

The Role of NEP 2020 in Transforming India into an Equitable Knowledge Society

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Research Focus: NEP-2020

Abstract: *Deemed as the first education policy of the 21st century, National Education Policy 2020 has created quite a stir amongst citizens of the country. There is a sense of aspiration, hope, excitement, curiosity and eagerness regarding the inclusivity and progressiveness of this plan, first published on the 30th of July, by The Ministry of Education, Government of India. Proposing revolutionary changes through a unique, bottom-up approach, the policy is already garnering support and opposition across several avenues. According to NEP 2020, students will be the primary stakeholders in the all-important mission to propel India into an equitable and lively knowledge society. This implies that students will be treated as active participants in the policies that relate to the development of this nation. India, owing to its under-educated and overpopulated demographic, is home to a large body of manual unskilled/semi-skilled labour. In addition to this, children in rural areas continue to be starved of quality education due to a lack of infrastructure, facilities, trained staff, familial support, and more. Hopefully, NEP 2020 will be capable of tackling these challenges with determination and vigor.*

Keywords: NEP, New Educational Policy-2020

1. Introduction

According to NEP 2020, students will be the primary stakeholders in the all-important mission to propel India into an equitable and lively knowledge society. This implies that students will be treated as active participants in the policies that relate to the development of this nation. India, owing to its under-educated and overpopulated demographic, is home to a large body of manual unskilled/semi-skilled labour. In addition to this, children in rural areas continue to be starved of quality education due to a lack of infrastructure, facilities, trained staff, familial support, and more. Hopefully, NEP 2020 will be capable of tackling these challenges with determination and vigor.

The policy lays the groundwork for a corrective course of action that offers all citizens, right from their impressionable young years, the resources to learn, think and grow critically and creatively. It conceives for India, an education system that is on global par, and regardless of social and economic backgrounds, access to high-quality education to all. While this is an ambitious goal, one that requires a rejig of the entire education environment and its governance, the following provisions have made headway in terms of the direction of thinking.

1.1 School Education

With regards to Higher Education, NEP 2020 mandates that GER be 50% by 2035, with an additional 3.5 crore seats added. The policy envisions broad-based, multi-disciplinary, holistic education with flexible curricula, creative combination of subjects, integration of vocational education, utilisation of technology, and development of multiple entries and exit points. In fact, universities such as the IITs and IIMs will be utilized as benchmark models. A complete restructuring of undergraduate and postgraduate programs will ensure that certifications be awarded each year, and credits are transferable. Yes, flexibility is embedded into the

very ethos of the new policy. To set the tone, the Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) will act as an umbrella organization for higher education, whilst National Research Foundation (NSF) will take on the role of an apex body to foster a research-oriented mindset and build research capacities across the landscape. It is important to note that private and public institutions will be governed by the same set of principles for academic standards, accreditation and regulation. Ultimately, the policy envisages that every college develops into an autonomous degree-granting college or constituent college of a university. Some noteworthy provisions to pay heed to include – financial aid to students, expansion of open and distant learning, faculty training and motivation, and promotion of Indian languages.

1.2 Higher Education

(Governors Conference on 'Role of NEP-2020 in Transforming Higher Education' Landmark in the history of education: DrNajmaHeptulla, Source: The Sangai Express / DIPR Imphal, September 07 2020:)

A video conference of Governors and Lieutenant Governors on 'Role of National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 in Transforming Higher Education' was held today at New Delhi.

The conference was organised by the Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, Government of India.

The occasion was divided into different sessions such as inaugural session, interaction with Governors and Lieutenant Governors, Education Minister of States and Union Territories, Special Session on NEP-2020, Technical Session and discussion.

In the interaction with Governors and Lieutenant Governors, Governor of Manipur, DrNajmaHeptulla stated that the New Education Policy-2020 will certainly be a landmark in the

history of education in India, for the policy is comprehensive, holistic, far sighted and will certainly play a pivotal role in the Nation's future growth.

This Policy was passed after more than three decades-the first one was framed in 1986 and modified in 1992.

"During this period of more than three decades, significant changes were noticed in our country pertaining to socio-economy and the globe at large.

Therefore, it appears quite legitimate that the education sector also needs to strengthen itself towards the demands of the 21st century and the needs of the people and the country.

"Quality education as well as innovation and research will be the pillars on which India will become a knowledge superpower.

It is, in this context, a New Education Policy is needed at this juncture," she said.

Dr. Najma Heptulla added that the Government of India, accordingly, mooted the process of formulating a New Education Policy, to begin with, through the consultation process in which expert opinions, field experiences, stakeholder feedback as well as lessons learned from best practices were taken into consideration.

She strongly viewed that the New Education Policy 2020 will certainly be a landmark in the history of education in India, for the policy is comprehensive, holistic, far sighted and will certainly play a pivotal role in the Nation's future growth.

"The policy is welcomed by one and all of our Nation which seeks to transform India into a vibrant knowledge society.

It is a pride in India as well as acceptance of the best ideas and practices in the world of learning from across the globe.

It is a matter of great satisfaction to note that one of its loftier goals is to bring crores of out of school children into the school system and reduce innumerable dropouts.

More importantly, to reduce the burdensome syllabus, focus on vocational education and environmental education are crucial aspects well covered by NEP.

Students will be much more empowered and have the opportunity to choose the subjects they wish to study," she added.

Acknowledging NEP-2020 for barring Medical and Law Colleges, DrNajmaHeptulla said that the NEP also makes an attempt to improve governance by bringing in a single regulator to look after all educational institutions.

This is a significant step.

In addition, the NEP also aims at a holistic education by envisioning the convergence of Science and Arts streams.

The focus on ethics and human and Constitutional values will go a long way in the creation of an enlightened citizenship essential for deepening our democratic roots.

The Governor opined that the policy also expands the scope of foundational education, increasing the schoolgoing years from 3 to 18 instead of the prevalent 6 to 14.

This will enable a more holistic development of children in the formative age group of 3-6 years.

Setting up a National Mission on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy is a much needed, timely step to improve the quality of education at the primary education level

NEP recognises the importance of nutrition to the all round development of children and has therefore included a provision for an energy filled breakfast, in addition to the nutritious midday meal, to help children achieve better learning outcomes.

It may be mentioned that Prime Minister NarendraModi addressed the inaugural session and President Ram NathKovind graced the conference.

Minister of Education, Government of India Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' attended the conference too.

1.3 Teachers Education:

The highlights of NEP-2020 for teacher's education part of higher education section [1], [2], [4] are listed below:

- 1) All stand-alone Teachers Education Institutions should convert themselves as Multi-disciplinary HETs by 2030 to offer only four-year integrated B. Ed. programme.
- 2) All schools of foundation, preparatory, middle, and secondary level should appoint 4-year integrated B. Ed. degree holders as teachers with dual major specializations (Education & Subject).
- 3) Till 2030, there will be two years B. Ed. programme for 3-year UG and one-year B. Ed. for fouryear UG and those who have Master's degree in other subjects.
- 4) M. Ed. will be one-year with a research focus. The faculty profile in Departments of Education will be diverse with Ph. D. 's in different areas.
- 5) All interested senior or retired faculty will be utilized for short or long term for guiding, mentoring, or professional support for research/training/innovation. A separate National Mission for Mentoring will be established.

1.4 General

NEP 2020 stresses the need to set up a Gender Inclusion Fund, so as to build the nation's capacity of providing equitable quality education to all students, be it a girl or transgender student. Add to this, Special Education Zones for socio-economically disadvantaged groups, and you've got concerted efforts by the government to change the landscape of rural, remote areas. Given the need of the hour, an autonomous body hailed as the National Educational Technology Forum (NETF) will be set up for the free

exchange of ideas on the investment and use of technology. The aim is to enhance and alleviate learning, assessment, planning and administration. In summation, the center and state cabinets will work together to increase public investment in the education sector, thus reach 6% of Gross Domestic Product at the earliest. Having gone through the highlights of NEP 2020, what do you foresee for the future? Is this policy a boon or a bane? Is it the right step forward? Will it come to fruition as planned? We believe that the measure of its success will much depend upon its implementation, acceptance and interpretation by institutions. That being said, the nation must fully commit itself to see the aforementioned reforms through.

2. Conclusion

NEP 2020 seems a wonderful idea without a road map for implementation. The policy that aims to pave the way for transformational reforms for higher education systems of India to make it a global knowledge superpower must answer the question of how can this aim be brought into action? In this 'global society' it becomes important to maintain a balance between competing at global standards and maintaining the individuality of the country. The constant commercialisation and massification of education will not make the learners critical thinkers. Hence, it can be concluded that NEP 2020 has contradictory stand from the perspective higher education. If it is not supported by clear road map for execution, it will just remain a wishful thinking.

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