



Original Article

Role of NEP in Higher Education

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Abstract

National Education Policy-2020 implemented by the Government of India drastically changed earlier set parameters of higher education in India. It is shifting paradigm in the field of education basically. It also promotes holistic development of the stakeholders and getting overall knowledge by choosing almost out of the track streams. It focuses on skilful development of employability of the student. Promotion of online education and strengthening skill, digital and vocational education is also one of the key parameters of the policy. The NEP aims to make Indian higher education more relevant and future-ready by making it globally competitive while ensuring that it addresses the local, national, and global challenges of the 21st century. It has the potential significantly to transform the landscape of higher education by fostering a more inclusive, flexible, and innovation-driven system.

NEP aims to address the evolving needs of both students and the nation by combining a focus on multidisciplinary education, research and innovation, global partnerships, inclusivity, and vocational training. The overall vision promises to shape a dynamic and future-ready higher education ecosystem while implementation challenges.

Keyword's: Higher education, holistic development, stakeholders, employability

Introduction:

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, implemented by the Government of India, has dramatically altered the established parameters of higher education in India. It represents a fundamental paradigm shift in the field of education, promoting the holistic development of stakeholders and encouraging comprehensive knowledge acquisition by allowing students to choose from diverse streams. A key focus of the NEP is on developing students' skills for enhanced employability. The policy also prioritizes the promotion of online education and the strengthening of skill, digital, and vocational education.

The NEP aims to make Indian higher education more relevant and "future-ready" by ensuring it is globally competitive while simultaneously addressing local, national, and global challenges of the 21st century. It has the potential to significantly transform the higher education landscape by fostering a system that is more inclusive, flexible, and innovation-driven. The policy seeks to meet the evolving needs of both students and the nation by emphasizing multidisciplinary education, research and innovation, global partnerships, inclusivity, and vocational training. While there are implementation challenges, the overall vision of the NEP promises to shape a dynamic and future-ready higher education ecosystem.

The National Education Policy (NEP) aims to overhaul the educational landscape and bridges the gaps in India's educational system, focusing on innovation, research, inclusivity, and internationalization. It also plays a transformative role in shaping the future of higher education. Following are some important aspects that show how NEP impacts higher education:

1. Holistic, Multidisciplinary Education:

The NEP promotes a shift from the traditional, siloes disciplinary structure to a more flexible and interdisciplinary approach. It allows students to combine different fields of study, fostering critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity. For example, a student can study subjects from science, arts, and social sciences simultaneously, enhancing their learning experience.

2. Prominence on Research and Innovation:

The policy proposes to increase public investment in research and development (R&D), encouraging universities and colleges to focus on creating new knowledge, innovations, and technologies that can contribute to societal growth.

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It seeks to improve the quality and quantity of research in higher education institutions (HEIs).

Research funding: The policy suggests increasing funding for research innovative and creating more robust frameworks for collaboration between academia and industry.

Research culture: It emphasizes creating a culture where research is encouraged at not just graduate and post-graduate levels but all levels of education.

3. Online Education and Digital Integration:

The NEP includes the promotion of online education platforms, digital classrooms, and e-learning resources and stresses the integration of technology in higher education. This type of shift, in making higher education more accessible to remote and underprivileged students, is especially important.

Digital literacy: The policy aims to equip students with the skills needed for the digital age by fostering digital literacy.

Open online courses: The development of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) to provide quality education to students across the nation is encouraged.

4. Educational Internationalization:

By encouraging universities to collaborate with global institutions the NEP advocates for greater international cooperation in higher education. The exposure of students and faculty to international ideas, practices, and research is enhanced by NEP.

Global partnerships: To facilitate a two-way exchange of ideas, the policy encourages top-tier global universities to establish campuses in India and vice versa.

5. Focus on Employability and Skills Development

The policy emphasizes the need to enhance the employability of graduates by equipping them with both academic knowledge and practical skills.

Vocational education: The NEP aims to create a workforce that is ready for the challenges of the global job market by introducing vocational training and skill development programs in higher education institutions.

Internships and industry linkages: It encourages HEIs to provide opportunities for students to gain hands-on experience through internships, field work, and industry collaborations.

6. Equity and Inclusion

The NEP ensures that students from marginalized communities, such as those from economically weaker sections (EWS), Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), and Other Backward Classes (OBC), have greater access to higher education and highlights the importance of promoting equity, inclusivity, and social justice in education.

Scholarships and financial support: Increasing scholarships and financial aid to ensure that no student is left behind due to financial constraints also taken into consideration.

Local languages Inclusion: Offering education in regional languages, which helps in making education more inclusive for students from non-English-speaking backgrounds is also emphasised.

7. Governance and Autonomy Reforms:

To become more autonomous of higher education institutions in their decision-making, governance, and curriculum development, the NEP encourages them by decentralizing authority, universities can tailor programs and policies to better suit the needs of their students and the challenges of the future.

Administrative and Academic freedom: Institutions will have greater flexibility in designing their own academic frameworks and administrative policies, fostering innovation and creativity.

Accountability and quality: There will be an increased emphasis on accountability, ensuring that institutions meet national and international standards of quality.

8. Focus on Quality Assurance

The NEP advocates for a National Higher Education Regulatory Authority (NHERA) to regulate, oversee, and improve the quality of higher education in India. This body will replace the fragmented regulatory system with a unified framework, ensuring consistent standards across universities and colleges.

Accreditation: To ensure that institutions should maintain high standards of teaching, learning, and research, the policy focuses on improving the accreditation process.

9. Promotion of Sustainable Practices:

The role of higher education in promoting sustainability is also emphasized. It encourages institutions to engage in research and teaching related to environmental sustainability, renewable energy, and climate change, making students more aware of their role in addressing global challenges.

Let's dive deeper into specific aspects of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 as it pertains to higher education. Each of the key areas in the NEP is designed to bring about a fundamental shift, both in terms of the structure and quality of higher education in India. Below is a more nuanced breakdown of these reforms:

1. Holistic and Multidisciplinary Education:

The NEP 2020 breaks away from the rigid, discipline-based, and compartmentalized structure that has traditionally characterized Indian higher education.

Particulars:

Incorporation of Knowledge: The NEP visualizes students' ability to choose from a wide range of subjects across various disciplines like science, humanities, arts, social sciences, and vocational courses rather than being stick-up into a particular track. This promotes creativity and allows students to build a more comprehensive skill and knowledge.

Example: A student pursuing a B. Sc. in Chemistry could take courses in Philosophy, Economics, or even Performing Arts and literature if they wish.

Four Year Undergraduate Program: A significant shift or promotion is the introduction of a four-year undergraduate program with options for exit points after one, two, or three years, which gives students more flexibility to explore their interests.

Exit Points: After one year: Certificate, after two years: Diploma, after three years: Degree, and after four years: Bachelor's Degree with Research. The emphasis is on research that is the key to fostering critical thinking.

2. Better Focus on Research and Innovation:

Research, with a deep focus on encouraging higher education institutions to build a robust research culture, is one of the cornerstones of the NEP.

Particulars:

Increased Research Funding: By both the public and private sectors, the policy proposes to increase funding for research. This would include more grants for universities and the establishment of dedicated research centres.

Example: The National Research Foundation (NRF) is proposed, which would act as an apex body to coordinate and fund research activities across various disciplines in India.

Associations with Global Institutions: NEP stresses the importance of research in associations between Indian institutions and global universities. This opens the doors to share resources, funding, and best practices, as well as enhancing the global visibility of Indian institutions.

Example: Joint research programs are encouraged, especially in areas like AI, nanotechnology, and renewable energy, where Indian universities can be a partner with leading global universities.

3. Digital Education and Technological Integration:

A key thrust to bridge geographical and socio-economic barriers of the NEP 2020 is integrating technology into the education system.

Particulars:

Digital Infrastructure: Not only to deliver high-quality content but also enable virtual classrooms, online evaluations, and remote mentorship, the NEP envisions robust digital platforms. The idea supplements traditional face-to-face teaching and to create a blended learning model where online education.

MOOCs and E-Content Creation: Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and virtual labs are to be established to promote quality education. National platforms such as SWAYAM will be further expanded to offer top-tier courses in a variety of fields, making them accessible to a wider range of students across India.

Example: The National Educational Alliance for Technology (NEAT) aims to bring together Ed-Tech companies to develop affordable digital tools for the education sector.

Online Degree Programs: The NEP allows full-fledged online degree programs, provided they meet rigorous standards. Particularly for working professionals and rural students, this has been especially pertinent given the growing need for flexibility in education.

4. Internationalization of Higher Education

To adopt international best practices and collaborate with foreign institutions, the NEP encourages higher education institutions in India.

Particulars:

Foreign Universities in India: The NEP pursues to create a policy environment that will allow top global universities to set up their campuses in India. This would not only elevate the quality of Indian education but also attract international students to India.

Example: Offering courses that align with global standards, a foreign university like Harvard, MIT, or Oxford could set up a branch in India.

Indian Universities Abroad: At the same time, Indian universities will be encouraged to establish collaborative research and educational partnerships abroad, which would increase their visibility and global standing.

Transfer of Credit: For making it easier for Indian students to pursue part of their education abroad, NEP 2020 envisions allowing students to transfer their credits between domestic and international institutions.

5. Strengthening Skills Development and Vocational Education:

Academic education alone cannot meet the needs of India's rapidly evolving job market. NEP places a heavy emphasis on vocational education and skills development in higher education.

Particulars:

Vocational Education in Universities: The policy pushes for integrating vocational education at the higher education level. Vocational courses in areas such as automotive engineering, healthcare, agriculture, IT, and hospitality management will be offered by the Universities.

Example: A student pursuing a degree in MBA could simultaneously take vocational courses in AI programming, block-chain technology, or smart city design to make them industry-ready upon his/her graduation degree.

Industry Collaboration: For students' acquiring not just theoretical knowledge but practical, market-driven skills, the NEP emphasizes close industry-academia collaborations.

Example: To give students' direct access to internships, mentorships, and live projects, collaborative programs with industries in sectors like automotive, AI, or biotechnology could be initiated.

6. Inclusion, Equity and Access:

NEP's emphasis on making higher education accessible to all is a significant part, regardless of their socio-economic background, caste and or gender.

Particulars:

Affordability: The policy calls for expanding the public funding for scholarships and financial aid. To ensure that students from disadvantaged backgrounds do not miss out on higher education opportunities, Institutions are also encouraged having more need-based scholarships.

Example: To promote gender equity, post-matric scholarships will be enhanced to support SC/ST/OBC students, and more targeted support for girl students.

Inclusivity and Language: The NEP advocates for teaching in Indian languages at all levels, including higher education. This aims at inclusivity and to provide students in rural and non-English-speaking areas with a chance to excel in their native languages, making education more relevant to them.

Example: To ensure that students from diverse linguistic backgrounds can pursue higher education in their language of comfort, Universities will be encouraged to offer courses in multiple languages.

7. Institutional Autonomy and Governance:

The NEP 2020 envisions a radical change in how higher education institutions (HEIs) are governed.

Particulars:

Institutional Autonomy: To innovate and design their curricula according to the needs of the students and the industry, Universities will be granted more academic and administrative autonomy. The idea is to break free from the rigid, bureaucratic control exercised by regulatory bodies.

Example: Institutions could have the freedom to design specialized courses in emerging areas like quantum computing, genomics, or sustainability, without the need for central approval.

Academic Credit Bank: The NEP proposes an Academic Credit Bank, which is intended to offer greater flexibility in completing a degree, where students can store their academic credits earned from various courses (online, offline, or abroad) and use them when applying for degrees.

8. Accreditation and Quality Assurance:

Focusing on standardization, monitoring, and transparency, the NEP addresses the long-standing issue of quality in India's higher education sector.

Particulars:

National Higher Education Regulatory Authority (NHERA): To set standards and overseeing the accreditation process, NHERA, the new body will ensure quality in higher education institutions.

Example: Institutions that receive accreditation from bodies like the NAAC (National Assessment and Accreditation Council) will be evaluated rigorously based on their teaching, research, infrastructure, and output.

National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF): To push the institutions to improve their standards across various parameters like research output, faculty quality, and internationalization, NIRF framework will continue to assess and rank universities and colleges.

Conclusion:

The NEP-2020 has the potential to transform significantly the landscape of higher education in India. It aims to make Indian higher education more relevant and future-ready by fostering a more inclusive, flexible, and innovation-driven system. The NEP could elevate India's higher education system, making it globally competitive while ensuring that it addresses the local, national, and global challenges of the 21st century, if it is fully implemented.

The NEP 2020 offers a bold reimagining of India's higher education system. It aims to address the evolving needs of both students and the nation by combining a focus on multidisciplinary education, research and innovation, global partnerships, inclusivity, and vocational training. The overall vision promises to shape a dynamic and future-ready higher education ecosystem while implementation of the same and challenges remain.

The NEP 2020 positively change and shift the paradigm of traditional education system which is imposed on Indian Knowledge System, especially during last two hundred years, and will help in enriching and glorifying the heritage of our original ancestral educational knowledge set-up. It will surely change entire educational mind-set of the society and beneficial especially to the career of the youth of the country.

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Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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