, mentoring, financial assistance, and digital access and research opportunities. Teachers, institutions and policymakers must therefore work together to create an environment in which students can exercise their new responsibilities effectively. The success of NEP 2020 in higher education will ultimately depend upon the interaction of policy, institution, teacher and student**.** Among these, students are not merely beneficiaries of educational reform; they are active participants in its realization.

REFERENCES:

1. Government of India. (2020). *National Education Policy 2020*. Ministry of Education, Government of India.
2. Government of India. *National Education Policy 2020: Implementation and Related Guidelines*.
3. Ministry of Education, Government of India. *Academic Research and Internationalization: Implementation of NEP 2020*.
4. Ministry of Education, Government of India. *NEP 2020: Initiatives and Implementation Framework.*
5. University Grants Commission. *Academic Bank of Credits: Guidelines and Framework.*
6. University Grants Commission. *Guidelines for Multiple Entry and Exit in Academic Programmes Offered in Higher Education Institutions*.