



A PARADIGM SHIFTS IN INDIAN EDUCATION: AN ANALYSIS OF NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY 2020 AND ITS TRANSFORMATIVE IMPACT ON HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract:

India has a long history of education with a great emphasis on developing skills in specific professions, education was also closely linked to stature in society. Various migrations and invasions were continuously changing the face of the society as well as its education strategies. The elitist education system was attempted to be replaced post-independence with limited success. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 represents the most comprehensive educational reform in India since the National Policy on Education of 1986. Designed to align India's education system with the demands of the twenty-first century, the policy emphasizes holistic, multidisciplinary, flexible, and learner-centered education. A review of the skill requirements and the education policy was undertaken and a new policy implemented in 2020 with due emphasis on multiple entry-exit options, flexibility to choose courses of one's choice, move between institutions of learning. With requisite availability of resources, the new policy can support the innovativeness and enterprise lacking in our education system. This paper examines the paradigm shift introduced by NEP 2020, particularly in the higher education sector. Using a qualitative descriptive research design based on policy document analysis and secondary literature, the study explores the key reforms proposed by NEP 2020, including multidisciplinary education, Academic Bank of Credits (ABC), multiple entry and exit systems, digital learning, institutional restructuring, and research promotion. The findings reveal that NEP 2020 seeks to transform higher education from a rigid, examination-oriented system into a flexible and skill-oriented framework capable of fostering innovation, employability, and lifelong learning. The study concludes that while the policy offers immense opportunities for educational transformation, effective implementation, infrastructure development, faculty preparedness, and equitable access remain critical challenges.

Key-words: National Education Policy 2020, Higher Education, Innovations, Educational Reform, MOOC, Holistic approach Multidisciplinary Learning, Academic Bank of Credits, Educational Transformation.

Introduction

विद्या ददाति विनयं विनयाद् याति पात्रताम्। पात्रत्वाद्धनमाप्नोति धनाद्धर्मं ततः सुखम्।

Education gives humbleness, humbleness gives nobility, nobility gives money and money gives righteousness. righteousness gives peace.

-Hitopdesha)

m|e su fg fl;/fUr dk;kZf.k u euksjFkS%A

u fg lqlrL; fl agL; cfo'kafr e q[ks e `xk%A

Have you ever heard of a deer coming and entering the mouth of a lion while he sleeps? In that case, why are we led to believe that we can achieve success by merely thinking about it or coveting it? One can achieve success only by working hard and through dedication.

-Hitopdesha)

Introduction

The above Sanskrit Slokas from Hito Desha highlight the pivotal role education and dedication play in transforming one's life and enable us to become contributing members of our society. Education thus has since time immemorial been considered to be a powerful weapon of change irrespective of an individual's being born in an underprivileged section of the society or being born in royalty. A classic example in Indian lore is the rise of Chandragupta Maurya from a street urchin to an emperor controlling the destiny of a nation. The importance of education has been perceived by modern day planners in India especially with the post-independence thrust on self-reliance and empowerment of the people of India. The first sentence of the 'Report of the Education Commission (1966)' reads "The destiny of India is now being shaped in her classrooms." (Kothari D.S. 1966) amply highlights this perception. The perception was further reiterated in subsequent policy documents at both the national and international levels; however, limited change in curriculum occurred due to the inertia in the academic system that relied primarily on traditional systems of learning with limited options for multidisciplinary subject choices.

An educated nation determines the economic well-being of a nation by enhancing the skill base in the human capital of a country (Hanushek and Wößmann, 2010). A citizenry that is equipped with the capability of exploiting new knowledge and converting it into technology will prosper. Education is considered the key as it is an integral part of the mechanism that facilitates knowledge absorption Cohen and Levinthal (1990). Thus, the educational achievement of a country might very-well define its economic growth trajectory.

India has in its history witnessed the rise and fall of civilizations, several dynasties and waves of migrations and invasions each accompanied by a change in the ruling elite. The ensuing societal change and intermingling of cultures was reflected on the education system and policies throughout the country's history. Concrete evidence on the education system of the Indus valley civilization is unavailable. The Aryan Civilization that followed believed education could place a person on a path to a virtuous path in life, make him humble and polite and earn a righteous livelihood. The learners were expected to innovate and advance new ideas for the betterment of society. Education was imparted in Gurukuls *i.e.* monasteries or Ashramas that were away from human settlements, the Teacher or Guru was a father figure for his disciples and mentored them. A major disadvantage of the Aryan education system was its elitist nature barring the underprivileged classes from education.

The advent of Buddhism witnessed a change and conflict between the elitist Aryan education system and the more equitable and just Buddhist one based on equality of access to all sections of society. It also expected the students to lead a moral life and earn a righteous livelihood. The conflict/ competition between the Aryan and the Buddhist Education system continued till the arrival of the Muslim invaders. The education system depended on the religious preferences of the ruling class of the time.

The Muslim invaders led to retrogressive changes in the education system in the Indian sub-continent with an elitist education system that primarily focused on teaching religious matters, with little focus on science or culture. Innovation took a back-seat and propagation of one's religion took the front-seat. It was in this

condition that the Europeans found the Indians in, on arrival. The European invaders/ settlers had a large requirement of staff at the lower levels who could communicate with the local population maintain accounts and records. Towards this end they initiated educational reform in India bringing in the teaching of science and arithmetic. Education in the European period primarily British rule also focused on the propagation of Christianity and building an army of clerks. Indian reformers and political leaders realizing the advantages of learning science, arithmetic and other modern disciplines of learning promoted the European pattern of education in India, this enabled them to instill ideas of democracy and freedom from exploitation of the European colonizers in the Indian elite. Education continued to remain elitist, for the underprivileged classes education was accessible on conversion to Christianity. The major providers of education being the missionaries out on a mission to Christianize the natives.

The political class of India on attaining independence from colonial rule on 15th August 1947 realized the importance of education in lifting out the country's population from impoverishment and exploitation. Various commissions and committees have been established by the Government of India to develop an educational system that could meet the ambitions and aspirations of an emerging nation. The important commissions that had a significant impact on development of an education system in the country are provided below:

The University Education Commission constituted in the year 1948 under the chairmanship of Radhakrishnan was constituted to assess the status of university education in India and recommend steps for its improvement. The major recommendations of the commission included the establishment of new universities for extending the reach of higher education and modifying the curriculum to address societal needs, constitutional obligations and develop the overall personality of students.

A Secondary Education Commission (1952) was constituted to evaluate the status of school education in the country and suggest reforms that would lead to improved efficiency of production. The Commission in its recommendations suggested the establishment of technical schools, diversifying subject choices in schools and having a uniform pattern of education throughout the country. The commission however, did not address issues of universalization of education.

In the year 1964 the Indian Education Commission also known as Kothari Commission was constituted to provide suggestions for the improvement of the education system in the country. The Commission recommended the revamping of education system at all levels, from primary to university levels. It also laid stress on improving the status and skills of teachers in the country.

A National Education Policy (1986) was formulated, its emphasis was mainly on a nationalized form of education, with emphasis on primary education, education of minorities, adult education and women education. It also suggested the initiation of the open university system in the country for providing a greater reach to higher education. A program of action for the policy was framed in 1992 with suggestions for improvement of quality education and developing moral values in students.

The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (2000-2001) was the first serious attempt to universalize primary education for children between 6 – 14 years of age in the country. This was complimented by the enactment of the Right to Education Act of 2009 and supplemented with Mid-Day Meal scheme to reduce drop-out of the marginalized sections of the society due to poverty.

A society to progress requires its members to be innovative (capable of adapting to change by developing new tools and techniques) and enterprising. Access to specialized education that is dynamic and continues to evolve with changes in the society and its mores is critical for this.

Besides this education also needs to ensure development of skills essential for remunerative employment to ensure continued engagement of students in the courses of their choice. Till the arrival of the National Education Policy 2020 the education system had entered a stage of moribund lethargy with the development of curriculum lagging behind the changes in society. Thereby leading to poor employability of college and university pass-outs due to a mismatch between the skills acquired during their course of study and that required in the current society. The various attempts at bridging the gap were inadequate in bridging this

mismatch. The rapid global technological evolution is also creating an unprecedented transformation in the educational systems at a global level (FICCI 2021). Nations that keep up with the change of pace can equip their human capital skills and competencies required to progress. The Organization for Economic Survey (OECD) in its 2018 document on the educational requirements in the 21st century stated “We need to replace old education standards with an educational framework that combines knowledge with the 21st century skills of creativity, critical thinking, communication and collaboration”. Accordingly, governments at a global level have started placing a much greater emphasis on developing educational policies that are synchronized with their economic aspirations. The innovations in policy have to be complimented with appropriate pedagogical methodologies, resource mobilization and curriculum. India has the second largest human population in the world, a large part of which possess limited skills for finding meaningful employment. It thus is critical that this population be suitably skilled through appropriate education programs to find gainful employment. Keeping this in view the Government of India launched the Skill India Mission in 2015 with the aim of creating market-relevant skills for 40 crore youth in the country. The Government of India however, perceived that the mission would be unable to have the desired long-term impact on the employability of the country’s youth. Accordingly, a committee under the chairmanship of T. S. R. Subramaniam was constituted in 2015 to address the lacunae in the country’s education system. The report of the committee forms the National Education Policy (NEP) 2022. NEP through policy recommendations intends to bring in the much-required overhaul of the education system of the country. The policy if implemented in its true spirit may bring in the desired paradigm shift in the objective of skilling our youth for meaningful employment. Education serves as the foundation of national development and social progress. In a rapidly evolving global knowledge economy, traditional educational models often fail to meet contemporary societal and industrial requirements. Recognizing these challenges, the Government of India introduced the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, replacing the 34-year-old National Policy on Education (1986). The policy envisions transforming India into an equitable knowledge society and global knowledge superpower through accessible, affordable, inclusive, and high-quality education. NEP 2020 is founded on five pillars—Access, Equity, Quality, Affordability, and Accountability—and promotes multidisciplinary education, critical thinking, creativity, research, and innovation. The policy introduces several structural and pedagogical reforms designed to reshape both school and higher education systems. The salient features of the NEP are presented in the following sections.

• **MULTIPLE ENTRY AND EXIT(MEES)**

Proposed objectives for multiple entry and exit (National Education Policy 2020)

- Flexibility in curriculum for learners rather than rigid boundaries
- Novelty in Course option instead of bifurcation in restricted stream in addition discipline specific specializations in the same.
- Increasing gross enrollment ratio (GER) and thereby decreasing dropouts.
- Offering different designs for Master’s level.
- Facility for Credit accumulation and transfer for the award of degree.

Structure of Multiple Entry and Exit:

DURATION COMPLETED	QUALIFICATION AWARDED
1 YEAR (2 SEMESTERS)	CERTIFICATE
2 YEAR (4 SEMESTERS)	DIPLOMA
3 YEAR (6 SEMESTERS)	BACHELOR’S DEGREE
4 YEAR (8 SEMESTERS)	BACHELOR’ S DEGREE / RESEARCH

The multiple entry and exit system under 2020 NEP aim to make higher education more flexible, accessible and learner friendly. It promotes educational continuity and lifelong learning while reducing the negative impact of student’s dropouts.

• **ACADEMIC BANK OF CREDITS (ABC)**

Students are free to opt multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary academic courses which give flexibility and a student can freely move to any Higher Education Institute (HEI) and their accumulated Credits can be easily transferred to the new institution. It is up to the students to choose their path and goal to attain a certificate, diploma, or degree course. The Academic Bank of Credits enables students to accumulate and transfer academic credits across institutions, promoting mobility and lifelong learning. This innovation supports flexible educational pathways and student autonomy.

• **HOLISTIC MULTIDISCIPLINARY EDUCATION**

Confluence of art and science streams with no definite bifurcation in the streams can now take place. Students are free to choose subject of his own choice. Yashpal Committee report also recommended that universities should allow for the growth of knowledge and should not lead to its fragmentation. It is therefore recommended that normally no single discipline or specialized university should be created. United States of America also offer students wide range of options to select subjects as there is no discrete line of separation between various streams. Similar to National Policy 2020 certain provision that evidently mentions that there will be no more forced lines of separation between different streams.

Holistic and multidisciplinary education will be helpful in their all-round development. One of the most significant reforms introduced by NEP 2020 is the promotion of multidisciplinary education. Students can combine subjects from science, arts, humanities, vocational education, and professional disciplines according to their interests.

This approach aims to develop:

- Critical thinking
- Creativity
- Communication skills
- Ethical reasoning
- Problem-solving abilities
- Social responsibility
- Professional Education is included into General Education instead of imparting in isolation.
- All stand-alone universities and institutions will offer holistic and multidisciplinary education
- Bringing improvement in the legal education use of new technology is suggested for wider access.
- India should prepare professionals in advance fields like Artificial intelligence, nanotechnology, neuroscience, genomic studies etc. these subjects will also be taught at under graduate level for raising employability of the youth.
- All the students of allopathic will have the knowledge of Yoga, Ayurveda, Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy
- Quality improvements and use of advance technology suggested for agriculture education Which would directly benefit community to set up agricultural technology park to promote technology incubation and dissemination and promote sustainable methodologies.

• **MASSIVE OPEN ONLINE LEARNING COURSES (MOOCs)**

Online learning course has been given importance for the upliftment and benefit of the students. Online learning has been notified in regulation 2021 in the Gazette of India that there should be facility up to 40% of the total course in a particular programmed to be offered through online mode Swayam or any online mode but it should be under approved list of University Grant Commission. In this way (GER) Gross Enrolment Ratio will also increase. It is a great deal of help for those who because of domestic compulsion cannot go for further Education. Such programs can have both asynchronous and synchronous modes to provide greater experimental learning pathways are included at all levels for inculcating interest and to learn applicability at the same time. Yashpal committee recommended practical training to the people that should be based on new knowledge and in response to social and personal needs. Acharya Rammurti committee (1990) education must provide a techno informative knowledge base and opportunities to

acquire skills to the students. MOOC is an online learning course designed to provide unlimited participation and open access high -quality educational content from universities and institutions regardless of their location. MOOCS have emerged a powerful tool for democratizing education and supporting the goals of NEP2020.

MOOCS support the vision by

- Expanding educational opportunities.
- promoting lifelong flexible and multidisciplinary learning.
- enabling credit transfer through recognized online course.

Major platform in India- SWAYAAM, NPTEL, SWAYAM PRABHA

• **HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION OF INDIA (HECI)**

There will be single body for promotion of higher education commission of India(HECI) with independent bodies for standard setting-the General Education Council; Funding Higher Education Grant Council, Accreditation-National Accreditation Council(NAC) and Regulation-National Higher Education Regulatory council(NHERC) Yashpal committee the report of the committee on renovation and rejuvenation of higher education has recommended protecting the intellectual autonomy of educational institutions and the creation of an all-encompassing National Commission and research to replace on subsume the existing regulatory bodies.

• **RESRTUCTURING OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

Universities will come under three categories

- i) Multidisciplinary Research Incentive Universities
- ii) Multidisciplinary Teaching Incentive Universities
- iii) Multi Autonomy College instead of Deemed University, Affiliating University, Central University etc. Top rank university around the world are free to open campus in our country National knowledge commission (2006-2009) Formulating policy for entry of foreign institutions of India and the promotion of Indian Institution abroad. The policy advocate transforming higher education institutions into large multidisciplinary universities and autonomous colleges. Institutions are expected to evolve into research-intensive, teachingintensive, and degree-granting establishments.

• **INSTITUTIONAL RECONSTRUCTION**

College and university will set up high support system for students and providing adequate support to disadvantaged section. It was also emphasized in National Education Policy (1986) for removing the imbalances and disparities in Education special emphasis was laid on the development of Education in respect of SC and ST through scholarships and facilities for special coaching also emphasized on vocational education. National Knowledge Commission (2006-2009) also put forth that access to education for economically and historically socially underprivileged students. The policy advocates transforming higher education institutions into large multidisciplinary universities and autonomous colleges. Institutions are expected to evolve into research-intensive, teaching-intensive, and degree-granting establishments.

• **MOTIVATED AND ENERGIZED AND CAPABLE FACULTY**

Success of any institution depends on the Faculty Higher Education Institute will have independent and transparent process and criteria for faculty requirement. Faculty is free to use their own approach within the framework.

Benefits

- Multiple entry and exit are the new idea that has come up brings the revolution by providing an opportunity to earn a degree by accumulating all the previously gained credits.
- Providing opportunity to other countries to open university in India and vice versa In this way many things can be learnt.
- Making internship compulsory will provide students to learn the applicability of theoretical concepts in real life situation.

- Establishment of Multidisciplinary Education and Research Universities will help in reaching high level promoting research.

• **Research and Innovation**

NEP 2020 proposes the establishment of the National Research Foundation (NRF) to strengthen research culture across higher education institutions. Research funding, interdisciplinary collaboration, and innovation are expected to increase significantly.

• **Technology Integration**

The policy emphasizes:

Online learning

Digital libraries

Virtual laboratories

Artificial Intelligence

Educational technology platforms

Technology is viewed as a catalyst for expanding educational access and quality.

NEP 2020 as a Paradigm Shift in Higher Education

✓ **From Teacher-Centered to Learner-Centered Education**

Traditional higher education largely focused on content delivery and examinations. NEP 2020 shifts attention toward active learning, inquiry, and student participation.

✓ **From Rote Learning to Competency-Based Learning**

The policy promotes:

- Critical thinking
- Creativity
- Analytical reasoning
- Problem-solving
- Experiential learning

These competencies align with global educational standards and workforce expectations.

✓ **From Rigid Structures to Flexibility**

The introduction of multiple entry-exit options and credit transfer systems enables students to personalize educational pathways.

✓ **From Discipline Silos to Multidisciplinary Learning**

NEP challenges traditional boundaries between disciplines and encourages integrated learning experiences.

✓ **From Knowledge Consumption to Knowledge Creation**

The National Research Foundation and emphasis on innovation promote a culture of research and entrepreneurship.

Opportunities Presented by NEP 2020

Enhanced Employability

Skill-based education and vocational integration can improve workforce readiness.

Global Competitiveness

Flexible curricula and multidisciplinary approaches align Indian education with international standards.

Increased Access

Digital technologies and expanded enrollment opportunities can democratize education.

Research Advancement

Improved funding and institutional support may enhance India's research output.

Lifelong Learning

Academic credit systems encourage continuous learning and professional development.

9. Challenges in Implementation

Despite its transformative vision, several challenges remain.

Infrastructure Constraints

Many institutions lack adequate technological and physical infrastructure.

Faculty Readiness

Successful implementation requires extensive teacher training and professional development.

Financial Resources

Large-scale reforms require substantial public investment.

Digital Divide

Unequal access to technology may widen educational disparities.

Institutional Resistance

Traditional academic structures may resist multidisciplinary reforms.

Recent implementation reviews indicate uneven adoption of reforms such as multiple-entry-exit systems and industry-linked academic initiatives across institutions.

Discussion

The analysis suggests that NEP 2020 represents a significant departure from conventional educational paradigms. The policy's focus on flexibility, interdisciplinarity, and holistic development reflects contemporary global trends in higher education. By emphasizing competencies rather than memorization, the policy aims to create graduates capable of addressing complex social, economic, and technological challenges.

However, policy success depends not merely on policy design but on effective implementation. Institutional autonomy, faculty engagement, funding mechanisms, and monitoring systems will determine whether the envisioned transformation materializes.

Conclusion

The National Education Policy 2020 marks a historic turning point in India's educational journey. It introduces a transformative vision that seeks to make higher education flexible, inclusive, multidisciplinary, and research-oriented. The policy's emphasis on learner-centered pedagogy, academic mobility, digital integration, and innovation signifies a genuine paradigm shift.

Nevertheless, realizing this vision requires coordinated efforts from policymakers, educational institutions, faculty members, industry stakeholders, and society. Effective implementation, adequate funding, and continuous evaluation will be crucial in ensuring that NEP 2020 achieves its goal of creating a globally competitive and socially responsive higher education system.

The National Education Policy 2020 may thus prove to be the game-changer in overcoming the shortcomings of the existing education system provided it gets the resources required for its full implementation. A possible way-out could be a greater involvement of private institutions in the programs; at least in the sector of higher education.

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