HIGHER EDUCATION AS PER NEP-2020: KEY HIGHLIGHTS, IMPLEMENTATIONAL STATUS, CHALLENGES, AND SUGGESTIONS

Rupali Rachana Patra, Rahul Kumar Nandi

Research Scholar

P.G. Department of Education

Fakir Mohan University, Balasore, Odisha, India

Abstract

The latest National Education Policy (NEP)-2020, is nation's 3rd educational policy published on 30th July 2020 under the supervision of K. Kasturirangan and T.R. Subramanian. The unfinished agenda of the previous policies namely NEP-1968 and NEP-1986 is appropriately dealt with in this policy. It envisions to transform India, into an evenhanded and dynamic knowledge society, by equipping exquisite education to all, and there by India become a universal and powerful contributor to knowledge. NEP-2020 introduced considerable changes in the educational system by redesigning school education, higher education, adult education, professional education, and other key areas of education. This policy contemplating to renovate the higher education system through more flexible, holistic, and multidisciplinary approach for quality education and excellence. This paper endeavor to explore the implementational status of higher education system of India as per NEP-2020, the challenges faced by the stakeholders, and contribute handful of recommendations for the improvement of the education system.

Keywords: *Higher Education, NEP-2020, Highlights, Implementational status, Challenges, Suggestions.*

Introduction

Education is the most important investments of a country on its future. It is a compelling instrument of social change which will lead to quality health and livelihood, contributes to social solidity, and direct durable economic upturn. one of can make in its future. Although education includes teacher education, school, and higher education, etc., the Indian higher education system has an ancient history and it emerged through different periods. The current higher education system of India traces its roots back in the British period of education. India is the 3rd greatest publicly funded higher education system of the world, beside the United States and China. As per University Grant Commission (UGC), our country has 55 central universities, 456 state universities, 50 deemed universities, and 421 private universities till 2022. In accordance with "All India Survey on Higher Education" (AISHE) 2019-20, the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of higher education system in India is 27.1 percent. This study focuses on the higher education sector of India as per NEP-2020, tries to figure out the challenges comes before the stakeholders of education and give appropriate suggestions and recommendations to overcome them.

Regarding NEP-2020

NEP 2020 is developed to foster education among the citizens of India. It covers the altogether the education system starting from elementary level to university level wrapping all the geological regions of India. This policy aims to reconstruct the Indian education system and works an asset of the Government of India to cater the progressive demand of the 21st century. There are five fundamental verticals of this policy: Affordability, Accessibility, Quality, Equity, and Accountability, to safeguard excellence in learning. Although it tried to encounter every aspect of the education system very efficiently, but its approach towards reengineering the higher education system of India is extremely appreciable. It focuses on several facets of the higher education system namely; Quality Universities and Colleges, Institutional Restructuring and Consolidation, Holistic and

Multidisciplinary Education, Motivated, Energized and Capable Faculty etc. The policy is determined to bring impactful and enduring changes in the higher education organization of India through its vibrant, energized, and impactful features. It also aims to expand the state expenses on education from 4% to 6% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in no time.

Objectives of the study

The prime objective of this research is to analyze the implementational status of higher education in India as per NEP-2020. The study also summing up the challenges faced by the stakeholders, and give recommendations for the refinement of the higher education system.

Research methodology

The research comes under the scope of descriptive study. The researcher collected secondary data using purposive sampling method, from various journals, magazines, websites, publications etc. The available data was further examined and reviewed to arrive at the inferences and conclusions.

Key Highlights of NEP regarding higher education

NEP-2020 made a lot of reforms and new developments in higher education sector of India. A few of its important features related to higher education are given below;

I. **Increase GER**
   The policy aimed to increase the GER of higher education including vocational education to outstretch at least 50% by 2035, through the expansion of open and distance learning and improving the quality of education.

II. **Foreign Universities construct campuses in India**
   Top 100 universities from all over the world will be promoted to set up their campuses in India. This initiative will help the students to get right amount of exposure to the evolving needs of the 21st century.

III. **National Research Foundation (NRF) to be set up in India**
   NRF will be formulated to catalyze quality academic research works. It will help in enculture interest towards research through suitable stimulus and recognition of outstanding research works.

IV. **Establishment of Higher Education Commission of India (HECI)**
   A HECI will be composed to re-energize and administer the higher education sector. It will work as an umbrella like regulating body having 4 verticals namely; National Higher Education Regulatory Council (NHERC), National Accreditation Council (NAC), Higher Education Grants Council (HEGC), and General Education Council (GEC).

Table-1 (4 verticals of HECI)

Serial No.	HECI Verticals	Function
1	NHERC	Creating and implementing higher education regulations
2	NAC	Accreditation to academic institutions
3	HEGC	Funding for academic and research activities
4	GEC	Standard setting for academia

V. **Provision of financial support for students**
   National Scholarship Portal will provide financial support to meritorious students belongs to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes, and other Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDG). This portal will trace the advancement of the students' who are obtaining scholarships.

VI. **Administering motivated, energized, and capable faculties**
   As it is said that students are future of the nation and it molded in the hands of teachers. Thus, NEP-2020 acknowledges the importance of quality engagement of faculties to achieve greater success in higher education sector. Numerous actions have taken to attain the best, stimulated, and proficient faculties in Higher Education Institutions (HEI).

VII.   Introduction to Academic Bank of Credits (ABC)

Multiple entry and exit programs are introduced for students who wish to drop out in mid of the course. Their credits will be transferred to ABC and degree will be awarded from a HEI considering those credits.

VIII.   Holistic Multidisciplinary Education

The policy takes a good initiative towards holistic and multidisciplinary education system. This approach will be helpful in making well-rounded students.

➢ **Vision behind this**

From the ancient history of India, it is noticeable that, primeval universities such as Takshashila and Nalanda had a tradition of holistic and multidisciplinary learning. NEP-2020 tried to brought back the "liberal arts" which is the kind of knowledge that is necessary in 21st century. The ambition of holistic and multidisciplinary education is to deepen the rational, creative, social, physical, emotional, and ethical capacities in a unified way inside the students. This type of education acts as a catalyst in generating proficient individuals possessing critical 21st century abilities in every field. Insightful and adjustable curriculum structures having multiple entry and exit points enable creative combinations of disciplines. Hence, removes rigid boundaries between the disciplines and will create new prospects for lifelong learning. Multi-disciplinary universities and colleges will initiate action towards first-rate, comprehensive, and integrative education. Pliability will be offered to students in curriculum and course options, along with a specialized subject or subjects. At all the HEIs departments in Language, Art, Dance, Literature, Music, Theatre, Education, Mathematics, Philosophy, Statistics, Sociology, Economics, Sprots and other subjects will be established and strengthen for stimulating multidisciplinary education and environment. To attain the holistic aspect of education, students of HEIs will be facilitate internships in collaboration with regional industries, businesses, artisan, craftsman, etc. It also assists research apprenticeship with faculties of HEIs/Research Institutions, for the active involvement of students with hands on experience. The length of UG programs will be of 3 or 4-years duration, having multiple entry and exit options owing appropriate certification.

Table-2 (UG Exit Options)

Option No.	Options	Academic Recognition
1	After 1st year of UG program	Certificate
2	After 2nd year of UG program	Advanced Diploma
3	After 3rd year of UG program	Bachelor's Degree
4	After 4th year of UG program	Bachelors with Research

The 4-year Bachelor's program allows the opportunity to experience a holistic and multidisciplinary education system which allows to store and carry forward the academic credits attained from various HEIs. Further, all the HEIs will be flexible to offer various type of Master's programs. Multi-disciplinary Education and Research Universities (MERU) will be established which aim to achieve highest global standards in quality education.

Implementational status of Higher Education

multiple initiatives NEP-2020 shall be taken in a systematic and harmonized manner by multiple government organizations namely; Ministry of Education, CABE, State Governments/Union Territories, etc. This policy comes up with different time periods for the implementation of important themes and subthemes. The activities of department of higher education concentrated under 9 different themes. There are 17 different Expert Groups

and 20 Sub-groups of Experts have been formed on these themes regarding several sub-themes. SARTHAQ (Students' and Teachers' Holistic Advancement through Quality Education) initiated on 8th April 2021 is a far-reaching initiative under Nep-2020. It formulates activities that delineates 297 tasks, compose agencies responsible for those tasks, and prescribes the agenda and deliberate outcomes of those tasks. The situation in higher education is evolving on a very slower rate. The 4-year multidisciplinary undergraduate program has not yet been included in the UGC approved degrees list. ABC has been turned out, for a number of institutions, accretion of credits is expected to be a benefit for the poverty-stricken students. UGC initiates guidelines for multiple entry and exit in HEIs. This policy stipulated the formation of HECI and 4 verticals under it but no such bill is ready yet. All the HEIs and other stakeholders trying to make plans for the successful implementation of NEP-2020. In August 2021, Karnataka became the first state to acknowledge and execute the policy and constantly trying to dissolve any issues within the new framework. It precedes by Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Telangana, Maharashtra, and other states. Again, in April 2022, UGC approved simultaneous dual degrees, both in physical and online modes. Whereas Goa would implement 100% NEP from 2023 in higher education.

Challenges

The path to successfully implement NEP-2020 is plentiful of challenges and obstacles which should be closely monitored by the centre and state governments. Some of the major challenges are given below;

- The giant size and diversity of the education system of India makes implementation a challenging task. For example, the higher education sector includes 3.38 crore students in almost 1000 plus universities, 40000 colleges, and 10,800 stand-alone institutions. Hence, a country wide execution of the policy will be a tough practice. This means creating a division of work and shared responsibility among the stakeholders is a major challenge.
- One of the biggest challenges for the stakeholders is the articulation and delivery of the amended curriculum and pedagogy at ground level.
- NEP-2020 openly challenges the rigid curriculum and rote learning system which is continuing from a decade. Thus, it will be difficult for the stakeholders of education to shift from memorization to critical thinking and experiential learning. This requires change in attitudes among teachers, students, and parents.
- Political polarisation proves as another challenge towards the implementation of the giant policy. The failure of the centre to bridge trust with the states is a major hurdle in the path of success.
- The privatization of higher education sector is increasing day by day. The role of private sectors is very critical in delivering the inclusive vision of the policy.
- Less allocation of financial resources and funds towards education. Although NEP-2020 recommended 6 % GDP be allocated towards education but it is not going beyond 3%. The budget is lessened by 6% in 2021-22.

Suggestions

- As NEP-1986 was preceding by Program of Action (POA)1992, NEP-2020 also needed a POA to facilitate faster implementation.
- An absolute change in attitudes of the stakeholders of education can be done through capacity building programs and reorientation programs for the better implementation of multidisciplinary education.
- Government of India should prepare a systematized and comprehensive roadmap for the key stakeholders of education.
- Government should recognise the contribution of private sectors in education and felicitate them as equal partner in the implementation of NEP-2020.
- Adequate financial resources should be allocated towards education sector. And strategic human resource management practices should be done by the HEIs.
- Successful collaboration, cooperation, and partnership of all the stakeholders is necessary to overcome the obstacles and make the policy a great success.
- Bottom-up approach should be adopted in the implementation process and allow the grassroot level stakeholders to put forward their suggestions.
- All the stakeholders of education should be trained with technology enhanced knowledge to overcome the gaps between physical learning and e-learning.
- There should be well defined directions for the composition of various statutory bodies at institution level and prepare institutional developmental plans.
- Educational leaders should use full authority for achieving the goals of education.

Conclusion

NEP-2020 wrapped up almost all aspects of education and presented high spirited endorsement towards the attainment of quality education. This policy empowers the education system with its path breaking recommendations and aim to metamorphose India into a knowledge super power. The success of the new education policy is completely relied on its implementation process.

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