



Reforms in Higher Education Proposed by the National Education Policy 2020 and the Possible Challenges

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Abstract

Education is the fundamental right to every citizen of India. This is the land of learning. This country has variety of subjects for the learners over centuries. The education system of India has undergone changes and modifications based on the suggestions of educational policies. The recent educational policy has come into being in 2020. The National Education Policy 2020 has replaced the National Policy on Education 1986 after 34 years. With the view to create an inclusive educational set up and to reinstate the country globally, the National Education Policy 2020 focussed on reforms as per present situation and future need. There have been massive changes in the structure of education at all levels. The present study aims to find out the noteworthy holistic changes recommended in NEP 2020 regarding higher education and to focus on the possible challenges towards its achievement.

Key words: NEP 2020, Higher Education, Holistic Changes, Challenges.

Introduction

India has got its new education policy in 2020 after 34 years under the chairmanship of Dr. K. Kasturirangan. Indian education system has witnessed massive changes since independence. Efforts have been made to ensure full participation of all children in education through different committee, commissions, policies as education is a fundamental right of every citizen of this country. The paradigm has been shifted from 3Rs to quality education.

It is a comprehensive policy taking into consideration all the education levels from primary to higher one. Rather than making students depend on rote memory and preparing for examinations, this new policy has emphasized on creativity, critical thinking, logical reasoning, decision making and innovation. With the aim to develop responsibility towards family, society and country, the new education policy stressed on identifying and nurturing the abilities of students. teamwork, resilience, cooperation, communication are some focussed areas of NEP 2020.

Objectives

1. to find out the noteworthy holistic changes recommended in NEP 2020 regarding higher education and
2. to focus on the possible challenges towards its achievement.

Method

The study is based on secondary sources of data, collected from several policy articles, journals, newspaper articles, government policy reports and books.

Delimitation

The study delimits to the higher education level only.

Objective 1

1. Structure of Education

The structure of education is set as 5+3+3+4+4+1 in which last four year is meant for undergraduate course and 1 year is meant for post graduate course. Previously it was 3 years undergraduate course and 2 years post graduate course. However, there will be two types of higher education institutes- multidisciplinary universities and multidisciplinary autonomous colleges (Darbar, 2021).

2. Admission , Multiple Entry- Exit

Admission to these courses will be based on scores from National Testing Agency which is to be conducted on national level. The most noteworthy change in the undergraduate level is multiple entry and exit. Students can exit after completion of one year with a diploma. Students wishing to exit after completion of two years, will get an advanced diploma, pass degree will be conferred on completion of three years of study and after four years they will be offered project-based degree.

3. Research

At the post graduate level more specialization and research-oriented works will be given more importance. As students will be given exposure to preliminary research in the undergraduate and post graduate level, hence M.Phil will be discontinued. The National Research Foundation will become an apex body for fostering and building research culture and research capacity in higher education. As per proposal, the new teacher education course will be of 4 years integrated one and will be treated as compulsory for faculties of school education by 2030. NCTE and NCERT jointly will formulate new and comprehensive National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education.

4. Autonomy and Multidisciplinary Institutions

Besides structure, there has been a major shift in terms of autonomy. NEP 20 has focussed on rendering autonomy to all higher educational institutes and thus abolishing the concept of affiliated colleges to state universities. Although these four verticals will ensure quality education, academic excellence as well as industry linkage under

the same umbrella of HECI. Unlike National Policy of Education 1986, NEP 2020 proposed that all HEIs must be multidisciplinary and the single discipline institutes will have to convert themselves into multidisciplinary one in order to get accreditation. Increasing number of students to thousands or more by 2040 is another condition for autonomy and accreditation. Even the technical education institutions are proposed to be offered in these multidisciplinary institutions. Failing to doing so will lead to closure of such institutes or conversion into public libraries or monuments.

5. Higher Education Commission of India

However, there will be Higher Education Commission of India for all higher education institutes excluding medical and legal education. Under the aegis of HECI there will be 4 bodies- National Higher Education Regulatory Council, National Accreditation Council, Higher Education Grants and General Education Council who will be shouldering separate responsibilities. Higher educational institutes will enjoy autonomy in deciding holistic, flexible curriculum and evaluation system as well. However, HEI accreditation once in every five years is compulsory for operation and offering the degree and diploma.

6. Ratio and Financial Support

The new policy will replace the student teacher ratio from 20:1 to 30:1. With the aim to increase the Gross Enrolment Ratio in higher education and vocational education sector, NEP20 has proposed addition of new seats to HEIs. For financial support to the meritorious students, National Scholarship Portal will also be expanded to government universities. Private institutions will also be encouraged for offering more free ship and scholarship on the same ground.

7. Academic Bank of Credit (ABC)

Another remarkable proposal is establishment of Academic Bank of Credit. It will digitally store the academic credits of students achieved from different institutes for transferring and counting the final score. Based on this final score, final degree will be earned.

8. Quality Education

The policy has stressed on quality education by ensuring more incentives to the institution which will impart highest quality of global education. Its aim was to attract international students.

9. Online Education and ODL

For improvement, inclusion and equality, NEP20 has clearly stressed on online education and open distance learning (ODL). Degree programmes will be made at par global standard of quality by constituting offline, online teaching, ODL with ratio model of 40:30:30. For looking after the e-education, digital infrastructure, content and capacity building, there will be a dedicated unit in the Ministry of Human Resource Development. For improving the classroom processes, technology will be integrated.

10. Vocational Education

Besides general degree courses, vocational courses have also been considered as important part of higher education. Thus integration of vocational education to higher education is stressed to include atleast 50% learners to it by 2025. There will be counselling centres in all higher education institutes for academic and professional development and mental well-being of students.

11. Competency Based Credit System

The present Choice Based Credit System will be revised by Competency Based Credit System which is innovative and flexible in nature. Pedagogy will be shifted towards communication, discussion, participation of debate, presentation and research analysis. Semester End Examinations will be altered with continuous and comprehensive evaluation.

12. Medium of Instruction

NEP recommends use of local language or mother tongue as medium of instruction in higher education institutes. There will be an Indian Institute of Translation and Interpretation, National Institute for all languages.

Objective 2

Educational policies are framed with the view to upgrade the existing system of education. it undergoes various amendment and changes before implementation. However, in the due course of implementation, it may face some practical challenges. This is true for any policy and NEP 2020 is not an exception. The challenges to the implementation of the new policy are as follows:

1. Multidisciplinary course

For restructuring HEIs as multidisciplinary one for existence, accreditation and autonomy, massive change in the infrastructure is required. It naturally will increase the expenditure in the education. hence the expenditure part has to be taken into consideration as on priority basis before transforming the HEIs.

2. Course fee

As the new education policy has stressed on global education, it is quite obvious that privatization of education is on its way. It is nowhere mentioned in the policy as how to decide and curtail the excessive fees of education. Also, it has not given any clear recommendation or proposal for educating the marginalized people who cannot afford the excessive cost of global education in private institutes. This is in other way goes against the law of inclusion.

3. Multiple Entry and Exit

Multiple entry and exit in the HEIs will increase the drop out rate by legitimizing students to exit from their study at any point of time. As there is not assurance of getting back those students in higher education, it will create a mess towards achieving 50% rise in enrolment in higher education level.

4. Student-teacher ratio

Another problem may arise with the student- teacher ratio. As it has been proposed to revise by 30:1, it might be obvious to retain such ratio at the elementary level. However, soon multiple entry and exit starts, the ratio might get upset.

5. Structure of Education

With the restructuring of HEIs as 4 years course, every institute requires plenty number of teachers and skilled personnel, without which again the student- teacher ratio is going to be in unsettled.

6. Curriculum

Regarding curriculum, there will be massive confusion regarding settling curriculum for one year diploma course to 4 years degree course as the students will be studying together.

7. Language Policy

If the language policy is implemented in the HEIs and Universities, it will create a lot of problems for students and teachers. The main reason behind this is in existing pattern, most of the HEIs give instructions in either English or Hindi. If local language is to be used as medium of instruction, then students studying in the same HEI from different areas across the country would fail to follow the local language of that institution. Even teacher will remain confused about which medium of instruction to be used.

8. Digitalization of Education

Before making proper arrangements to teach digitally, blended mode of education will not be possible. The policy has remained silent regarding enabling students to receive digital education. Institutional infrastructure for digitalization is another challenge. There is no such proposal for teachers' digital skill development programme.

Conclusion

The National Policy on Education 1986 has contributed toward development of human resources, whereas the National Education Policy 2020 is more concerned with creation of human resources of international standard. However, the new policy may have some drawback, but it has emphasized on the holistic development of the child as well as development of creativity through art, music, vocational courses and so on. The new policy has come into being after 34 years. During this long period there has been massive change in the country in all aspect. It has become globalized and requires an education system of global standard. It has long way to go. Only after proper transparent implementation from all ends and stakeholders, it can be re-evaluated.

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