

NEP 2020: Policy into Practice to Create a Knowledge Economy — A Critical Study of the North Eastern Region

Dr. Abhijit Saha

Principal, Secondary Education, Assam, D N N K GIRLS' H S SCHOOL

Abstract

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 envisions a radical transformation of India into a global "Knowledge Economy" by fostering multidisciplinary learning and research-intensive environments. However, the transition from "Policy to Practice" presents unique structural and geographical challenges in the North Eastern Region (NER) of India. This paper aims to explore the status of NEP 2020 implementation within the NER, focusing specifically on the dual pillars of resource mobilization and stakeholder perception. Using a qualitative analytical framework based on secondary data and current institutional case studies, this study identifies the critical barriers to creating a knowledge-driven economy in the region, including digital infrastructure gaps and funding management. The research focuses on how resource monitoring and management can be optimized to ensure that "Quality Education" is not just an urban privilege but reaches the diverse demographic landscape of the North East. The findings suggest that a localized, region-specific roadmap for resource management is essential for the successful realization of NEP 2020 goals.

1. Introduction: The Vision of a Knowledge-Based Society

The global economic landscape has undergone a seismic shift from labour-intensive manufacturing to a Knowledge Economy, where growth is predicated on the quality, accessibility, and application of information. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 serves as India's strategic blueprint to transition from a traditional degree-granting system to a dynamic ecosystem of innovation.

For the North Eastern Region (NER), this transition is not merely a policy change but a socio-economic necessity. The NER possesses immense cultural and intellectual potential, yet it often faces "peripheral neglect" in terms of infrastructure. As we move from "Policy to Practice," the objective is to transform institutions in the NER into hubs of excellence that can sustain a 21st-century workforce. This paper examines how institutional governance, resource mobilization, and stakeholder mind set must align to fulfil the mandates of NEP 2020.

2. Research Methodology

This study employs a Qualitative Analytical Framework. The methodology is bifurcated into:-

Secondary Data Analysis: Examining reports from AISHE (2024-25), NITI Aayog's SDG Index, and Ministry of Education gazettes to understand macro-trends in the NER.

Case Study Method: Utilizing the recent transition of Gurucharan College into G.C. University (Silchar) as a benchmark for multidisciplinary institutional reform.

Observational Insight: As a Principal in the school education sector, the author provides a unique perspective on the "School-to-University" transition, which is critical for a sustainable Knowledge Economy.

3. The Concept of "Policy to Practice" in the NER

The gap between policy formulation and its ground-level practice is often widened by geographical and structural constraints. In the NER, "Practice" involves overcoming:

Logistical Hurdles: The high cost of setting up high-tech research labs in hilly or flood-prone terrains like the Barak Valley.

Administrative Adaptation: Moving away from a "Silo-based" administrative culture to a "Collaborative" one.

The success of NEP 2020 in the North East depends on Localization. A "one size fits all" approach will fail; instead, the practice must reflect the regional strengths in biodiversity, ethno botany, and cross-border trade potential.

4. Resource Mobilization, Management, and Monitoring

A core objective of the seminar is understanding the role of resources. A Knowledge Economy functions on the "Digital and Physical Highway."

4.1 Financial Mobilization

In the NER, dependency on Central and State grants is high. However, NEP 2020 encourages HEIs to explore:

Public-Private Partnerships (PPP): Engaging regional industries (Tea, Petroleum, Rubber) to fund R&D.

Alumni Philanthropy: Formalizing diaspora networks to create endowment funds.

HEFA Loans: Utilizing the Higher Education Financing Agency for capital asset creation.

4.2 Resource Monitoring

Monitoring is the "audit" of the Practice. It involves:

Academic Performance Reviews: Moving beyond pass percentages to "Skill Acquisition" metrics.

Digital Transparency: Using ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning) systems to track fund utilization at the institutional level, ensuring zero-leakage.

5. Case Study: G.C. University (A Unitary Model for the Future)

The transformation of Gurucharan College into G.C. University is a landmark event for the Barak Valley. It represents the NEP 2020 goal of creating "Large Multidisciplinary Unitary Universities."

Autonomy and Curriculum: As a Unitary University, it now possesses the autonomy to design a curriculum that reflects local needs—integrating vocational credits with traditional sciences, Experiential learning, Value Added Courses, multiple entries and exits.

Research Focus: It shifts the institutional identity from a "Teaching-only" college to a "Research-intensive" University, which is the cornerstone of a Knowledge Economy.

Institutional Practice: The transition of G.C. University serves as a model for other colleges in the region, proving that institutional maturity leads to structural independence.

6. Issues and Challenges for Quality Education in the NER

Despite the progressive vision, several challenges persist:

The Digital Divide: Reliable internet connectivity remains an "urban privilege." For students in remote districts of Cachar or Barak Valley or any remote area of Tripura, digital inclusion is still a theoretical concept rather than a practical reality.

Faculty Shortage and Re-skilling: The transition to multidisciplinary teaching requires faculty to unlearn traditional methods and adopt "Inquiry-based" pedagogy.

Connectivity-Poverty: The lack of physical transport infrastructure often prevents students from accessing high-quality regional hubs, making localized digital access even more critical.

7. Stakeholder Perception: The "Security vs. Innovation" Paradox

The success of NEP depends on the "Buy-in" from parents and students.

Traditional Mindset: In the North East, there is a deep-seated cultural preference for "Secure Government Jobs."

The Shift: NEP 2020 promotes "Entrepreneurship." Moving stakeholders toward this new perception requires consistent counselling and evidence of success in the innovation sector.

8. Equity and Inclusion: Ensuring Quality Education for All

Linguistic Inclusion: The use of regional languages in higher education is a significant hurdle but an essential step for democratizing the Knowledge Economy.

9. Recommendations for a Regional Roadmap

To synchronize regional strengths with national goals, I propose:

Establishment of "Institutional Clusters": Sharing labs and libraries between schools and colleges to maximize resource utility.

Digital Hardware Subsidy: State-level schemes to provide research-capable devices to BPL students in the NER.

Vocational-Academic Integration: Creating "Skill Hubs" within Universities that focus on regional industries like sustainable agriculture and handicrafts.

Transparency in Monitoring: Implementing a regional "Education Quality Dashboard" to monitor the status of NEP implementation in real-time.

10. Conclusion

NEP 2020 is a visionary framework, but its success in the North East will be measured by how effectively we bridge the Policy-Practice Gap. As educators and leaders, our duty is to ensure that the transition to a Knowledge Economy is inclusive and equitable. By optimizing resource mobilization and fostering a culture of innovation—exemplified by institutions like G.C. University—we can ensure that the youth of the North East are not just observers but leaders in India's global knowledge journey.

References

1. Government of India. (2020). National Education Policy 2020. Ministry of Education.
2. AISHE. (2024). All India Survey on Higher Education Report 2024-25.
3. NITI Aayog. (2025). NER District-wise SDG Index.

4. Tilak, J. B. G. (2022). Higher Education and the Knowledge Economy.
5. UNESCO. (2024). Digital Inclusion and the Global South.