REIMAGING HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN INDIA- INLIGHT OF NEP-2020

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Abstract

The New Education Policy 2020, introduced on July 29, 2020, represents the first major education policy of the 21st century. In a developing country like India, higher education plays a vital role in fostering human development. Since India's independence, its higher education sector has expanded significantly, contributing to the nation's growth by providing specialized knowledge and skills. This study examines the impact of NEP 2020 on the higher education system and highlights the challenges and issues currently faced by this sector in India. Utilizing secondary data from journals, books, reports, websites, and newspapers, the study employs descriptive analysis aligned with its objectives. NEP 2020 aims to modernize the higher education system in India and is expected to bring substantial advancements. With its progressive approach and awareness of the current socioeconomic context, NEP 2020 has the potential to transform India into a global educational hub by 2030, provided it is effectively implemented.

Key words- NEP-2020, Higher Education, Issues and Challenges

INTRODUCTION

The National Education Policy 2020, launched on July 29, 2020, marks the first education policy of the 21st century. It emphasizes five key principles for promoting continuous learning: accessibility, affordability, equity, quality, and accountability (Chandra, 2021). Designed to meet the needs of individuals who constantly seek new knowledge and skills for societal and

economic success, the policy calls for a comprehensive review and reform of all aspects of the educational system, including governance and regulation. NEP 2020 aims to guarantee that high-quality education and lifelong learning opportunities are available to everyone, leading to suitable employment and productive careers in alignment with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 2030 (Inamdar & Parveen, 2020). The policy advocates for substantial reforms in elementary, secondary, and higher education to prepare future generations for success in the evolving digital economy (Aithal & Aithal, 2020). It provides a broad framework for education spanning from primary through higher education and vocational training across both rural and urban areas of India. The policy's goal is to transform India's educational system by 2021, significantly altering it to boost enrollment and promote equitable, internationally recognized educational standards. NEP 2020 focuses on various educational dimensions, such as early childhood education, curriculum and pedagogy reform, examination process changes, and teacher training (Aithal & Aithal, 2019). The consultation process for the policy began in January 2015 under a committee led by former Cabinet Secretary Subramanian. A panel headed by former ISRO director Krishnaswamy Kasturirangan submitted the NEP proposal in June 2017, and it was finalized in 2019. The Draft New Education Policy (DNEP) 2019 was released by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) after extensive public consultations, comprising 484 pages. The goal of NEP 2020 is to establish an India-centric education system that directly contributes to transforming the country into a vibrant knowledge society by delivering high-quality education to all (Goel, 2020, p.15).

Higher education plays a vital role in developing nations like India by fostering human development. Since India gained independence, higher education has expanded significantly. It contributes to national progress by spreading specialized knowledge and skills. Key focus areas include providing a flexible curriculum through an interdisciplinary approach, allowing multiple exit points in a four-year undergraduate program, advancing research, increasing faculty support, and promoting internationalization (Das & Barman, 2023). The study's objectives are based on these goals.

OBJECTIVES

1. To highlight the significant changes in the higher education system according to NEP 2020.
2. To study the current issues and challenges of the present higher education system.
3. To study the impact of the New Education Policy 2020 on higher education.

METHODOLOGY

The study was purely descriptive in nature which was based on qualitative work and the data used in this study were secondary. The study only used theoretical information; therefore, content analysis of the accessible materials was performed. Therefore, the researchers have collected the data from various journals, books, reports, magazines, internet sites, newspapers etc.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

Significant Changes in Higher Education System According to NEP 2020

Higher education's organizational structure will change once the NEP 2020 is fully implemented. Here is a list of some of the significant modifications made in this regard:

Four-year Undergraduate Programme

The undergraduate programme is now a three-year curriculum. However, the New Education Policy (2020) will offer a four-year undergraduate degree.

• Certificate Programme for the first year.

• Advanced Diploma Programme, second year

• Bachelor's degree in the third year.

• Bachelor's degree with research in the fourth year.

Multiple entry and exit options

The four-year, interdisciplinary Bachelor's degree offers multiple entry and existing options. For instance, if a student completes only one year of his undergraduate degree before leaving the institution, he or she may enter the programme in the second year rather than begin again (Gupta & Gupta, 2021).

Academic Bank of Credit

The Academic Bank of Credit is one of the fundamental components of National Education Policy 2020's Credit-Based system, which is a crucial component. When a student enrols in a programme and is evaluated, all of his marks or credits will be put to the credit bank against his/her name, precisely as how a person's bank account represents his/her debits and credit information. As a result, individuals can easily monitor and see their credits anytime they want to (Gupta et al., 2021).

Termination of the M.Phil.

programme After completing a master's degree, the M.Phil. is now regarded as a higher education degree. This situation has changed as a result of the New Education Policy. The

M.Phil. degree will no longer be offered; hence the higher education system will only provide bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees (Gupta & Choubey, 2021).

One year of Master degree programme

Students who complete their undergraduate programme in four years, including a year of research activity, can get their master's degree in one year. On the other hand, students who finish their undergraduate studies in three years, indicating they did not complete their last year of research, are still eligible to apply for admission to the master's degree programme. However, their master's degree will only take two years to complete (Kumar, 2021).

The cap for private institution fees

Several Indian colleges demand very costly fees in order to provide higher education. Consequently, many students need help to afford further education and drop out. Hence, to raise enrollment to 50% by 2035, the government implemented CAP on the fees for private institutions, colleges, and universities. That implies that there will not be any more fees above the CAP. For example, if the CAP is 50,000 rupees, an institution or university may charge only the CAP, regardless of the subject in which the students are enrolled. This has aimed to make education more affordable (Kumar, 2020).

Current Issues and Challenges in India's Higher Education System

Higher education plays a critical role and faces several pressing issues in India. Some of the prominent challenges include:

Enrollment

The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education in India stands at only 25.2%, which is relatively low compared to both developed and major developing countries (Kakodkar, 2022).

Quality

The system suffers from issues such as rote learning, inadequate focus on employability, and lack of skill development.

Inadequate Infrastructure

Despite significant progress, many institutions still lack basic amenities and infrastructure (Menon, 2020).

Lack of Access and Equity

There is a significant disparity in access to higher education across different regions and socio-economic groups.

Faculty Shortage

The shortage of qualified faculty members is another critical issue affecting higher education.

Financing Issues

Insufficient funding leads to a decline in the quality of education in institutions.

Impact of New Education Policy 2020 on Higher Education

Transforming the Regulatory Framework

 NEP 2020 aims to overhaul the regulatory system by creating distinct, autonomous bodies for regulation, accreditation, funding, and academic standards. This includes the Higher Education Commission of India (HECI), which will oversee these functions through its various branches, such as the National Accreditation Council (NAC) and the Higher Education Grants Council (HEGC) (Das, 2023).

Internationalization

 The policy encourages the establishment of foreign universities in India, which is expected to boost the local education sector. With over 900 universities and 40,000 colleges, the current GER of 26.3% in Asia is lower than that of other BRICS nations and much lower compared to Europe and North America. NEP 2020 aims to address this gap by enhancing educational facilities and international collaborations (Das, 2020).

Financial Support for Students

 NEP 2020 proposes expanded financial aid for students through the National Scholarship Portal, including support for stipends and accommodation (Gupta, 2020; Banerjee et al., 2021).

Access and Equality

 The policy aims to improve access to high-quality education for all students, particularly those from socio-economically disadvantaged groups (SEDGs) (Majhi, 2021).

Evaluation System

NEP 2020 will reform the evaluation process by introducing a more flexible and continuous assessment model, replacing high-stakes exams with the Choice-Based Credit System (CBCS) (Banerjee et al., 2021).

Vocational Education

 The policy seeks to change the perception of vocational education, emphasizing its value and integrating it more effectively into the education system (Wankhade, 2021).

Research and Innovation

NEP 2020 emphasizes increasing investment in research and development and fostering industry-academia partnerships to boost innovation and skill development. It also aims to enhance understanding and protection of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) (Banerjee et al., 2021).

National Education Technology Forum (NETF)

NEP 2020 plans to establish the NETF to support the use of quality Ed-tech tools in education. This includes hosting local EdTech products on open-source platforms with strong cyber security measures to protect student privacy (Kumar, 2020).

CONCLUSION

Higher education plays a pivotal role in shaping a nation's economy, social standing, technological advancement, and human behavior. The National Education Policy 2020 aims to address these challenges by improving enrollment rates, enhancing quality, and making education more affordable and accessible. By allowing international institutions to set up campuses in India and fostering interdisciplinary education, NEP 2020 seeks to modernize the higher education system and prepare India for future challenges. Effective and comprehensive implementation of NEP 2020 is crucial for its success and transformative impact on higher education in India (Aithal & Aithal, 2020; Das & Barman, 2021).

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