NATIONAL EDUATION POLICY 2020 AND HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA

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Abstract

The economic success of any nation is directly determined by their education systems in the world, because education is a Nation's Strength. A developed nation is inevitably an educated nation. The year 2020 has been an exceptional year for countries across the globe. In India, apart from Covid-19, one of the important changes that took place was the development of the New Education Policy (NEP) 2020. The National Education Policy 2020 has therefore been transformed into the framework of this reform, which could help to build a new education system in the country, in addition to strengthening those economic and social indicators. That still needs to be improved. NEP 2020 provides for quality higher education through multidisciplinary universities and autonomous colleges. The present study attempts to analyze the various educational stages, features, highlights and challenges of Higher Education in NEP 2020 and some suggestions for improvements.

Keywords: NEP, Higher Education, India.

Introduction:

Higher education sector plays an important role in the country's overall development which includes industrial, social, economic etc. The economic success of any nation is directly determined by their education systems in the world, because education is a Nation's Strength. A developed nation is inevitably an educated nation. The National Policy on Education (NPE) is a policy formulated by the Government of India to promote education amongst India's people. The policy covers elementary education to colleges in both rural and urban India. The first NPE was promulgated by the Government of India by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1968, the second by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1986, and the third by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2020.

India, being a growing liberal country for educational reforms, currently has about 845 universities and approximately 40,000 higher education institutions (HIEs), reflecting the overall high fragmentation and many small sized HEIs in the country which are affiliated to these universities. It is found that over 40% of these small sized institutions are running single program me against the expected reform to a multidisciplinary style of higher education which is an essential requirement for the educational reforms in the country for the 21st century. It is also noted that over 20% of the colleges have annual enrolment less than 100 students making them nonviable to improve the quality of education and only 4% of colleges enroll more than 3,000 students annually due to regional imbalance as well as the quality of education they offer. (Venkateshwarlu, 2021).

The National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020), which was approved by the Union Cabinet of India on 29 July 2020, outlines the vision of India's new education system. The new policy replaces the previous National Policy on Education, 1986. The policy is a comprehensive framework for elementary education to higher education as well as vocational training in both rural and urban India. The policy aims to transform India's education system by 2021. The language policy in NEP is a broad guideline and advisory in nature; and it is up to the states, institutions, and schools to decide on the implementation. The NEP 2020 enacts numerous changes in India's education policy. It aims to increase state expenditure on education from around 4% to 6% of the GDP as soon as possible.

Scenario of Higher Education in India:

Table 1 shows, at present in 2019, there are 1043 government-recognized Universities and Institutions in India. Out of them 48 are central universities, 126 are deemed universities, 15 are Open Universities, 386 are state universities, 327 are Private Universities, 135 are Institutes of national importance and 5 are Institutes under state Legislature act. 16 universities are exclusively for women.

Table 1 Scenario of Higher Education in India

Sr. No.	Institutions		Total Number
1	Central Universities		48
2	State Universities		386
3	Deemed Universities		126
	Government	36	
	Govt. Aided	10	
	Private	80	
4	Private Universities		327
5	Central Open University		01
6	State Open Universities	14	15
	State Private Open University	01	
7	Institutes of National Importance		135
8	Institutes under state Legislature act		05
Total			**1043**

Source: https://aishe.nic.in

Review of Literature:

The different aspects of NEP have been covered by several scholars. It is widely discussed in various research publications some of them have been reviewed in this section.

Kurian & Chandramana (2020) mainly focuses on national education policy 2020 and its impact on higher education, also outlines the salient features of NEP and analyses how they affect the existing education system. Verma & Kumar (2021) describes the analysis of the requirements for NEP 2020 provisions and management practices at the university level. Recommendations are made for the design and implementation of NEP at national and higher education level. Kaurav & et. al. (2020) identifies three crucial aspects of the policy-course, language and students for the higher education sector. They also discuss the sentiment analysis, related to NEP 2020. They found that most of the people consider the policy as a positive and welcoming step. Aithal & Aithal (2020) highlights on various policies announced in the higher education system and compare them with the currently adopted system. Various innovations and predicted implications of NEP 2020 on the Indian higher education system along with its merits are discussed. Also some suggestions are proposed for its effective implementation towards achieving its objective. Soni (2022) explores the issues and challenges in the implementation of policies mentioned in NSE 2020, the key areas that remain missing, and the complexities involved. The paper is divided in to the policy and practices together with the recent data statistics. Pralhada G. (2022) makes overview of NEP 2020, distinguish the strengths and weakness of the policy at higher education and research part, evaluation of the implementation, suggestions given in the policy, identifying and analyzing possible generic strategies for implementation of NEP 2020 to fulfill its objectives based on focus group discussions. It includes many predictive proposals on issues like developing quality universities and colleges, institutional, restructuring and consolidation etc. Banerjee & et.al. (2021), highlights the various educational stages features, some principle of the new policy, the difference between the old national education policy 1986 and current national education policy 2020, various things which was adopted in higher education system, various innovations in NEP 2020, main implications of NEP 2020, advantages of higher education in NEP 2020 and also gives some suggestions for improvements. Vijay laxmi & Ugandhar T. (2022) emphasizes the needs to inculcate research in higher education and how policies must be framed to promote research more so under graduate research which is the dire need of the hour. It also discusses on organization and approaches to promote research integrity and holistic and multidisciplinary education system. G. Santoshi (2021) highlights on National Education Policies and major changes that took place in the education sector in the last decade. It reveals that drastic changes took place in education sector. Shubhada & Niranth (2021) emphasizes the major differences between the current education policy i. e. new education policy of 1986 and new education policy of 2020. An attempt had been made to figure out the challenges in the existing policy that led to the emergence of NEP 2020. A brief analysis has also been made on the highlights of the NEP 2020. Kumar (2021) takes systematic review of existing literature. He found that one of the main

objectives of NEP 2020 is to increase student's enrollment in all educational institutions such as elementary school, professional and higher education by 2030. To achieve that it has suggested progressive reform in the existing education and governance systems. Sarna & et. al. (2021) analyses several commendable benefits such as structured pre-schooling and an early start to learning, universalization of inclusive education, a paradigm shift from rote to active learning put forward by NEP. Also opportunities offered by NEP 2020 are irrefutable, apprehensions pertaining to its scope and usefulness also exists, questioning the sanguinity shown in the framed policy. Significant challenges such as the implementation of the three language formula, possibilities of amplified inequalities, privatization and financing concerns have been critically evaluated.

Methodology:

The present study attempts to analyze the various educational stages, features, highlights and challenges of Higher Education in NEP 2020 and some suggestions for improvements. The data have been collected for the present study through secondary sources. The secondary data have been collected from the published and unpublished sources. The data have been collected through the sources such as, websites, annual reports and statements, books, Journals, Periodicals and reports.

Objectives:

In the light of the issues discussed earlier and the available literature relating to status of higher education in India the following specific objectives are framed for the study.

1. To study the impact of New Education Policy 2020 on higher education system in India.
2. To highlight the educational stages, salient features of NEP related to higher education system in India.
3. To highlight the challenges before NEP 2020 in higher education.

Different Educational Stages

Various stages of Education are being highlighted as under –

- **Foundation Stage:** Foundational stage is for five years. In this stage the basic education is being provided and the education will be flexible, discovery-based, activity-based, play-based and multi-level. The emotional and cognitive level of children must be continuously improved by the research.
- **Preparatory Stage:** The preparatory stage is for three years. This stage is also an activity-based, play-based and discovery based and the children gradually link up with normal classroom learning along with some textbooks. This stage is mainly focus on to introduce various subjects so that the children can develop knowledge from various subjects.
- **Middle School Stage:** The middle school stage is for three years. This stage has given focuses on the abstract concepts of all subjects such as mathematics, arts, sciences, humanities and social sciences and the method of learning is experimental learning at all specialized subjects along with subject teachers. In this stage, there was a semester system.
- **Secondary stage:** The secondary education stage is for four years. The subjects of this stage will multidisciplinary and the style of curriculum will be always greater critical thinking, greater depth and greater flexibility. In this stage, there was a semester system and each semester the students will study 5 to 6 subjects. At the end of class 10th and 12th the board exams will be held.
- **Under-graduation stage:** The duration of under-graduation degrees will be either three / four year's duration. After passing first year the students gets one certificate, after passing second year the students will get a diploma and after third year the students get a Bachelor degree. The major, minors and research projects is basically preferred in four year undergraduate degree programme.
- **Post-graduation Stage:** The students who have four years B.A degree have one year M.A degree, three years B.A degree have two years M.A degree. In M.A degree there must be a research component; so that the competence in the professional areas will increase and the students will prepare for a degree of research.
- **Research Stage:** The minimum period of Ph. D for a full-time and part-time is three to four years. In this stage the students are able to pursue high quality research with any multidisciplinary subject. In Ph. D there must be an8 credit course work in education / teaching / pedagogy in related to their own subject. The one year M. Phil programme was quit.

- **Lifelong learning:** The new policy NEP 2020 gives a lifelong learning so that all human beings are not deprived from having an experience, skills and knowledge in a society and have a comfortable life. Sometime it has believed that at any stage the education and research gives a satisfaction for a whole life.

Salient Features of NEP related to Higher Education in India:

The new higher education regulatory structure will ensure that distinct administrative, accreditation, financing, and academic standard-setting roles are performed by separate, autonomous, and empowered bodies. These four structures will be established as four independent verticals within a single umbrella institution, India's Higher Education Commission (HECI). There are a lot of reforms and new developments which have been introduced by NEP in the higher education sector. Some of the salient features are:

1. Single regulatory body for higher education:

The NEP aims to establish Higher Education Commission of India which will be the single regulatory body except for legal and medical education.

2. Multiple entry and exit programme:

There will be multiple entry and exit options for those who wish to leave the course in the middle. Their credits will be transferred through Academic Bank of Credits.

3. **Tech- based option for adult learning through apps, TV channels:**

Quality technology-based options for adult learning such as apps, online courses/modules, satellite-based TV channels, online books, and ICT-equipped libraries and Adult Education Centers, etc. will be developed.

4. **E-courses to be available in regional languages:**

Technology will be part of education planning, teaching, learning, assessment, teacher, school, and student training. The e-content to be available in regional languages, starting with 8 major languages – Kannada, Odia, Bengali among others to join the e-courses available in Hindi and English.

5. **Foreign universities to set-up campuses in India:**

World's top 100 foreign universities will be facilitated to operate in India through a new law. According to the HRD Ministry document, "such (foreign) universities will be given special dispensation regarding regulatory, governance, and content norms on par with other autonomous institutions of India."

6. Common entrance exam for all colleges:

The common Entrance exam for all higher education institutes to be held by National Testing Agency (NTA). The exam will be optional.

A Higher Education Council of India (HECI) will be set up to regulate higher education. The council's goal will be to increase gross enrollment ratio.

Highlights of NEP 2020 policy for Higher Education:

(1) HE monitoring and controlling institutions like UGC, AICTE, MCI, DCI, INC, etc will be merged with the Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) as a single regulator for HEI.

(2) The current Accreditation Institutions like NAAC and NAB will be replaced by a robust National Accreditation Council (NAC).

(3) Establishment of a National Research Foundation (NRF) to fund research in universities and colleges.

(4) Consolidation of existing fragmented HEIs into two types of Multidisciplinary Universities (MU) and Multidisciplinary Autonomous Colleges (AC) with the campus having more than 3,000 students. The Timeline to become multi-disciplinary is by 2030 and to have 3,000 and more students by 2040.

(5) Multidisciplinary Universities will be of two types as (1) Research-intensive Universities, and (2) Teaching-intensive Universities.

(6) Every existing College will develop into either degree granting autonomous College or migrated into a Constituent College of University and becomes fully a part of the University.

(7) The Gross Enrolment Ratio in HE including Vocational education will increase from current 26.3% (2018) to 50% by 2035.

(8) HEIs which deliver the highest quality will get more incentives from the Government.

(9) All existing affiliated Colleges will eventually grow autonomous degree-granting colleges with the mentoring support of affiliated University by improving and securing the prescribed accreditation level.

(10) The various nomenclatures used currently such as deemed to be university, affiliating university, central university, affiliating technical university, unitary university, etc will be replaced by 'University' after fulfilling the required criteria as per norms.

(11) Research will be included in UG, PG level and have a holistic and multidisciplinary education approach.

(12) Pedagogy in HEIs will focus on communication, presentation, discussion, debate, research, analysis, and interdisciplinary thinking.

(13) An Academic Bank of Credit (ABC) will be established which would digitally store the academic credits of all registered candidates earned from various recognized HEIs (SWAYAM & ODL mode) that can be taken into account while awarding degrees by the college or university.

(14) Four years Bachelor degree with multiple exit options, one to two years Master's degree based on the number of years spent in Bachelor degree as four or three respectively, and option to do Ph.D. for four years Bachelor degree with research are possible.

(15) Two years Master degree with full research in the second year, One year Master degree for four years Bachelor degree holders, and Five years integrated Bachelor/Master degree.

(16) All HEIs will focus on research and innovation by setting up (1) Start-up incubation centers, (2) Technology development centers, (3) Centers in frontier areas of research, (4) Centre for Industry academic linkage, and (5) Interdisciplinary Research Centers including humanities and social sciences research.

(17) Student Centered teaching & learning process instead of Teacher centered teaching model.

(18) Choice Based Credit System is revised by an innovative and flexible Competency Based Credit System.

(19) Examination system will change from high-stakes examinations (Semester End system) towards a more continuous and comprehensive evaluation examination system.

(20) All HEIs will have professional academic and career counseling centers with counselors available to all students to ensure physical, psychological and emotional well-being.

(21) All HEIs will develop, support, and fund for topic-centered clubs and activities organized by students with the help of faculty and other experts as needed, in the area of science, mathematics, poetry, language, literature, debate, music, sports, etc.

(22) Encouragement for Online Distance Learning (ODL) courses as a part of degree programmes to include the credit system.

(23) The Degree programmes may contain in-class teaching, Online teaching components, and ODL components with 40:30:30 ratio model to achieve a global standard of quality.

(24) HE quality will be improved to global quality level to attract more international students and the credits acquired in foreign universities will be counted for the award of a degree.

(25) National Scholarship Portal will be strengthened and expanded to help the financial needs of merit based students. Private HEIs will be encouraged to offer larger numbers of free ships and scholarships to their students.

Challenges of NEP 2020

1. Opening universities every week is a greater challenge:

India today has around 1,000 universities across the country. Doubling the Gross Enrolment Ratio in higher education by 2035 which is one of the stated goals of the policy will mean that we must open one new university every week, for the next 15 years. Opening one University every week on an ongoing basis is an undoubtedly massive challenge.

2. The numbers are no less daunting in reforms to our school system:

The National Education Policy 2020 intends to bring 2 crore children who are currently not in schools, back into the school system. Whichever way you look at it, accomplishing this over 15 years requires the setting up of around 50 schools every week.

3. Funding is a big challenge:

From a funding standpoint, this is not a challenge for the faint-hearted. The National Education Policy 2020 envisages an increase in education spending from 4.6% to 6% of GDP, which amounts to around INR 2.5 lakh crores per year. This money will be well-spent building schools

and colleges across the country, appointing teachers and professors, and for operational expenses such as providing free breakfast to school children. What makes things tricky is that this policy comes into being at a time when the economy has been battered by Covid-19 related lockdowns, government tax collections are abysmally low, and the fiscal deficit was high even pre-covid.

4. Current focus on healthcare and economic recovery to lower the execution speed:
Economists have been calling for large stimulus packages amounting to double-digit percentages of GDP, despite the strain on the exchequer.

5. Need to create trained teachers:
In school education, the policy envisages a sweeping structural re-design of the curriculum a very welcome step. But in order to deliver this curriculum effectively, we need teachers who are trained in and understand the pedagogical needs. Many of the curricular changes require substantial mindset shifts on the part of teachers, as well as parents.

6. Inter-disciplinary higher education demands for a cultural shift:
In higher education, the National Education Policy 2020's focus on inter-disciplinary learning is a very welcome step. Universities, especially in India, have for decades been very departmentalized. The National Education policy 2020 has many initiatives to improve the quality and the broadness of the education system in India.

7. Educational facilities and opportunities:
In NEP 2020 educational facilities and opportunities reduce for rural, poor, SC/ST and other disadvantaged sections. There is no mention about reservations or other affirmative action. The increase costs of education across the board may fail to meet the aspirations for all round knowledge and productive employment.

8. Reimagining and adopting pedagogical changes
Education must not only develop the cognitive skills in learners – both 'foundational skills' of literacy and numeracy and the 'high-order' cognitive skills like critical thinking – but also 'social and emotional skills' known as the soft skills like empathy, grit, determination, leadership and teamwork. The NEP calls for such value-based learning along with significant curriculum and pedagogical changes. These pedagogical changes are tough and need to be figured out softly for successful implementation.

9. Bottom-up approach
Bottom-line approach is acceptable by all areas of life. This social and educational transformation is only possible with a bottom-up grass-root level intervention which will enhance and bring a massive change in the mindset of the stakeholders, including the office staff and parents, right at the outset. A transformation is needed from 'what to think' and 'how to think'.

10. Building public house for Remote school teachers
Teacher is regarded as the most respected and essential members of our society, as they are the ones who truly shape our next generation of citizens. Work also needs to be done in removing personal and professional barriers of working in remote, inaccessible locations which is crucial for preparing this workforce and also for making the NEP successful.

11. Digital connectivity
We require internet penetration in remote areas because e-learning is the way forward, as witnessed during the pandemic. Digital infrastructure for this purpose will include digital classrooms, expertise-driven online teaching models, AR/VR technologies to overcome gaps in physical teaching and lab infrastructure, uniform assessment schemes across schools, career counseling sessions and teacher training to become skilful at new-age technologies. According to the NSS conducted by the National Statistical Office in 2016- 17, only 23.4 percent of people in cities and only 4.4 percent of people in villages have computers. In all, only 23.7 per cent of people in India have access to the internet. It is 42 percent in urban areas and only 14.9 percent in rural areas. Only 11 per cent of students in this country have online services. This will continue to be a major challenge in the next decade.

Conclusion:
Education is a country's lifeline, and it has to be given more importance than defense in any country. The higher education sector plays an essential role in today's dynamic business, industry, cultural, political, economic and social environment. Its utility and applicability should always grow. To conclude we can say that the NEP 2020 made a full attempt to design a policy that

considers diverse viewpoints, global best practices in education, field experiences and stakeholders' feedback. The mission is inspirational but the implementation roadmap will decide if this will truly foster an all-inclusive education that makes learners industry and future ready. The quality higher education has the objective of developing human beings who are responsible for creating better society by means of improved human value-based discipline, and respecting each other for growth and prosperity. Quality higher education also makes everyone to contribute to discovering new technology, adopting new technology, or promoting new technology which can contribute to the progress of society. It is expected that the new education policy which is research focused, will accelerate the attainment of the above objectives and makes every stakeholder as innovator.

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