NEP-2020 and Higher Education Policy in India

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ABSTRACT: National Education Policy, 2020 (NEP) envisions a massive transformation in education through– "an education system rooted in Indian ethos that contributes directly to transforming India, that is Bharat, sustainably into an equitable and vibrant knowledge society, by providing high quality education to all, thereby making India a global knowledge superpower." The NEP 2020 is founded on the five guiding pillars of Access, Equity, Quality, Affordability and Accountability. It will prepare our youth to meet the diverse national and global challenges of the present and the future.

In school education, the National Education Policy 2020 stresses on the core values and principle that education must develop not only the cognitive skills, that is, – both 'foundational skills' of literacy and numeracy and 'higher-order' skills such as critical thinking and problem solving – but also, social and emotional skills - also referred to as 'soft skills' -including cultural awareness and empathy, perseverance and grit, teamwork, leadership, communication, among others. The Policy aims and aspires to universalize the pre-primary education and provides special emphasis on the attainment of foundational literacy/numeracy in primary school and beyond for all by 2025. It recommends plethora of reforms at all levels of school education which seek to ensure quality of schools, transformation of the curriculum including pedagogy with 5+3+3+4 design covering children in the age group 3-18 years, reform in the current exams and assessment system, strengthening of teacher training, and restructuring the education regulatory framework. It seeks to increase public investment in education, strengthen the use of technology and increase focus on vocational and adult education, among others. It recommends that the curriculum load in each subject should be reduced to its 'core essential' content by making space for holistic, discussion and analysis-based learning.

KEYWORDS-NEP, 2020, higher, education, policy

I. INTRODUCTION

It also proposes the revision and revamping of all aspects of the education structure, including the school regulation and governance, to create a new system which is aligned with the aspirational goals of 21st century education along with India's tradition, culture and value system. Technology will be integrated with education through several existing as well as proposed initiatives, including energized text books, high quality e-content for capacity building of teachers and learners, question banks based on learning outcomes, etc. The policy also notes that establishing primary schools in every habitation across the country has helped in increasing access to education. However, it has led to the development of very small schools (having low number of students) which makes it operationally complex to deploy teachers and critical physical resources. Therefore, the Policy recommends that multiple public schools can be brought together to form a school complex or any innovative grouping mechanism for efficient governance. The policy has emphasized upon Quality Education across all stages of School Education. Quality education is not only a life-changing, but also a mind-crafting and character-building experience, that positively impacts on citizenship. Empowered learners not only contribute to many growing developmental imperatives of the country but also participate in creating a just and equitable society.[1,2,3]

In Higher Education, NEP, 2020 provides valuable insights and recommendations on various aspects of education that include moving towards multidisciplinary and holistic education, institutional autonomy, promotion of quality research through establishment of National Research Foundation, continuous professional development of teachers, integration of technology, internationalization of higher education, restructuring of governance and regulatory architecture, multidisciplinary curricula, engaging blended, pedagogy, valid reliable and blended assessment and availability of content in Indian languages. The policy is expected to bring long-lasting positive impact on the education system and making India a global hub of skilled manpower during the 'Amrit Kaal', the next 25 years leading up to Developed India in 2047. Its implementation needs collective efforts of Centre, States, UTs, HEIs, Regulating Agencies / Regulatory Bodies and all other relevant stakeholders.

The National Education Policy 2020 i.e. NEP 2020 is a comprehensive education policy introduced by the Government of India in July 2020. NEP 2020 aims to transform the education system in India by providing access to education for all, promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion, and preparing students for the 21st century.

NPE 2020 has introduced 5+3+3+4 education structure where the first five years of education are foundational, promoting multilingualism, emphasizing vocational education and skills training, introducing common entrance exams for university admissions, and leveraging technology to enhance learning outcomes.

II. DISCUSSION

NEP 2020 for Higher Education

The National Education Policy 2020 for higher education aims to transform the existing higher education system in India. This policy emphasizes on promoting interdisciplinary studies, introducing new subjects, and providing flexibility in courses and fresh opportunities for students. It aims to increase the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education, provide multiple entry and exit options, and allow students to choose courses according to their interests and aptitude.

The policy envisions setting up of a National Research Foundation, a National Education Technology Forum, and setting up of more Higher Education Institutions in the country. The policy is aimed at creating a holistic and flexible education system that is adaptive to the needs of the 21st century.

National Education Policy 2020 for Higher Education Highlights

The policy aims to increase the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education to 50% by 2035.

Around 5 crore seats to be added in higher education.

The policy proposes the establishment of a National Research Foundation (NRF) to fund and promote research in all disciplines.

The policy recommends the establishment of a single regulator for higher education, called the Higher Education Commission of India (HECI), to replace multiple regulatory bodies.

The policy proposes the introduction of a four-year multidisciplinary undergraduate degree, with multiple exit options and opportunities for skill development.[4,5,6]

The policy proposes the establishment of a National Educational Technology Forum (NETF) to promote the use of technology in higher education.

The policy recommends the development of a credit-based system for degree programs, which would enable students to pursue multiple degrees or programs simultaneously.

The policy proposes the establishment of a National Academic Credit Bank (NAC-Bank) to facilitate the transfer and accumulation of academic credits across institutions.

NEP 2020 for UG Courses

According to the NEP, undergraduate students will now have the opportunity to choose from several exit points in their program. For instance, a student may decide to leave after the first year, earning a certificate. If they leave after the second year, they will receive an Advanced Diploma for completing two years of study. Completing the third year will result in a Bachelor's Degree, while the fourth year will merit a Bachelor's of Research, as usual.

III. RESULTS

NEP 2020 – UG Exit Options

Option No.	Options	Academic Recognition
1	After 1st year of UG programme	Certificate

2	After 2nd year of UG programme	Advanced Diploma
3	After 3rd year of UG programme	Bachelor's Degree
4	After 4th year of UG programme	Bachelor's with Research

NEP 2020 for M Phil

MPhil or Master of Philosophy is a postgraduate academic research programme of two years duration. Candidates can pursue an MPhil course from any stream – Humanities, Commerce, Science, Law, Teaching etc. In an MPhil course, aspirants need to study theory as well as practical subjects. Apart from this, candidates also need to conduct research and present their research findings.

After completing MPhil course candidates can consider pursuing a PhD .With the introduction of four years of integrated bachelors with research program government has discontinued the MPhil degree which is earlier considered to be junior research degree. MPhil or Master of Philosophy is a postgraduate academic research programme that is of two years duration.

Now students can directly pursue the four year integrated programme to incline their career towards research. They are not needed to do MPhil after masters to enroll for Phd. They can directly enter in research area after clearing UGC NET , SET or institute specific entrance tests.

NEP 2020 Introduced HECI

HECI – A Single Regulatory Body with 4 Verticals

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 dictates that a solitary regulatory entity shall oversee Higher Education in India. This regulatory entity, referred to as the Higher Education Commission of India (HECI), will comprise four distinct verticals responsible for addressing various aspects of higher education.

Serial No	HECI Vertical	Function
1	National Higher Education Regulatory Council (NHERC)	Creating and Implementing Higher Education regulation
2	General Education Council (GEC)	Standard setting for academia
3	Higher Education Grants Council (HEGC)	For funding academic and research activities
4	National Accreditation Council (NAC)	Accreditation to academic institutions

Features of the NEP 2020 for higher Education

The features of the NEP 2020 for Higher Education has been given below:

Interdisciplinary education: The NEP 2020 proposes the breaking down of rigid boundaries between different academic disciplines and faculties. It encourages universities to offer multi-disciplinary courses that allow students to explore various subjects and fields of study.

Flexible curriculum and credit transfer: The NEP 2020 recommends a flexible curriculum that allows students to choose from a range of courses and subjects to meet their individual interests and career goals. The policy also proposes a credit-transfer system that enables students to shift between institutions without losing academic credit, thereby boosting mobility and promoting academic excellence.

Research and innovation: The NEP 2020 aims to make India a global hub for innovation and research by encouraging universities to prioritize research and increasing investment in science and technology. The policy also recommends the establishment of a National Research Foundation to support and fund research activities across all disciplines.[7,8,9]

Vocational education and skill development: The NEP 2020 recognises the importance of vocational education and skill development in preparing students for the job market. It proposes the integration of vocational education into

mainstream education, offering apprenticeships, and work-integrated learning programmes to help students acquire relevant skills.

Online education: The NEP 2020 acknowledges the importance of technology in education and proposes the development of a comprehensive digital infrastructure for education. It encourages universities to offer online courses and blended learning models to reach a broader student population and promote access to education.

Inclusivity and Equity: The NEP 2020 places significant emphasis on promoting inclusivity and equity in education by addressing the needs of disadvantaged groups such as girls, low-income families, and students with disabilities. It also seeks to provide equal opportunities to students from all socio-economic backgrounds.

Internationalization: The NEP 2020 aims to promote internationalization by encouraging collaborations with foreign universities, attracting international students, and facilitating student and faculty exchanges. The policy also recommends the establishment of a National Education Exchange Programme (NEEP) to promote educational exchanges between states.

Autonomy and accountability: 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.

Merits of National Education Policy 2020 for higher education

Flexibility: The new policy offers a flexible, multi-disciplinary and student-centric approach to higher education, allowing students to choose their courses, the pace of their learning and the mode of delivery.

Multiple Entry and Exit Points: The system allows students to enter or exit their courses at various points, giving them the freedom to opt for different courses at different times during their education.

Investments in research has been urged: The policy aims to establish a robust research and innovation ecosystem by investing in research and development, funding, and encouraging collaborations between academia and industry.

Job oriented Training: The policy includes vocational training as an integral component of higher education, aiming to equip students with practical skills to enter the job market.

Teacher Development: 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.

Enhanced ways: The policy aims to leverage technology to enhance teaching and learning experiences, including the creation of online courses, open educational resources, and e-learning platforms.

Challenges of National Education Policy 2020 for higher education

Overhauling of higher education system: The National Education Policy 2020 proposes a major overhaul of India's higher education system. While this could potentially create a more streamlined and effective system, some stakeholders are concerned about the challenges that could arise during the transition.

Financing: The policy proposes several new initiatives such as setting up of new universities, restructuring of the education system, and promoting online education. Implementing these will require significant funding, and the government needs to find ways to finance them without putting an additional burden on the taxpayers.

Bridging the Digital Divide: The policy envisions promoting online education and making it accessible to all, including those living in remote areas. However, this will require bridging the digital divide, which remains a challenge in a country where many people still lack access to basic internet connectivity.

Faculty Development: The policy places a strong emphasis on faculty development and training, but there is a shortage of qualified faculty in many areas of higher education, and it may take time for institutions to build the necessary capacity.

Equity: While the National Education Policy 2020 seeks to promote equity and inclusion in higher education, there are concerns that some of the proposed measures, such as the four-year undergraduate program, may disadvantage students from marginalized communities or those with disabilities.

National Education Policy 2020 is a comprehensive document that promises major reforms in higher education in India. The policy recognizes the importance of multidisciplinary education, research, vocational education, teacher education, and the use of technology in higher education. The policy aims to make India a hub for research and development, attract talent from around the world, and prepare students for the changing job market.[10,11,12]

The implementation of the NEP 2020 will require coordinated efforts from all stakeholders, and it remains to be seen how effectively the policy will be implemented. However, the NEP 2020 is a step in the right direction towards transforming India's education system to meet the demands of the changing world.

In a special session of Parliament, the Parliament Standing Committee on Education, presented a comprehensive report on the "Implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 in Higher Education."

The report examined the progress and challenges in implementing this significant policy shift in India's higher education sector.

What are the Major Highlights of the Report?

Diversity of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs):

The report emphasized that a significant portion of India's higher education system operates under State Acts, with 70% of universities falling under this category.

Furthermore, 94% of students are enrolled in State or private institutions, leaving just 6% in Central higher educational institutions.

This underscores the critical role played by States in providing higher education

Key Issues Discussed:

Disciplinary Rigidity: The panel raised concerns about the rigid separation of disciplines, which can hinder interdisciplinary learning and innovation.

Limited Access in Disadvantaged Areas: Access to higher education in socio-economically disadvantaged regions remains limited, impeding the equitable distribution of educational opportunities.

Language Barriers: There's a dearth of higher education institutes (HEIs) that offer instruction in local languages, potentially excluding a substantial section of the population.

Faculty Shortage: A scarcity of qualified faculty members is plaguing the higher education sector, adversely impacting the quality of education.

Lack of Institutional Autonomy: Many institutions face a lack of autonomy, hindering their ability to adapt and innovate.

Research Emphasis: The panel noted a diminished emphasis on research within the current higher education system.

Ineffective Regulatory System: The regulatory framework governing higher education was deemed ineffective, requiring comprehensive reform.

Concern Related to Multiple Entry Multiple Exit Programme: The panel expressed concerns that implementing the MEME system in Indian institutions, while flexible in theory, may not align effectively due to unpredictability in student entry and exits. This unpredictability could disrupt the pupil-teacher ratio.

Recommendations:

Equitable Funding: Both the Union and State Governments should allocate sufficient funds to support Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs) in higher education.

Clear targets for the Gross Enrolment Ratio should be set for SEDGs to ensure increased access to higher education.

Gender Balance: Efforts should be made to enhance gender balance in admissions to HEIs.

Inclusive Admissions and Curriculum: Admission processes and curriculum should be made more inclusive to cater to diverse learner needs.

Regional Language Courses: Development of more degree courses taught in regional languages and bilingually should be encouraged.

Accessibility for Physically Challenged: Specific infrastructural steps should be taken to make higher education institutions more accessible to physically challenged students.

Anti-discrimination Measures: Strict enforcement of no-discrimination and anti-harassment rules was recommended to ensure a safe and inclusive environment.

HEFA Diversification: The Higher Education Financing Agency (HEFA) should diversify its funding sources beyond government allocations.

Exploration of partnerships with private sector organizations, philanthropic foundations, and international financial institutions for funding should be pursued.

What is National Education Policy 2020?

About:

The National Education Policy 2020 seeks to tackle the evolving development needs of India.

It calls for a comprehensive overhaul of the education system, including its regulations and management, to establish a modern system that aligns with 21st-century educational goals, including Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4), while respecting India's cultural heritage and values.

It replaces the thirty-four year old National Policy on Education, 1986, modified in 1992 (NPE 1986/92).[13,14,15]

Salient Features:

Universal Access: NEP 2020 focuses on universal access to school education, including pre-school to secondary levels.

Early Childhood Education: The 10+2 structure will shift to a 5+3+3+4 system, bringing 3-6-year-olds under school curriculum, with a focus on Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE).

Multilingualism: Mother tongue or regional language will be the medium of instruction till Grade 5, with options for Sanskrit and other languages.

Indian Sign Language (ISL) will be standardized.

Inclusive Education: Special emphasis on Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs), support for children with disabilities, and establishment of "Bal Bhavans."

Elimination of Barriers: The policy promotes a seamless education system with no rigid distinctions between arts and sciences, curricular and extracurricular activities, and vocational and academic streams.

GER Enhancement: Aim to increase Gross Enrolment Ratio from 26.3% to 50% by 2035, adding 3.5 crore new seats.

Research Focus: Creation of National Research Foundation to boost research culture and capacity.

Language Preservation: Support for Indian languages, including an Institute of Translation and Interpretation (IITI) and strengthening language departments.

Internationalization: Facilitation of international collaborations and entry of top-ranked foreign universities.[16,17,18]

Funding: Joint efforts to increase public investment in education to 6% of GDP.

PARAKH Assessment Center: The establishment of PARAKH (Performance Assessment, Review, and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development) as a national assessment center signifies a significant step towards competency-based and holistic assessment in education.

Gender Inclusion Fund: The policy introduces a Gender Inclusion Fund, emphasizing the importance of gender equality in education and supporting initiatives to empower disadvantaged groups.

Special Education Zones: Special Education Zones are envisioned to address the specific needs of disadvantaged regions and groups, furthering the policy's commitment to equitable access to quality education for all.[19]

IV. CONCLUSIONS

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