

HIGHER EDUCATION IN ODISHA WITH REGARD TO NEP 2020: READINESS AND CHALLENGES

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Paper Received On: 20 MAR 2024

Peer Reviewed On: 28 APRIL 2024

Published On: 01 MAY 2024

Abstract

The paper discusses the present scenario of higher education institutions in Odisha with regard to their readiness, possibilities and challenges in implementing NEP 2020 suggestions and provisions. The paper is in thematic design with covering different reviews of the related work. It discusses the GER of previous years in higher education. Apart from it the paper widely covers the current scenario of teachers in different colleges of Odisha. The possible challenges and difficulties are also discussed here in details in achieving the targets set by NEP 2020.

Key Words: Higher Education, NEP 2020, Challenges, Possibilities, Readiness

Introduction

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, a comprehensive framework for transforming India's education system, has been lauded as a significant step in promoting an inclusive, holistic, and multidisciplinary approach to education. However, implementing NEP 2020 in higher education institutions (HEIs) in Odisha, a state on India's eastern coast, presents a unique set of problems and potential. Odisha, with its rich socio-cultural fabric and geographical elements, has made great progress in higher education. The state has a diverse range of institutions, including one Central University, five institutes of national importance, and

several state and private universities. However, the state's higher education sector is also dealing with challenges of access, quality, and equity. The implementation of NEP 2020 in Odisha's higher education institutions needs a detailed analysis of the state's willingness to embrace the policy's transformative ambition. The policy's emphasis on multidisciplinary education, increasing Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER), and the incorporation of technology into education necessitate significant infrastructural and pedagogical adjustments. The state's readiness to make these changes is critical to the successful implementation of NEP 2020.

However, adopting NEP 2020 at Odisha's HEIs presents numerous problems. Infrastructure development, teacher training, curriculum change, and guaranteeing equitable access to quality education are among the major challenges that must be addressed. The digital gap, a critical issue in the state, presents a significant barrier to the policy's aim of widespread ICT integration in education. Furthermore, the policy's goal of increasing the GER to 50% by 2035 requires a substantial growth of the higher education sector. This expansion, together with the goal of ensuring quality education, necessitates substantial financial commitment, novel methodologies, and strong administrative systems.

In summary, implementing NEP 2020 at Odisha's HEIs is a challenging endeavour that necessitates strategic planning, resource mobilization, and collaborative efforts from all stakeholders. While there are major hurdles, good policy implementation has the potential to revolutionize the state's higher education landscape, opening the way for a more inclusive, holistic, and quality-driven education system.

Rationale of the Study

The current status of higher education in Odisha can provide valuable insights into the impact of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. The need to highlight the current status of higher education in Odisha, which has seen significant changes, including an increase in enrolment ratio and a rise in SC and ST students. The NEP 2020 has brought about a paradigm shift in the Indian education system, emphasizing multidisciplinary and holistic education, institutional autonomy, quality research, continuous professional development of teachers, technology integration, internationalization, and restructuring of governance and regulatory architecture. The paper can also suggest future directions for higher education in Odisha, including recommendations for policy makers, educators, researchers, and stakeholders to enhance the quality of education.

"Implementation of NEP 2020 in Higher Educational Institutions" (Bhandwalkar 2023): This study presents a comprehensive analysis of the implementation of NEP at Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in India. The NEP promotes a student-centred multidisciplinary, and comprehensive approach to education. "Impact of NEP 2020 on Higher Education: A Case Study of Odisha" (Das 2024). This case study investigates the influence of NEP 2020 on higher education in Odisha, with an emphasis on the policy's consequences for institutional governance, curriculum, teaching, and evaluation.

Implementing NEP 2020 in

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 includes several important features and provisions for higher education in India, including Odisha. Here are some of the key features:

1. **Flexibility of Subjects:** The policy allows learners to customize their learning paths and programs. It eliminates rigid distinctions between arts and sciences, curricular and extra-curricular activities, vocational and academic streams¹.
2. **Multidisciplinary Approach:** The policy prioritizes a comprehensive education encompassing sciences, social sciences, arts, humanities, and sports¹.
3. **Emphasis on Conceptual Understanding:** The policy shifts away from exam-centric education and towards promoting creativity and critical thinking¹.
4. ****Use of Technology**:** The policy advocates for the extensive use of technology in teaching and learning, eliminating language barriers and increasing access. has the world's largest education system, followed by China and India (ranked third overall). India, a developing country, has faced challenges in education since independence. The Indian educational system faces many challenges, but it also has many opportunities.

Equity and Inclusion: The policy guarantees full equity and inclusion as the foundation of all educational decisions.. The policy proposes a 'light but tight' regulatory framework to promote educational system integrity, transparency, and resource efficiency.¹³ The policy aims to increase the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education to 50% by 2035⁴.

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Multiple Entries/Exit Points: The policy permits multiple entries and exit points with appropriate certification. The policy proposes establishing an Academic Bank of Credits to facilitate credit transfers.

These features aim to make India's higher education system, including that of Odisha, more comprehensive and learner-centered. However, the actual implementation may differ depending on the specific context.

Faculties and Qualification: Faculty members in Odisha's higher education institutions often have strong educational levels because these institutions strive to deliver superior education. Below are some general guidelines:

1. Ph.D. Degree: The majority of faculty members in Odisha's higher education institutions have earned a Ph.D. in their areas. This is particularly true for permanent academic posts in universities and independent colleges.
2. Master's Degree: A Master's degree is frequently the minimal qualification for faculty posts at several universities. Technical institutions, such as engineering colleges, sometimes need a Master's degree in the applicable engineering discipline¹.
3. NET/SLET qualifying: For specific positions, especially in arts, commerce, and science colleges, qualifying in the National Eligibility Test (NET) or the State Level Eligibility Test (SLET) is mandatory.
4. Experience: In addition to academic credentials, experience in teaching and research is valued. Senior positions often require multiple years of teaching experience¹.
5. Extra certificates: Depending on the discipline, extra certificates may be necessary. Engineers may prefer certificates in specific technology or tools¹.

Infrastructure and Institutions

Odisha has one Central University, five institutes of national importance, 16 State Universities, three Deemed Private Universities, six private universities, and one State Open University¹.

There are 1,087 colleges in the state, of which 33% are Government colleges and 67% are private, aided, and unaided colleges¹.

Faculty and Enrolment

The average enrolment in the colleges is 659, whereas 680 is the national average¹.

The estimated enrolment during the year is around 9.95 lakh, of which girls constitute 47% against 49% at the all-India level¹.

Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER)

The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education of Odisha declined to 21.7% for the 2019-20 academic session as compared to 22.1% in 2018-19².

While the ratio among male students came down to 23% from 24.2% in 2018-19, there was a marginal improvement among females from 20% in 2018-19 to 20.3% in 2019-20².

The GER among Scheduled Caste students dropped to 19.7% in 2019-20 from 20% in 2018-19, while the GER among Scheduled Tribe students increased from 12.8% (2018-19) to 13.5% (2019-20)².

Odisha's GER was around 5% less than the national average of 27.1% in 2019-20².

Provisions for ICT Integration in HEI: The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 of India acknowledges the critical role of information and communication technology (ICT) in altering higher education. Here are some significant provisions regarding ICT integration in higher education according to the NEP 2020:

1. **Technology Use and Integration:** NEP 2020 prioritizes utilizing technology in teaching and learning, eradicating language barriers, boosting access for Divyang students, and educational planning and management¹. The article emphasizes the importance of researching new technologies such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, blockchains, smart boards, mobile computing devices, adaptive computer testing, and educational software and hardware¹.
2. **Online and Digital Education:** The policy intends to optimize and extend existing digital platforms and ongoing ICT-based educational activities to satisfy the current requirements and future problems. It emphasizes the importance of ensuring fair use of technology.
3. **Teacher Professional Development:** The NEP 2020 encourages and grows DIKSHA, as well as other education technology programs. DIKSHA/SWAYAM plays a crucial role in promoting integration between schools and higher education¹.
4. **Role of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs):** HEIs should perform research on disruptive instructional materials, including online courses, and evaluate their influence on certain areas¹. Universities plan to provide Ph.D. and Masters programs in core disciplines like Machine Learning, as well as multidisciplinary subjects like "AI + X" and professional domains like health care, agriculture, and law.
5. **Access and Equity:** NEP 2020 aims to use ICT to increase access to higher education, especially in underserved and remote locations. The goal is to close the digital gap and provide equal access to quality education².

These rules aim to modernize administrative processes, promote e-governance technologies, and use data analytics for informed decision-making in higher education.

Challenges in Integrating ICT in Higher Education in Odisha

Incorporating Information and Communication Technology (ICT) into higher education in Odisha faces numerous challenges:

- 1. Infrastructure:** A lack of necessary infrastructure is a significant issue. Many institutions may lack the appropriate gear, software, and internet connectivity to properly integrate ICT.
- 2. Affordability:** Implementing and maintaining ICT tools can be costly, posing a barrier institution.
- 3. Digital Literacy:** Not all students and faculty members may possess the digital abilities required to properly use ICT. Inadequate digital literacy can impede ICT incorporation.
- 4. Attitudes and Beliefs:** Teachers and students may be reluctant to adopt ICT. Teachers' pedagogical views can cause stumbling obstacles in the integration of ICT.¹³.
- 5. The Quality of Faculties:** The digital skills can only be channelised by the competent teaching staffs of Higher Education. Many colleges and universities have senior teaching faculties who hesitate to adapt to changes.
- 6. Technical help:** A lack of technical help can be problematic. Institutions want individuals who can troubleshoot difficulties and offer assistance when needed¹³.
- 7. Rapid Obsolescence of Technology:** Technology evolves quickly, making it difficult to stay current.

These difficulties underline the importance of strategic planning, proper finance, capacity building, and ongoing monitoring and evaluation in the integration of ICT into higher education in Odisha. It is crucial to emphasize that solving these problems can result in major benefits, such as improved teaching and learning experiences, increased access to education, and student preparation for the digital age.

Present number of Teachers working in Higher Education Institutions in Odisha:

According to the most recent data available, the number of teachers in higher education institutions in Odisha is as follows.

Odisha had 43,730 instructors in 2022, including 3,523 professors, 4,424 associate professors/readers, 29,661 lecturers/assistant professors, 3,888 tutors/demonstrators, and 1,987 temporary teachers. The gender distribution is also interesting. Odisha has 16,186 female faculty members in all higher education institutes, versus 25,787 males across all positions.

Major Challenges in Implementing the Provisions of NEP 2020 in HEI in Odisha: Several problems exist when implementing the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 in higher education in Odisha:

1. Infrastructure and Accessibility: Expanding higher education infrastructure to support the additional enrolment anticipated by NEP 2020 is a significant task. This covers the demand for additional physical buildings, libraries, laboratories, and faculty recruiting.⁵

2. Quality of Teaching and Research: Ensuring the quality of teaching, research, and innovation is another key concern. The successful implementation of NEP 2020 in higher education will need a united effort by all parties.³

3. Curriculum Modification: Modifying the curriculum to align with the National Curriculum Framework is a substantial difficulty. Educators should reconsider the learning content rubric and update textbooks accordingly

4. Funding: The NEP 2020 proposes an increase in education funding, from 4.6% to 6% of GDP, equivalent to approximately INR 2.5 lakh crores per year. A significant amount of investment is needed to develop schools and universities around the country, select instructors and professors, and cover operational expenditures.

5. Opening New Universities: One of the policy's stated objectives is to increase the Gross Enrolment Ratio in higher education by 2035. Opening one new university per week over the next 15 years is a significant challenge¹.

6. Bringing Children Back to School: The NEP 2020 aims to re-enrol 2 crore children who are currently out of school. Accomplishing this over 15 years involves the establishment of approximately 50 schools every week, which is sustainable.

Conclusion

To summarize, the implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 in Odisha's higher education sector offers both enormous prospects and formidable hurdles. The policy's emphasis on transdisciplinary education, institutional autonomy, and quality research is consistent with worldwide higher education trends and has the potential to change the educational landscape in Odisha.

However, various problems must be overcome before the policy may be implemented successfully. These include providing enough infrastructure, training and maintaining qualified professors, incorporating technology into education, and ensuring equal access to education for all members of society. The state government, educational institutions, and other stakeholders must collaborate to overcome these difficulties.

The readiness of Odisha to implement the NEP 2020 is obvious from the steps already undertaken, such as the increase. Odisha's readiness to implement the NEP 2020 is evidenced from actions previously implemented, such as an increase in enrolment ratio and a growth in the number of SC and ST students. However, additional work is required to fully achieve the potential of the NEP 2020.

The figures on the number of teachers in Odisha's higher education institutions show a favourable trend, but instructors must continue to improve professionally in order to be equipped with the skills required in the NEP era. Odisha has the opportunity, in light of the NEP 2020, to reimagine its higher education industry and emerge as India's education leader. The road is difficult, but with concerted work, it is possible.

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Cite Your Article as

Asmit Kumar Sahoo, & Asmit Kumar Sahoo. (2024). HIGHER EDUCATION IN ODISHA WITH REGARD TO NEP 2020: READINESS AND CHALLENGES. *Scholarly Research Journal for Interdisciplinary Studies*, 12(82), 143–151. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.11193272>