



ENFORCEMENT OF NEW EDUCATION POLICY 2020 IN CONVENTIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS-THREATS AND RESOLUTIONS

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Abstract : The need of a new education policy in India was being felt for long and its introduction in 2020 was the demand of time in the changing world scenario. In present times, we are living amidst the sea of new emerging knowledge fields, with the geographic boundaries shrinking, so our education system should certainly be in sync with the potent education systems of the world. The framework of NEP 2020 certainly promises to serve that purpose. But the question arises, does it reconcile with our 'mass education system', where even the higher education is thought to be 'for all', flooding the colleges every year with more and more students, but with no addition of teaching staff and infrastructure? Making vocational courses compulsory for everyone also poses a big challenge as per its feasibility and expediency in the present infrastructural situation of our conventional colleges.

Many challenges posed by NEP 2020 in conventional colleges are discussed in this paper, viz. Conducting exams twice a year in Semester system; internal evaluation, given 25% weightage of a course grade, with very high student-teacher ratio; running vocational courses genuinely in the spirit of NEP; lack of funds; accommodating and arranging classes for major and minor courses opted by students from other stream; practicability of online courses as regard to the access of internet to every student; future scope for students with certificate or diploma obtained in multi-exit option, etc. Few suggestions are also proposed for effective implementation of the policy fulfilling its objectives.

Index Terms : NEP 2020, conventional colleges, Mass education system, Student-teacher ratio, Semester system, internal evaluation, Internet access, Multi-exit option.

INTRODUCTION

The need of a new education policy in India was being felt for long and its introduction in 2020 was the fulfillment of hopes to move withtime and marchingwith the changing world scenario. Today we are living in the ocean of new emerging knowledge fields,with the geographic boundaries diminishing, so our education system should certainly resonatewith that of the developed countries of the world. Today the promising youth of our country is springing to international institutions in pursuit of best higher education, therefore it becomes more of a responsibility of the government today to provide that quality of education back home to stop continuous outflow of our best brains.

The new National Education Policy 2020(NEP 2020) introduced andapproved by the Union Cabinet of India on 29 July 2020 aims to transform India's education system. The new policy replaces the 1986 National Policy on Education. The policy is acomprehensive framework for elementary education to higher education as well as vocational training in both rural and urban India.

NEP's higher education policy proposes a 4-year multi-disciplinary bachelor's degree in an undergraduate programme with multiple exit options.Some key features of NEP are:

Multi-disciplinary education, Multiple exit options, compulsory vocational courses, semester system of examination, continuous internal evaluation, credit based course Structure, creation of Academic Bank of Credit, etc.

The framework of NEP 2020 certainly promises to serve that purpose, assumingly to be in sync with the potent education systems of the world. But the biggest question arises, does it reconcile with our mass education system in conventional colleges, where even

the higher education is thought to be 'for all', flooding the colleges every year with more and more students, but with no addition of teaching staff and infrastructure?

HISTORY OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA

The famous American writer and thinker has said, "India is the cradle of the human race, the birthplace of human speech, the mother of history, the grandmother of legend and the great-grandmother of tradition. Our most valuable and most instructive materials in the history of man are treasured up in India only."

It is believed and well documented that India had a functioning system of higher education as early as 1000 B.C. Even before the establishment of ancient universities, the knowledge was imparted from one generation to another through 'Shruti'-the word of mouth by the Rishi or Guru to his Shishyas and the tradition continued through remembrance. Later these were compiled into Vedas-the precious treasure of knowledge. In later Vedic period students stayed at the Guru's Ashram until their education was completed.

Later numerous universities were established which spread across the boundaries of India, like: Takshshila University in Gandhar, Telhara, Nalanda and Vikramshila universities in Magadh, SharadaPeeth temple University in Kashmir, Vallabhi University in Saurashtra, Pushpagiri University in ancient Kalinga, Kanthalloor Sala University in Tamilnadu, called Nalanda of South, Jagaddala and Somapura universities in Bengal, Morena golden triangle University in the Chambal division of Madhya Pradesh, etc. Students from across Aryavart and from around the world, places as far as Greece, Arabia, Persia, Tibet and China came and studied at these centres of higher learning. A large variety of subjects such as: Vedas, Vedanta, Vyakaran, Aayurveda, Surgery, various crafts, warfare and archery, Astronomy, Agriculture Commerce, Politics etc were taught at these centres and students enrolled there had the liberty to choose and subject of their choice. Preservation of ancient culture, character building, personality development, inculcation of the spirit of individual's roles towards family and society, discipline and self dependence were considered the basic factors while imparting education in these institutions. Chinese traveller and Buddhist scholar Hieun-Tsang has written about education at Nalanda saying there were three methods of teaching namely- verbal and explanatory, lectures, debates and discussions. So we can say that our ancient education system had almost all attributes of new education policy of today.

PRESENT STATUS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA

While the ancient higher education system was primarily based on Guru-Shishyaparampara and imparted holistic development of a student's character, the modern India's education finds its roots in colonial legacy, the British Government using the University system as a tool of cultural colonisation. The first higher education institution set up by British East India company was the Calcutta Madrasa in 1781, followed by Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1784, Benaras Sanskrit College in 1791 and Fort William college in 1800. Macaulay's controversial Minute on Education in 1835 reflected the growing support of a Western approach to knowledge over an oriental one. In 1857, the first three official universities were started in Bombay, Calcutta and Madras, followed by the University of Punjab in 1882 and University of Allahabad in 1887. These universities were modelled after the University of London and focussed on English and humanities.

When India got independence in 1947, the nation had a total of 241,369 students registered across 20 universities and 496 colleges. In 1948, the Indian Government established the University Grants Commission (UGC) to oversee the growth and improvement of higher education.

As a data of 2020 provided by MHRD India has over 1000 universities, out of which there are 54 Central and 416 state universities, 125 deemed and 361 private universities, 159 institutes of national importance such as AIIMS, IIMs, IITs, IIITs, IISERs and NITs. Other institutions include 52,627 colleges as Government degree colleges, private colleges, standalone institutions and P.G. research institutions, functioning under these universities.

Indian higher education system has expanded at a fast pace by adding nearly 20,000 colleges and more than 8 million students in a decade.

THE NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY- 2020

The undergraduate degree will be of either 3 or 4-year duration, with multiple exit options within this period, with appropriate certifications, e.g., a certificate after completing 1 year in a discipline or field including vocational and professional areas, or a diploma after 2 years of study, or a Bachelor's degree after a 3-year programme. The 4-year multidisciplinary Bachelor's programme, however, shall be the preferred option.

Departments in Languages, Literature, Music, Philosophy, Indology, Art, Dance, Theatre, Education, Mathematics, Statistics, Pure and Applied Sciences, Sociology, Economics, Sports, Translation and Interpretation, etc. will be established and strengthened at all HEIs.

Curricula of all HEIs shall include credit-based courses and projects in the areas of community engagement and service, environmental education, and value-based education.

An Academic Bank of Credit (ABC) shall be established which would digitally store the Academic credits earned from various recognized HEIs so that the degrees from an HEI can be awarded taking into account credits earned.

The 4-year programme may also lead to a degree 'with Research' if the student completes a rigorous research project in their major area of study as specified by the HEI.

Model public universities for holistic and multidisciplinary education, at par with IITs, IIMs, etc., called MERUs (Multidisciplinary Education and Research Universities) will be set up and will aim to attain the highest global standards in quality education.

SALIENT FEATURES OF NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY-2020

- Multidisciplinary and a holistic education across the sciences, social sciences, arts, Humanities, and sports for a multidisciplinary world in order 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.
- 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 and educational planning and management.

CHALLENGES TO THE SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF NEP- 2020 IN CONVENTIONAL COLLEGES

In India, the Tertiary education has many levels of standards. There is large gap in quality of education imparted in different HEIs. Where, in India there are some institutions like AIIMS (All India Institute of Medical Sciences), IIMs (Indian Institutes of Management), IITs (Indian Institutes of Technology), IIITs (Indian Institutes of Information Technology), IISc (Indian Institute of Science), IISERs (Indian Institutes of Science Education and Research), NITs (National Institutes of Technology), BITS Pilani, University of Delhi, Calcutta, Madras, JNU, which have been globally acclaimed for their standard of education and they are already working in the same spirit as of NEP, so these institutes are not to get much affected by the implementation of new policy. But on the other hand, we have majority of UG and PG colleges, imparting conventional education in Science, humanities or commerce, which are providing quantity, not quality education and those are going to face a topsy-turvy situation in the implementation of NEP. There the large number of students, inadequate number of teaching and supporting staff, lack of funds and infrastructure pose serious challenges to the success of NEP.

Some major hurdles, as I feel, in the path of successful implementation of this New Education Policy, are discussed below, one by one:

1. Viability of multidisciplinary system

The National Education Policy makes it compulsory for a student to select at least one course, major or minor, from stream other than one's own. In a big college, which is already facing the crunch of teaching staff, accommodating and arranging classes for major and minor courses opted by students from other faculties also, won't be easy. Similarly arranging classes of co-curricular courses for all the students of the college is an herculean task and we know, in practice they are not even being carried on, only the examinations are conducted and students are supposed to prepare themselves for that, defeating the very purpose of inclusion of one co-curricular course in every semester.

2. Access and feasibility of online courses

In National Education Policy, the emphasis is given on online courses also along with offline teaching. In practical courses of Science subjects, besides performing experiments in college laboratories, students are required to do some experiments on virtual labs also. That simply means, now all the students must have access to internet, but that can't be ensured for the students from rural areas.

3. Workability of vocational courses

Inclusion of one vocational course in first four semesters might be a welcome step to bring about skill development in a student, if carried out in true spirit. But this being enforced without setting up required infrastructure amounts to a big hurdle in the success of the intent. Making vocational courses compulsory for all, poses a big challenge as per its feasibility and expediency in the present infrastructural situation of our conventional colleges.

4. Practicality of Semester system

Although, semester system is already running well in professional institutions, switching over from annual system to semester system in conventional colleges is a drastic change. With very large number of student enrollment, where admissions take about a month and examinations and then evaluation and result preparation by any University cover around 4 months of a year in current system, now doubling that time for a semester system, then add to it necessary semester break in between, how much time is left for classes of two semesters in a year, which have to cover 3 major subjects, 1 minor subject, 1 co-curricular subject and 1 vocational subject per semester? Already in an annual system of examinations, we get maximum six months of time for classes- from mid August, after admissions till beginning of February, before the start of practical examinations, so how can we run two semesters in a year?

5. Sincerity and sanctity of internal evaluation

Is the internal evaluation, which is given 25% weightage of a course grade and includes student's attendance and interaction in the class, tests, quizzes, assignments and seminars, feasible in present system with so high student-teacher ratio? For a sincere continuous internal evaluation, there must be one to one interaction of teacher and taught and if that is imposed strictly, in its true spirit, it will certainly boost up the class attendance and the quality of education.

6. Job opportunity and Future scope in multi-exit option system

It is a good move to introduce multi exit options in a bachelor's degree programme, in respect to the facility given that a student if somehow has to take break from one's studies, can leave with a certificate and can again join back in future at one's convenience at

the same point of the course, where it was left. But what if one doesn't join back studies? What would be the value of that certificate or diploma, which the student is given after the completion of one year or two years of study in bachelor's degree program? What would be one's job prospects with that degree or diploma?

7. Utilization of Credit Bank points among different institutions having vast difference in their standards

Creation of a bank of a student's credits earned is certainly a revolutionary step and gives freedom to a student to progress his/her course of education at his/her will. But what would be the mode of disbursement? Where can those credit points be utilised? Can a student, who has earned credit points doing part of a degree from one University, take admission in another University for rest of the part of his bachelor's degree and utilise those credit points? The question becomes more valid, when we know that there is vast difference in the standards of various higher education institutions in our country.

FEW SUGGESTIONS FOR THE SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY- 2020

If the Government is serious to implement NEP in its true sense, then following moves have to be made at any cost, otherwise the policy will remain only on papers and in practice, institutions and universities will find the ways to bend it to their convenience.

- (i) Reducing the size of the classes to a maximum of 40 students for effective continuous internal evaluation.
- (ii) Appointment of more teaching staff in core subjects to accommodate classes for major and minor courses of any subject.
- (iii) Preparation of separate syllabus for any subject taken as minor, specially in Science subjects, a light version, which can impart a basic knowledge of that subject rather than deep insight required in major course.
- (iv) Creation of faculties and appointment of separate teaching personnel for the co-curricular subjects in every college.
- (v) Establishment of vocational centres for various vocational courses with full facilities in every college and creating their liaison with industry for the practical training of students.
- (vi) Making all the HEI campuses fully Wi-Fi with high internet speed.
- (vii) Making internet accessible to each and every citizen, to the remotest corner of the country and subsidizing the cost of internet for the students and the institutions.
- (viii) Constricting the admission schedule by colleges and complete the whole procedure in one week's time.
- (ix) Making compact schedule of examination and enforcing improvement in evaluation system to bring back all the teachers, seniors and juniors to the mainstream of evaluation, so that evaluation process can be completed in much lesser time.
- (x) Creating job/self-employment opportunities or any further course for the drop-out students from bachelor's program after one year or two year with certificate or diploma, respectively.

CONCLUSION

The National Education Policy-2020 promises to be the best education policy so far among all those introduced after the independence, in theory. It arouses the hopes that Indian higher education system will regain its lost glory of its ancient higher education institutions, destroyed by foreign invaders. Imaginative and flexible curricular structure, respect for diversity and respect for the local context in all curriculum, pedagogy and policy will enable creative combinations of disciplines for study and would offer multiple entry and exit points.

But yes, there are some serious challenges in practical implementation of these sea changes, but nothing is impossible, if the will to change for good, is strong. The deciding factor for the success of the policy lies in the seriousness and determination of the Government, Universities, Colleges and Teachers.

Hopefully, the National Education Policy-2020 will unify the content and quality of education nationwide and will prove to be character-building and nation-building.

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