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Higher Education Institutions in India and New Education Policy 2020: An Analytical Approach

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Abstract

Higher education is a significant form of investment in human capital. It is a very important factor to the economic growth of a country. Castells rightly regarded it as “engine of development in the new world economy” The last National Education Policy of 1986 had certain challenges which we could not overcome and thus our Higher Education Institutions lags behind in global recognition. To promote quality education in Higher Education Institutions there was need to bring in reforms on priority basis. The National Education Policy 2020 is a milestone policy document in the current era. It seeks to change the entire education system in India, wherever possible immediately or in a phased manner. This research paper endeavours to analyse the National Education Policy 2020 in light of the challenges encountered by the present higher education system.

Keywords : National Education Policy, Higher Education Institutions

Higher education is crucial for building a stronger society, curbing poverty, and boosting shared prosperity. Higher education contributes to knowledge, advanced skills, competencies and research. The higher education system includes University, College and Stand-Alone Institutions. According to report of the All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) in 2019-20, there are 1043 Universities, 42343 Colleges and 11779 Stand Alone Institutions.

Despite of the large number of Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) in India it does not fulfill the global standards of quality education due to various reasons. Thus Indian Universities lag much behind in top ranking Universities of the World. For higher education to be instrumental for development in India, its Universities must be globally ranked.

To maintain the global standards of our education there is an urgent need to bring immense reforms in our education system right from school education to higher education. The National Education Policy (NEP)2020 provides a complete reform to the existing education system from school level to higher education level.

Some of the challenges encountered in the higher education system in India include fragmented higher educational structure, least emphasis on cognitive skills and learning outcomes, inflexible separation of

disciplines, low standards of undergraduate education due to large affiliating universities etc. The restructuring in the higher education system through the NEP 2020 shall overcome these challenges and promote quality in higher education. This research paper endeavours to analyse the National Education Policy 2020 in light of the challenges encountered by the present higher education system.

The prime objective of the NEP 2020 is to implement and strengthen multidisciplinary, inclusive and technology-based learning that shall be accessible to all. It focuses on imparting higher education that enables personal accomplishment for students and prepares them to pave a good future. To achieve global standards in higher education the NEP 2020 emphasises internationalization of higher education. The policy also gives autonomy and flexibility to create curriculum and internal assessment methods to have an interactive learning experience for the students. The key features of the NEP 2020 for Higher Educational Institutions include :

Quality Universities and Colleges with Multidisciplinary and Holistic Approach :

Under the New Education Policy 2020, the current HEIs shall be consolidated under two categories Multidisciplinary Universities and Autonomous Colleges which has more than 3,000 students. However this will be done gradually and the proposed time period to become multi-disciplinary is by 2030 and the intake of students shall be 3,000 and more by 2040.

The Multidisciplinary Universities shall be further be classified into two types

- (i) Research-oriented Universities
- (ii) Teaching-oriented Universities

All existing Colleges shall turn into autonomous College or get absorbed as Constituent College of University. By 2035 the gross enrolment ratio in HEIs including vocational education shall increase from 27.1% (2019-20) to 50%. To recognize and motivate the HEIs maintaining highest quality in education the Government proposes to give more incentives to HEIs. In compliance with the required norms, the nomenclatures i.e. Deemed to be University, Affiliating University, Central University, etc. will be replaced by 'University'.

To have a holistic and multidisciplinary education approach and to inculcate research culture, research shall be included in Postgraduate as well as Undergraduate level. For attaining a holistic and multidisciplinary education, the curricula of all HEIs shall contain credit-based courses and projects in environmental education, value-based education etc. The emphasis of teaching pedagogy in HEIs shall be on communication, presentation, discussion, debate, research, analysis, and interdisciplinary thinking.

The NEP 2020 also proposes to establish Academic Bank of Credit which digitally stores the academic credits of all registered candidates earned from various recognized HEIs (SWAYAM & ODL mode) which shall be included while awarding degrees to the students either by the college or university. There shall be four years Bachelor degree with multiple exit options, one or two years Master's degree which shall be based on the number of years of Bachelor degree as four or three respectively, and an option to do Ph.D. for four years Bachelor degree with research. In two years Master degree shall have focus on only research in the second year, One year Master degree shall be for four years Bachelor degree holders, and Five years integrated Bachelor/Master degree. To pursue Ph.D. the prerequisite shall be either a Master's degree or a four year Bachelor's degree with research. There M.Phil. programme shall be discontinued.

All HEIs shall lay emphasis on research and innovation by setting up

- (i) Start-up Incubation centres
- (ii) Technology development centres
- (iii) Centres in frontier areas of research
- (iv) Centre for Industry-academic linkage, and
- (v) Interdisciplinary Research Centres including humanities and social sciences research.

Support for Students :

Faculty shall have the autonomy in curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment within the parameters of higher education qualifications that ensures consistency across institutions and programmes and across the ODL, online, and traditional 'in-class' modes.

There shall be a shift from the traditional teacher centred teaching model to student centred teaching & learning process where in Choice Based Credit System shall be revised. The existing examination system which includes semester end system shall be replaced by continuous and comprehensive evaluation examination system. Each institution will integrate its academic plans into its Institutional Development Plan (IDP) and shall be committed to the holistic development of students

To ensure the holistic development of students all HEIs shall have professional academic and career counseling centres with counsellors available to all students. The students shall be encouraged for Online Distance Learning (ODL) courses which shall be taken into account in the credit system.

Internationalization :

To make the higher education system of our country at par with the global standard of quality, degree programmes shall include in-class teaching, online teaching and ODL components with 40:30:30 ratio model. Thus international students shall be attracted and the credits acquired by the students from foreign universities will be counted for the award of a degree in India.

Memorandum of Understanding with foreign countries shall be initiated to facilitate Research/teaching collaborations and faculty/student exchanges with foreign institutions. Indian universities with excellence shall be motivated to set up campuses abroad, and similarly, selected universities in the world shall make way to operate in India.

In education system, students being the key stakeholders, opportunities shall be provided for their participation in sports, culture/arts clubs, eco-clubs, activity clubs, community service projects, etc. All HEIs shall ensure providing medical facilities for all students in their respective institutions

Financial assistance shall be provided to meritorious students belonging to Scheduled Class, Scheduled Tribe, Other Backward Class, and other Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups. The National Scholarship Portal shall be to support, promote, ascertain the progress of students receiving scholarships. Private HEIs shall be encouraged for more of free ships and scholarships to their students.

Faculty in HEIs :

Faculty being the next important stakeholder in educational institutions, to motivate them the HEIs shall provide various facilities in teaching learning process equipped with educational technology. The teacher-student ratio shall not be in excess and transfer of faculty across institutions shall be avoided to promote stability. The Faculty shall be empowered to adopt innovative methods of pedagogy and evaluation methods for students. Excellence in faculty shall be rewarded however they shall also be accountable for

not maintaining the basic rules. The parameters shall be laid in the Institutional Development Plan to gauge the excellence of faculty for their promotions.

The Equity Principle and Inclusion in Higher Education :

The New Education Policy seeks to provide equitable access to quality education to all students, with a special emphasis on Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups. Similarly HEIs shall take further measures to implement the initiatives taken by the Government through that Institutional Developmental Plans.

Teachers Education :

The policy mentions that all stand-alone Teachers Education Institutions (TEIs) shall be converted as Multi-disciplinary. For further development and to attain the levels of integrity and credibility of the teaching profession, the Regulatory System shall be authorised to take stern action against substandard and dysfunctional teacher education institutions that do not have even the basic educational criteria. Action shall be taken against such TEI after giving one year for remedy of the breaches. By 2030, only educationally sound, multidisciplinary, and integrated teacher education programmes shall be in force.

By 2030, there shall be two years B.Ed. programme for 3 years Under Graduate and one-year B.Ed. for four year Under Graduate and those having Master's degree in other subjects, M.Ed. will be one year with research focus. The faculty profile in Departments of Education will be diverse with Ph.D.'s in different areas. All interested senior or retired faculty will be utilized short or long term for guiding, mentoring, or professional support for research/training/innovation. A separate National Mission for Mentoring will be established.

Vocational Education :

Through this policy there shall be integration of vocational education programmes into mainstream education in all education institutions in a phased manner which will be in consonance with the Sustainable Development Goal. A National Committee for the Integration of Vocational Education (NCIVE) shall be constituted by MHRD for this purpose. By 2025, it is expected that minimum 50% of learners shall have opportunity for vocational education. The Bachelor of Vocational Education degrees will continue to exist, but in this policy under the Choice Based Credit System, vocational courses shall be made available to students pursuing Bachelor's degree programmes in other disciplines including the 4-year multidisciplinary Bachelor's programme. To implement this HEIs shall offer short-term certificate courses in various skills including soft skills. 'LokVidya' shall be made available to students through integration into vocational education courses.

National Research Foundation :

The New Education Policy seeks to promote research culture in HEI and therefore proposes to establish National Research Foundation (NRF) to fund research in universities and colleges. The NRF shall ensure to provide an equitable funding for research which shall go through the peer-reviewed body, This shall facilitate research culture by providing incentives for and recognition of outstanding research, and it shall undertake major initiatives to promote research at State Universities and other public institutions. Currently institutions funding research such as DST UGC, DBT etc. and other private/philanthropic organizations will continue.

Transformation of Regulatory System of Higher Education :

There shall be complete transformation of the regulatory system of higher education to ensure that the distinct functions of regulation, accreditation, funding, and academic standard setting will be performed by distinct, independent, and empowered bodies. There shall be four institutional structures set up as four independent verticals under one umbrella institution i.e. the Higher Education Commission of India (HECI)

The first vertical of HECI shall be the National Higher Education Regulatory Council (NHERC). It shall function as the common, single point regulator for the higher education sector including teacher education but excludes medical and legal education. The second vertical of HECI shall be a 'meta-accrediting body', called the National Accreditation Council (NAC). It shall function as a recognized accreditor for HEIs. The third vertical of HECI shall be the Higher Education Grants Council (HEGC), which will provide funding and financing of higher education. The fourth vertical of HECI will be the General Education Council (GEC), which will frame expected learning outcomes for higher education programmes.

Curbing Commercialization of Education :

Commercialization of Education violates the right of the students to seek education. Different mechanisms with proper system of accountability shall prevent the commercialization of higher education. This shall be a key priority of the regulatory system. There shall be transparency in these financial matters and the system shall provide grievance- mechanisms to the aggrieved public. The accreditation system developed by National Accreditation Council shall also provide a monitoring mechanism of this system, and National Higher Education Regulatory Council shall take this as one of the key objective of its regulatory system. All HEIs - public and private - shall be treated on par within this regulatory regime.

Effective Governance and Leadership for Higher Education Institutions :

The Policy aims to make all HEIs in India to become independent self-governing institutions by adopting a suitable system of graded accreditation and autonomy, in a phased manner. Appropriate measures shall be taken at all HEIs to ensure leadership of the highest quality to promote institutional excellence. A Board of Governors shall be established after being awarded with appropriate graded accreditations.

Conclusion

For success of any initiative of the Government in the form of piece of legislation, policies etc. its effective implementation is very important. To bring the NEP 2020 into action to overcome the challenges of the existing higher education system the cooperation of all the stakeholders of HEIs is the need of the hour. Some of the policies shall be implemented in a phased manner. The reforms of NEP 2020 will definitely make our higher education system at par with the global standard. Subject-wise implementation committees of experts in cooperation and consultation with relevant Ministries shall be set up at Central and State levels for overall implementation of the Policy in accordance with principles stated above to achieve the goals of the Policy. It is presumed that by 2030-40, the entire policy will be in an operational mode.

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