



PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES OF NEP-2020 IMPLEMENTATION IN HEIs IN NAGALAND

Mercy Hau
Assistant Professor
Department of History
Peren Government College
Peren Nagaland

Abstract

The new National Education Policy 2020 aims to transform the current education system in India. The policy envisions to provide quality education by promoting equity, inclusivity and by making skill-oriented learning platform for the students. This upgradation of the learning process will equip the students to face the challenges in future life. The Nagaland University also introduced this new NEP-2020 from the current year at the undergraduate level in the HEIs in Nagaland. With unique geographical set up and various infrastructural bottlenecks in Nagaland, the HEIs are facing various challenges regarding smooth implementation of the policy. On this backdrop, the current study aims to highlight the prospects and challenges faced by the HEIs in Nagaland after implementation of the policy.

Keywords: Higher Education, Digital gap, Learning path, Skill development, Cultural adaptation

Introduction

India has made remarkable progress in the higher education landscape over the last two decade and still has lot more to achieve in terms of overall enrolment as well as in its quality. The New Education Policy (NEP) 2020 plans to completely restructure the educational sector and realise the goal of universal access to education for all young students in India. It aims to transform the Indian education system completely from conventional to modern approach through diversification and integration approach. The policy envisions equity, inclusiveness and quality of education envisaged to transform the current education system in Nagaland with the rest of the other States in India. However, there is a complex terrain regarding the opportunities and difficulties for its implementation in Nagaland's higher education institutions (HEIs), a state with a distinct socio-cultural setting. The State is characterized by numerous impending factors such as geographical exclusion, infrastructural bottlenecks, manpower, technological factors etc, which makes it more difficult to realise the vision of achieving high growth rate economically and socially. It is also arguably agreed that the Nagaland University considered the urgency and the importance of the NEP and introduced the new system from the current semester (July Session) at undergraduate level, just to be in line with the other states in India and not lag behind others. Though the NEP is indispensable for the country's education system to catch up with the rest of the world, the move has been made in haste, especially for a state like Nagaland. In the State, most of the higher education institutions (HEIs) are facing acute shortage of physical infrastructure and manpower. Another issue being faced at present is changing the mindset of both the students and teachers to adapt to the new system coterminous with limited infrastructure and facilities is adding a burden to the HEIs in the State.

Aims and objective of the study:

The Nagaland University has implemented the NEP 2020 at the undergraduate level from the current semester in a phase manner. Despite numerous limitations and shortfalls in terms of physical infrastructure and manpower, the four years undergraduate program was introduced merely because the State must be in line with the rest of the States in India. This study makes an attempt to highlight the prospects of NEP 2020 in the higher education institutions (HEIs) in Nagaland and also capture the practical problems face by the HEIs in Nagaland post introduction of NEP 2020.

Methodology of study

This study is descriptive in nature. The study is based on secondary data gathered from various sources including government portals, websites, local dailies, publications, journals, bulletins, and other publications. The content of the study has been broken down into four sections- Introduction, prospects of NEP-2020, Challenges faced by the HEIs and conclusion. The inferences and conclusions were drawn from the analysis of the data.

NEP 2020- PROSPECTS

The NEP 2020 aims to transform the higher education system from conventional to more action and result oriented learning system in the HEIs. In a small state like Nagaland, despite various limitations, a successful implementation of the new NEP will completely transform the education system. The State has a huge potential to realise various goals such as increase in enrolment and retention ratio, enhance technology integration, promote entrepreneurship and employment opportunities, research and innovation, etc. Following are the major prospects that the new NEP can achieve and contribute to the people in the State.

Holistic Development:

NEP 2020 places a strong emphasis on developing students' critical thinking, creativity, and practical abilities in addition to their academic knowledge. This is consistent with State's goal of developing a world class educational hub. The State has a huge potential for human resource development and this NEP 2020 will provide a window to harness this potential. With cooperation from various stakeholders such as the government, public and the parents, the new NEP is expected to realise its goal of academic excellence.

Flexibility in Learning Paths:

In keeping with Nagaland's various communities, the strategy places a strong focus on subject flexibility. It enables students to pursue courses that are in line with their interests and professional goals, resulting in a more customized educational experience. A much-needed platform for the students in the State has been incorporated in the NEP 2020. For instance, multiple entry and exit in the undergraduate level will provide an opportunity for the economically weaker students to exit and continue and complete their studies even at a later stage after some gaps.

Development of Skills:

The new NEP 2020 acknowledges the significance of skill development. The policy's emphasis on including skill-enhancing courses can improve employability and match education with local requirements in Nagaland, where vocational skills are highly valued. The policy envisions to harness the skills and knowledge of the youths, and this will enlarge and diversify the employment avenues for the young graduates in Naga society. This will also open a new window for many fresh graduates to pursue entrepreneurship as their career in life and lessen the burden on the State government for unemployment issues. Many HEIs in the State have embarked on the path of skilling their students with vocational courses and the outcome of this skilling courses will be visible within few years from now on.

Interdisciplinary Approach:

In keeping with the Naga's cultural richness, NEP 2020 promotes an interdisciplinary approach. It promotes the incorporation of regional viewpoints, guaranteeing that education is more inclusive and pertinent to the socioeconomic environment of the State. This approach is going to benefit large sections of the people in the State especially the weaker sections of the society.

CHALLENGES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF NEP-2020

As the NEP 2020 comes into effect, the HEIs in the State are facing various challenges for the effective implementation of the new policy. Linguistic diversity, infrastructure and connectivity issues, digital gaps and unreliable power supply in remote areas are hindering smooth implementation of NEP in the State. The NEP mandates various stakeholders for continuous engagement of teachers, parents and government to achieve the NEP's desire goal but logistical and resource constraints pose a big hurdle in the effective implementation of the policy. Major challenges being faced by the Nagaland's HEIs post implementation of new NEP 2020 were highlighted below.

Cultural Adaptation:

The various indigenous communities of Nagaland each have their own distinct cultural identity. The task of modifying NEP to these unique cultures while upholding national standards calls for significant thought and community involvement. The unique socio-political condition of the State, marked by a history of insurgency and political instability, raises concerns about the smooth implementation of the policy and its sustainability in the long run. For now, it is the responsibility of the stakeholders to ensure that the NEP 2020 is adapted to the specific needs of people.

Infrastructure Development:

Nagaland's HEIs have a lot of infrastructure constraints. Putting NEP ideas into practice, such as creating interdisciplinary institutions, requires huge infrastructure investments that could be limited by budgetary constraints. Even prior to the implementation of the new policy in HEIs in Nagaland, the HEIs especially those public HEIs were facing shortage of facilities such as classrooms, labs, subject specialist faculty, etc. This burden has become more acute after the implementation of the NEP 2020 in HEIs in Nagaland. The stakeholders should give careful thoughts on the issue and act on priority basis to lighten the stress level on the HEIs in the State.

Shortage of Faculty:

The new NEP emphasizes how important teachers are to the educational ecology. Nagaland is struggling with teacher shortages especially in specific fields. There are many obstacles in the way of addressing this deficit and offering sufficient training that is in line with NEP's mission. Maintaining adequate teacher-student ratio ensures optimum teaching and learning capacity in educational institutions. This issue is more acute in the HEIs located in less advantage areas in the State.

Language Integration:

The policy promotes the use of regional tongues as a teaching medium. In Nagaland, where English is frequently the primary language, including local languages into the curriculum without sacrificing academic standards is a challenging task. The diversity of culture and language place another challenge to the stakeholders for effective implementation of the new policy. Due to resource constraints, the issue becomes more acute in the HEIs in Nagaland.

Proper Implementation Strategy:

It is observed that the Nagaland University has introduced the NEP 2020 at the undergraduate level without drawing out a robust implementation strategy. This is obvious from the fact that many colleges or departments of different discipline in the State's colleges are still facing difficulties to fully understand and need further guidance from the university regarding certain syllabus contents or course modalities or examination and evaluation patterns. These issues have already been raised by the State's teaching association ANGCTA (All Nagaland College Teachers Association) to the University for rectifying the existing ambiguity in the new policy. The University needs to relook at the existing framework of the system and give more clear and precise guidelines for effective implementation of the NEP 2020 in the HEIs in the State.

Digital Gaps:

The new education policy emphasised on digital education and e-learning platform. Although the new approach is likely to benefit every student and teaching community in one way or the other, yet a large section of the students and teachers will be affected. This is because, not all students have equal access to digital tools, internet facilities or resources require for online learning. Internet accessibility for online learning for

most of the students in rural areas of the State still remains a long cherish dream for many students in the State. This issue has been faced in the past as evident from the experience during Covid-19 lockdown periods. Another drawback observed from the practical point of view is that many teaching faculty in HEIs in the State, especially those senior faculty members who are on the verge of retirement from service and who lack proper knowledge of digital education are finding it quite difficult to adapt with the new techniques as introduced in the NEP 2020. Thus, it is pertinent to keep these issues in the minds of the policy makers for effective implementation and to realize the goal and objective of the inclusive education.

CONCLUSION

With unique culture, there is a dynamic interplay between local realities and national objectives about the opportunities and challenges of implementing NEP 2020 in Nagaland's HEIs. Although Nagaland's values are in line with the policy's holistic approach, cooperative efforts are needed to overcome infrastructure, teacher training, and cultural adaptation problems. The long cherish dream of the people for accessibility, equity, quality, affordable and accountability in the field of education in Nagaland could be realise soon with cooperation from various stakeholders and transform Nagaland into a vibrant knowledge society.

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