



Value Education In Higher Education In Assam: A Critical Analysis In The Context Of India's National Education Policy 2020

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Abstract: The growing ethical, social, and cultural challenges in contemporary societies have renewed global interest in value education within higher education. In India, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasizes the integration of ethical, constitutional, humanistic, and cultural values as a central objective of higher education reform. This study critically examines the position and practice of value education in higher education institutions in Assam, a region characterized by cultural plurality and socio-historical complexity. Using a qualitative, policy-analytic approach, the paper analyzes NEP 2020 provisions alongside institutional practices and regional realities in Assam. The study identifies gaps between policy intent and implementation, particularly in curriculum design, pedagogical practices, faculty preparedness, and assessment mechanisms. It argues that while NEP 2020 provides a comprehensive and progressive framework, effective realization of value education in Assam requires contextual adaptation, institutional commitment, and pedagogical transformation. The paper contributes to the discourse on value-based higher education by offering region-specific insights and policy-oriented recommendations relevant to developing and multicultural contexts.

Keywords: Value education, Higher education, NEP 2020, Assam, Holistic learning, Policy analysis.

1. INTRODUCTION

Higher education systems across the world are increasingly expected to respond not only to economic and technological demands but also to ethical, social, and civic challenges. The emphasis on employability and technical skills, though essential, has often marginalized the moral and humanistic dimensions of education. Consequently, value education has re-emerged as a critical concern in higher education policy and practice. In India, the National Education Policy 2020 marks a significant departure from earlier policy frameworks by explicitly foregrounding ethical, constitutional, and human values as integral to education. The policy envisions higher education institutions as spaces for holistic development, where academic excellence is complemented by character formation and social responsibility.

Assam, located in India's northeastern region, presents a unique context for examining the implementation of value education. The state's ethnic diversity, indigenous knowledge systems, and socio-political history demand a nuanced and contextualized approach to value-based education. This paper critically analyzes value education in higher education in Assam in light of NEP 2020¹

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Existing literature conceptualizes value education as a process aimed at developing ethical judgment, social responsibility, and civic consciousness among learners (Aggarwal, 2014; Pathak, 2012). International studies emphasize the role of higher education in fostering democratic values, intercultural understanding, and social cohesion (UNESCO, 2015).

In the Indian context, earlier education policies acknowledged value education primarily through moral instruction and civic education. However, scholars have noted the absence of systematic integration of values within higher education curricula (Kumar, 2018). Recent analyses of NEP 2020 highlight its holistic vision but caution against challenges related to implementation, teacher preparedness, and assessment. Region-specific studies on higher education in Assam focus largely on access, quality, and infrastructure, with limited attention to value education. This gap underscores the need for a focused analysis of value education in Assam within the NEP 2020 framework.

3. Research Gap and Objectives

Despite growing scholarly interest in NEP 2020, limited research has examined the regional implications of value education, particularly in culturally diverse states such as Assam. Existing studies often remain policy-centric, overlooking ground-level institutional realities.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To critically examine the conceptual foundations of value education in higher education.
2. To analyze NEP 2020 provisions related to value education.
3. To assess the status and challenges of value education in higher education institutions in Assam.
4. To propose context-sensitive strategies for strengthening value education under NEP 2020.

4. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative and interpretive research design. The methodology includes:

- Policy analysis of the National Education Policy 2020
- Review of secondary literature including academic journals, books, and reports
- Analytical interpretation of higher education practices in Assam
- The study is conceptual and analytical in nature and does not involve empirical data collection.

5. VALUE EDUCATION IN NEP 2020: A POLICY PERSPECTIVES

NEP 2020 conceptualizes education as a means of developing individuals who are ethically grounded, socially responsible, and culturally rooted. The policy emphasizes:

- Integration of ethical, constitutional, and human values across disciplines
- Promotion of Indian knowledge systems and indigenous traditions
- Experiential learning through community engagement and service-based activities
- Development of life skills, emotional intelligence, and social awareness

- These provisions reflect a shift from content-driven education to holistic and value-oriented learning.

6. Value Education in Higher Education in Assam

Higher education in Assam includes state and central universities, private institutions, and a large network of affiliated colleges. While recent reforms have focused on curriculum restructuring and multidisciplinary education, value education remains unevenly implemented.

In most institutions, value education is addressed indirectly through subjects such as environmental studies, political science, or sociology, and through co-curricular activities like NSS and NCC. However, these efforts often lack systematic integration with core academic programs and institutional learning outcomes.

7. CRITICAL DISCUSSION

i. Curriculum and Pedagogy:

The dominance of examination-oriented and discipline-centric curricula limits opportunities for reflective and interdisciplinary learning essential for value education. NEP 2020's vision of integrated learning has yet to be fully realized in Assam's HEIs.

ii. Faculty Preparedness:

Effective value education requires educators who are trained in reflective pedagogy and ethical discourse. Limited professional development opportunities hinder faculty capacity to translate policy objectives into classroom practice.

iii. Assessment Challenges:

Assessment frameworks in higher education prioritize cognitive achievement, leaving affective and ethical learning outcomes largely unmeasured. This weakens institutional commitment to value education.

iv. Contextual Relevance:

Assam's socio-cultural diversity necessitates locally grounded approaches to value education. Uniform policy prescriptions risk overlooking indigenous values, community practices, and regional realities.

8 IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Curricular Integration: Embed value education across disciplines rather than isolating it in standalone courses.
- Faculty Development: Institutionalize training programs on value-based and experiential pedagogy.
- Assessment Reform: Introduce reflective, portfolio-based, and community-linked evaluation methods.
- Community Engagement: Strengthen university-community partnerships to promote socially relevant learning.
- Contextual Policy Adaptation: Develop state-level frameworks aligned with NEP 2020 and regional needs.

9. CONCLUSION

Value education is essential for fostering ethical, inclusive, and socially responsible higher education systems. NEP 2020 provides a robust framework for integrating values into higher education, yet its effective implementation in Assam remains constrained by curricular, pedagogical, and institutional challenges. Addressing these challenges requires a sustained and context-sensitive approach that aligns national policy objectives with regional realities. Strengthening value education in Assam's higher education institutions is critical for realizing the transformative vision of NEP 2020 and for promoting holistic and inclusive development.

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