Challenges And Prospects Of Implementing The National Education Policy 2020 In Higher Education: A Teacher Educator Perspective

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ABSTRACT

The National Education Policy of India 2020 (NEP 2020), approved by the Union Cabinet of India on 29 July 2020, outlines the vision of the new education system of India. It replaces the previous National Policy on Education, 1986. The vision of the policy is to build an education system rooted in Indian ethos that contributes directly to transforming India by providing high-quality education to all, thereby making India a global knowledge superpower. This research paper explores the challenges and suggestions for the implementation of the National Education Policy 2020 in Higher Education. The NEP 2020 is a comprehensive reform policy aimed at transforming the education system in India, with a focus on holistic and multidisciplinary education, experiential learning, technology integration, and skill development.

KEY TERMS: NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY 2020, CHALLENGES, HIGHER EDUCATION, IMPLEMENTATION,EDUCATION REFORM

INTRODUCTION

The Ministry of Human Resource Development formed a committee chaired by Dr K. Kasturirangan to prepare the National Education Policy. The Committee was constituted in June 2017. The Committee submitted its report on May 31, 2019. The NEP 2020 covers all stages of education, from preschool to higher education, and it proposes significant changes in the education system, with a focus on universal access, equity, quality, multidisciplinary education, vocational education, research and innovation, autonomy, and accountability. The NEP 2020 is based on the principles of inclusiveness, diversity, and excellence, and it aims to promote a holistic and integrated approach to education that emphasizes the development of critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills. The NEP 2020 also recognizes the critical role of teachers in the education system and proposes significant reforms in teacher education and professional development. The NEP 2020 is a transformative policy that aims to build a strong, equitable, and vibrant education system that can meet the challenges of the 21st century and promote the overall development of the country.

The National Policy on Education covers elementary and university education in urban as well as rural India.

- ❖ The very first policy for education was promulgated in 1968 with the second one following in 1986.
- ❖ The first NPE was based on the recommendations of the Education Commission (1964-66). This policy sought to have a 'radical restructuring' of India's educational system and equalizing opportunities for education for all, to accomplish national integration and better economic and cultural development.
- ❖ The NPE also called for compulsory education for every child until the age of fourteen, as mentioned in the Indian Constitution.
- ❖ It also aimed at providing enhanced training and improving teachers' qualifications.

Some relevant points from the official NEP 2020

1. NEP 2020 is the 21st Century's first education policy in India.
2. The development of the creative potential of each student is emphasized in the National Education Policy 2020.
3. The NEP 2020 mentioned ancient scholars like Charaka and Susruta, Aryabhata, Bhaskaracharya, Chanakya, Madhava, Patanjali, Panini, and Thiruvalluvar.
4. The principles of National Education Policy 2020 as mentioned by the government are:
   - o Flexibility
   - o No hard separations between subjects, curricular and extra-curricular activities
   - o Multi-disciplinary education
   - o Conceptual understanding
   - o Critical thinking
   - o Ethical Values
   - o Teachers as the heart of the learning process
   - o The strong public education system

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is a comprehensive education reform policy that aims to transform the education system in India. The policy has several key features, including a focus on holistic and multidisciplinary education, experiential learning, technology integration, and skill development. However, the implementation of the policy faces several challenges, particularly at the state level.

Pradhan and Gurramkonda (2023) examined the challenges of implementing the NEP 2020. The study found that the NEP 2020 presented significant opportunities for improving the education system in the region. However, the study also identified challenges such as the lack of infrastructure, teacher shortage, and difficulties in implementing multilingual education.

Ahuja (2023) conducted a study on the topic '**Implementation of NEP 2020 @DEI BOARD** and explored the challenges and prospects of implementing the NEP 2020 in the Indian context. The study identified challenges such as inadequate funding, limited stakeholder engagement, and the need for teacher training as major challenges in implementing the policy.

Agrawal and Bhatt (2023) Conducted a study on the topic '**Procrastination in Implementation of NEP 2020**' and found that the policy recognizes the role of technology in improving the quality of education. The literature highlights the potential of the NEP 2020 to transform the education system in India. However, the implementation of the policy faces several challenges, particularly at the state level. Effective engagement, capacity building, monitoring, and resource mobilization are critical for the successful implementation of the policy.

The fundamental principles that will guide both the education system at large, as well as the individual institutions within it are:

• **recognizing, identifying, and fostering** the unique capabilities of each student, by sensitizing teachers as well as parents to promote each student's holistic development in both academic and non-academic spheres;

• according to the highest priority to **achieving Foundational Literacy and Numeracy** by all students by Grade 3;

• **flexibility,** so that learners can choose their learning trajectories and programs, and thereby choose their paths in life according to their talents and interests;

• no hard separations between arts and sciences, between **curricular and extra-curricular activities**, between vocational and academic streams, etc. to eliminate harmful hierarchies among, and silos between different areas of learning;

• **multidisciplinary and holistic education** across the sciences, social sciences, arts, humanities, and sports for a multidisciplinary world to ensure the unity and integrity of all knowledge;

• emphasis on **conceptual understanding** rather than rote learning and learning-for-exams;

• **creativity and critical thinking** to encourage logical decision-making and innovation;

• **ethics and human & Constitutional values** like empathy, respect for others, cleanliness, courtesy, democratic spirit, spirit of service, respect for public property, scientific temper, liberty, responsibility, pluralism, equality, and justice;

• **promoting multilingualism** and the power of language in teaching and learning;

• life skills such **as communication, cooperation, teamwork, and resilience**;

• focus on regular **formative assessment** for learning rather than the **summative assessment** that encourages today's 'coaching culture';

• extensive use of **technology in teaching and learning**, removing language barriers, increasing access for Divyang students, and educational planning and management;

• **respect for diversity** and respect for the local context in all curriculum, pedagogy, and policy, always keeping in mind that education is a concurrent subject;

• full equity and inclusion as the cornerstone of all **educational decisions** to ensure that all students can thrive in the education system;

• **synergy in curriculum across all levels of education** from early childhood care and education to school education to higher education;

• teachers and faculty as the heart of the learning process – their recruitment, continuous professional development, positive working environments, and service conditions;

• a **'light but tight'** regulatory framework to ensure integrity, transparency, and resource efficiency of the educational system through audit and public disclosure while encouraging innovation and out-of-the-box ideas through autonomy, good governance, and empowerment;

• **outstanding research as a corequisite** for outstanding education and development;

• continuous review of progress based on **sustained research and regular assessment by educational experts; National Education Policy 2020.**

• **a rootedness and pride in India**, and its rich, diverse, ancient, and modern culture and knowledge systems and traditions;

• education is a public service; access to quality education must be considered a basic right of every child;

• **substantial investment** in a strong, vibrant public education system as well as the encouragement and facilitation of true philanthropic private and community participation.

NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY (NEP) 2020 AT THE HIGHER EDUCATION LEVEL

NEP 2020 for Higher Education

The National Education Policy 2020 for higher education aims to transform the existing higher education system in India. This policy emphasizes promoting interdisciplinary studies, introducing new subjects, and providing flexibility in courses and fresh opportunities for students. It aims to increase the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education, provide multiple entry and exit options, and allow students to choose courses according to their interests and aptitude.

The policy envisions the setting up of a National Research Foundation, a National Education Technology Forum, and the setting up of more Higher Education Institutions in the country. The policy is aimed at creating a holistic and flexible education system that is adaptive to the needs of the 21st century.

National Education Policy 2020 for Higher Education Highlights

- ❖ The policy aims to increase the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education to 50% by 2035.
- ❖ Around 5 crore seats are to be added in higher education.
- ❖ The policy proposes the establishment of a National Research Foundation (NRF) to fund and promote research in all disciplines.
- ❖ The policy recommends the establishment of a single regulator for higher education, called the Higher Education Commission of India (HECI), to replace multiple regulatory bodies.
- ❖ The policy proposes the introduction of a four-year multidisciplinary undergraduate degree, with multiple exit options and opportunities for skill development.
- ❖ The policy proposes the establishment of a National Educational Technology Forum (NETF) to promote the use of technology in higher education.
- ❖ The policy recommends the development of a credit-based system for degree programs, which would enable students to pursue multiple degrees or programs simultaneously.
- ❖ The policy proposes the establishment of a National Academic Credit Bank (NAC-Bank) to facilitate the transfer and accumulation of academic credits across institutions.

NEP 2020 for UG Courses

According to the NEP, undergraduate students will now have the opportunity to choose from several exit points in their program. For instance, a student may decide to leave after the first year, earning a certificate. If they leave after the second year, they will receive an Advanced Diploma for completing two years of study. Completing the third year will result in a Bachelor's Degree, while the fourth year will merit a Bachelor's of Research, as usual.

NEP 2020 – UG Exit Options

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

NEP 2020 for M Phil

MPhil or Master of Philosophy is a postgraduate academic research program of two years duration. Candidates can pursue an MPhil course from any stream – Humanities, Commerce, Science, Law, Teaching, etc. In an MPhil course, aspirants need to study theory as well as practical subjects. Apart from this, candidates also need to conduct research and present their research findings.

After completing the MPhil course candidates can consider pursuing a PhD. With the introduction of four years of integrated bachelors with research program government has discontinued the MPhil degree which was earlier considered to be a junior research degree. MPhil or Master of Philosophy is a postgraduate academic research program that is of two years duration.

Now students can directly pursue the four-year integrated program to incline their career toward research. They do not need to do an MPhil after a master's to enroll for a PhD. They can directly enter in research area after clearing UGC NET, SET, or institute-specific entrance tests.

Features of the NEP 2020 for Higher Education

- ❖ **Interdisciplinary education**: The NEP 2020 proposes the breaking down of rigid boundaries between different academic disciplines and faculties. It encourages universities to offer multi-disciplinary courses that allow students to explore various subjects and fields of study.
- ❖ **Flexible curriculum and credit transfer**: The NEP 2020 recommends a flexible curriculum that allows students to choose from a range of courses and subjects to meet their interests and career goals. The policy also proposes a credit-transfer system that enables students to shift between institutions without losing academic credit, thereby boosting mobility and promoting academic excellence.
- ❖ **Research and innovation**: The NEP 2020 aims to make India a global hub for innovation and research by encouraging universities to prioritize research and increasing investment in science and technology. The policy also recommends the establishment of a National Research Foundation to support and fund research activities across all disciplines.
- ❖ **Vocational education and skill development:** The NEP 2020 recognizes the importance of vocational education and skill development in preparing students for the job market. It proposes the integration of vocational education into mainstream education, offering apprenticeships, and work-integrated learning programs to help students acquire relevant skills.

- ❖ **Online education**: The NEP 2020 acknowledges the importance of technology in education and proposes the development of a comprehensive digital infrastructure for education. It encourages universities to offer online courses and blended learning models to reach a broader student population and promote access to education.
- ❖ **Inclusivity and Equity**: The NEP 2020 places significant emphasis on promoting inclusivity and equity in education by addressing the needs of disadvantaged groups such as girls, low-income families, and students with disabilities. It also seeks to provide equal opportunities to students from all socio-economic backgrounds.

Challenges of National Education Policy 2020 for higher education

- ❖ **Overhauling of higher education system**: The National Education Policy 2020 proposes a major overhaul of India's higher education system. While this could potentially create a more streamlined and effective system, some stakeholders are concerned about the challenges that could arise during the transition.
- ❖ **Financing**: The policy proposes several new initiatives such as setting up of new universities, restructuring of the education system, and promoting online education. Implementing these will require significant funding, and the government needs to find ways to finance them without putting an additional burden on the taxpayers.
- ❖ **Bridging the Digital Divide**: The policy envisions promoting online education and making it accessible to all, including those living in remote areas. However, this will require bridging the digital divide, which remains a challenge in a country where many people still lack access to basic internet connectivity.
- ❖ **Faculty Development**: The policy places a strong emphasis on faculty development and training, but there is a shortage of qualified faculty in many areas of higher education, and it may take time for institutions to build the necessary capacity.
- ❖ **Equity**: While the National Education Policy 2020 seeks to promote equity and inclusion in higher education, there are concerns that some of the proposed measures, such as the four-year undergraduate program, may disadvantage students from marginalized communities or those with disabilities.

In conclusion, the National Education Policy 2020 is a comprehensive document that promises major reforms in higher education in India. The policy recognizes the importance of multidisciplinary education, research, vocational education, teacher education, and the use of technology in higher education. The policy aims to make India a hub for research and development, attract talent from around the world, and prepare students for the changing job market.

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