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## **NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY 2020 & THE FUTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The National Education Policy - 2020, a long time coming, has laid a clear path for transforming the education system of the country. The aim of the NEP 2020 is “National Education Policy 2020 envisions an India-centric education system that directly contributes to the transformation of our country into a vibrant knowledge society by providing high-quality education to all”. The Policy also aims to revolutionize the Indian Higher Education space to catch up with the global needs of the 21st century. The NEP is truly forward-looking, innovative, democratic and learner- centric. Now, it is the turn of implementers to realize the Policy in letter and spirit. The New Education Policy 2020, introduced on July 29, 2020, is the first education policy of the twenty-first century. Higher education is crucial in a developing nation like India because it promotes human development. India’s higher education system has grown astronomically since its independence. It will aid the country’s growth by disseminating specialized information and abilities. The higher education system in India is to be modernized as part of NEP 2020. The NEP 2020 will significantly advance Indian higher education. The NEP 2020 is a very forward-thinking document with a firm understanding of the current socio-economic landscape and the potential to tackle future challenges. It can turn India into a global hub for education by 2030 if appropriately implemented.

**Keywords:** National Education Policy 2020, Higher Education System, forward-looking, innovative.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The National Education Policy 2020, introduced on July, 2020, is the first education policy of the twenty-first century. To ensure continuous learning, NEP 2020 strongly emphasizes five pillars: accessibility, affordability, equity, quality, and accountability. It has been designed to the requirements of the people, who regularly seek new information and skills to succeed in society and the economy. According to the Policy, all dimensions of the educational system, including its governance and regulation, are to be re-examined and restored. The focus of NEP 2020 is to ensure that everyone has access to high-quality education and opportunities for lifelong learning, which result in appropriate jobs and productive



employment as outlined in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 2030. The NEP 2020 argues for significant changes to elementary, secondary and higher education that will equip the next generation to compete and prosper in the new digital economy. The policy offers a complete framework for education from primary through higher education and vocational training in rural and urban India. The policy's goal is to overhaul India's educational system by 2030. It will result in radically altering India's educational system. The policy aims to increase enrollment and foster egalitarian, internationally benchmarked literary trends. The National Education Policy emphasizes various dimensions of education, including early childhood education, curriculum and pedagogy reform, changes to the examination process, and teacher preparation initiatives.

### **NEP 2020 & HIGHER EDUCATION**

Higher education is crucial in a developing nation like India since it promotes human growth. After Indian independence, higher education has grown massively. It promotes the development of the country by disseminating specialized knowledge and abilities. The policy's main objectives are to improve the quality of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and establish India as a hub for international education. The emphasis is on offering a flexible curriculum via an interdisciplinary approach, allowing multiple exit points in a four-year undergraduate degree, accelerating research, boosting faculty support, and promoting globalization. The NEP promotes flexible pathways to higher learning. The system will promote 4 or 3-year undergraduate degree programs and one or two-year Master's programs. The system will permit multiple entry and exit options with appropriate certifications - a student at the undergraduate level can get a certificate at the end of one year, a Diploma at the end of second year and a Bachelor's degree at the end of the third year. The preference, however, will be for the four-year multidisciplinary education at the undergraduate level. The universities will offer one-year Master's degree to those students who have completed four-year undergraduate studies and two-year Master's degree to those who completed three-year undergraduate studies. Students with the four-year undergraduate studies with focus on research can be admitted directly to doctoral studies (PhD) since M.Phil. study programs will be discontinued.

The restructuring of institutions will have an impact on curriculum restructuring and flexibility of curricular choices for students. This will be a big move towards introducing learning.



## **MULTIPLE ENTRY AND EXIT OPTIONS**

The four-year, interdisciplinary Bachelor's degree offers multiple entry and existing options. For instance, if a student completes only one year of his undergraduate degree before leaving the institution, he or she may enter the program in the second year rather than begin again.

## **ACADEMIC BANK OF CREDIT**

The Academic Bank of Credit is one of the fundamental components of National Education Policy 2020's Credit-Based system, which is a crucial component. When a student enrolls in a program and is evaluated, all of his marks or credits will be put to the credit bank against his/her name, precisely as how a person's bank account represents his/her debits and credit information. As a result, individuals can easily monitor and see their credits anytime they want to.

## **TERMINATION OF THE M.Phil. PROGRAMME**

After completing a master's degree, the M.Phil. was regarded as a higher education degree. This situation has changed as a result of the New Education Policy. The M.Phil. degree will no longer be offered; hence the higher education system only provides bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees.

## **ONE YEAR OF MASTER DEGREE PROGRAMME**

Students who complete their undergraduate programme in four years, including a year of research activity, can get their master's degree in one year. On the other hand, students who finish their undergraduate studies in three years, indicating they did not complete their last year of research, are still eligible to apply for admission to the master's degree programme. However, their master's degree will only take two years to complete.

## **INSTITUTIONAL CONSOLIDATION**

One of the important features of the NEP - 2020 is to transform existing institutions into large multidisciplinary universities and colleges offering undergraduate and graduate studies. Institutions will be classified into research-intensive universities, teaching - intensive universities and autonomous degree granting colleges, focusing on teaching undergraduate students. The autonomous degree granting institutions can eventually develop into Research University, Teaching University and Multidisciplinary Autonomous College-to develop world class Multidisciplinary Education and Research University (MERU). Another related feature of the NEP - 2020 is to phase out small colleges and ensure a minimum of 3000 student

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enrolments in any college. As of 2019, nearly 6.5 percent of the colleges have an enrolment of less than 500 students; nearly 92 percent of the colleges have less than 2000 students and only 4 percent of the colleges have more than 3000 student enrolment.

## **RESEARCH AND INNOVATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

Encouraging substantial research and development investments from the public and commercial sectors is one of NEP 2020's main focus areas. This will promote creativity and imaginative thinking. For industry-led skilling, up skilling, and reskilling to be possible, there has to be a strong industry commitment and close academic engagement. Also, it is essential to develop the skills necessary to promote an understanding of "Intellectual Property Rights (IPR)" and their protection in order to reap their advantages.

## **QUALITY AND ACCREDITATION**

The NEP - 2020 accords high priority to enhancing the quality of outcomes at all levels of education. The emphasis on learning crisis at the school level and the wide variations in levels of learning achievement observed among schools is a matter of serious concern. The low quality of our higher education institutions and poor quality of learning among the graduates are important points of discussion, especially after the rankings have begun in this century and the results of which are published annually.

It is a fact that Indian universities do not appear in top positions in the global ranking of universities even though there have been efforts to establish world class universities in India - 20 institutions of eminence (10 in the public sector and 10 in the private sector). India started its own rankings through the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) in 2015 and the results have been published every year since 2016. These are the initiatives manifesting our aspirations to become an important player in higher education at the global level. The NEP - 2020 envisages to reorganize the accreditation procedures. It emphasizes on the need for accreditation and external quality assurance mechanisms, and effective functioning of internal quality assurance mechanisms. The approach to accreditation as envisaged in the NEP-2020 is different from the existing arrangements. In place of a single accreditation agency such as NAAC, there will be multiple accreditation institutions to assure quality in higher education. The role of NAAC will change from accrediting institutions to accrediting multiple accreditors by issuing licenses to accreditation institutions. Further, the grading while accrediting institutions will disappear eventually and it will be replaced by binary categorization.

The NEP-2020 considers setting up a meta-accreditation agency called the National Accreditation Council (NAC). The NAC attempts to create a set of accreditors at the regional level. It will accredit the accreditors (the decentralized or regional accreditation agencies) to create a pool of or an ecosystem of accreditors. This may imply creating capacities at the state level to carry out the external quality assurance arrangements and accreditation procedures. The



state councils of higher education may be a reliable organizational arrangement to facilitate this process provided they are strengthened to carry out accreditation functions effectively. Another related area is to create a National Higher Education Qualifications Framework (NHEQF) outlining the learning outcomes associated with degree/diploma/certification, which shall be the guiding document for curriculum development across all disciplines and fields of study in higher education. India has already established the National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF) in 2013. The NHEQF needs to be consistent with the framework provided by the NSQF. As discussed in the earlier paragraphs, the UGC has already setup a committee to develop a framework and a detailed plan for NHEQF. The NHEQF will become the basis for developing curriculum and study programs in the colleges and universities. Another proposal in the policy is the need for linking research and teaching not only in research universities but also in all types of higher education institutions. To promote research, the NEP - 2020 envisages setting up of a national research foundation (NRF) through an Act of the Parliament with an annual grant of Rs. 20, 000 crores. It will be an autonomous body to fund research in all disciplines across public and private universities and colleges. The funding through NRF will be in addition to the existing funding by various agencies through competitive peer-reviewed grant proposals.

### **THE CAP FOR PRIVATE INSTITUTION FEES**

Several Indian colleges demand very costly fees in order to provide higher education. Consequently, many students need help to afford further education and drop out. Hence, to raise enrollment to 50% by 2035, the government implemented cap on the fees for private institutions, colleges, and universities. That implies that there will not be any more fees above the cap. For example, if the cap is 50,000 rupees, an institution or university may charge only the cap, regardless of the subject in which the students are enrolled. This has aimed to make education more affordable.

### **INTERNATIONALIZATION AT HOME**

NEP 2020 also enables international universities and faculties to return to Asian countries, which challenges local institutions to raise the level of education they provide. The possibility of paving the way for foreign universities to establish campuses within the nation is causing the Indian education sector to boom everywhere. The Asian country has one of the world's largest networks of higher education systems, with over 900 universities and 40,000 colleges. However, the GER (Gross Entering Ratio) of Asian countries in education is only 26.3%, which is significantly lower when compared to other BRICS nations like China (51%), Brazil (50%) and other countries in the region. It is also significantly lower when compared to European and North American countries, where the GER may be higher than 80%. Asian countries should experience substantial development in the field of global education in order to





develop a new economic mechanism that is not based on natural resources but rather on knowledge resources. According to reports, Asian countries may need another 1,500 new higher education facilities by 2030 to accommodate a significant increase in students. For this reason, the Indian government encourages FDI (Foreign Direct Investments) and make the ECB (External) industrial Borrowing) route available to strengthen capital investment in the education sector. Because more than seven lakh Indian students are already studying overseas, the ministry strives to improve India's reputation as a hub for education. This programme aims to drastically reduce the amount of human capital that migrates to other nations for study and employment opportunities by enabling overseas universities to provide the finest education available locally at a much-reduced cost while remaining in place. According to several international studies, cross-border education benefits the economy and fosters a greater sense of global awareness, cultural sensitivity, and combat. Foreign partnerships provide educational institutions an additional way to hone their curriculum in line with global pedagogy and offer students a wide range of specializations and topic options.

### **TOWARDS A MORE HOLISTIC AND MULTIDISCIPLINARY EDUCATION**

A holistic and interdisciplinary education would combine the development of a person's moral, social, physical, emotional, and intellectual faculties. Even engineering Institutions like the IITs would transition to a more comprehensive, interdisciplinary curriculum emphasizing the arts and humanities. Arts and humanities students would aim to study more science and include more vocational and soft skill disciplines. The curriculum of all HEIS should contain credit-based courses and projects in community participation and service, environmental education, and value-based education to achieve such a comprehensive and interdisciplinary education. The undergraduate degree would take three or four years to complete, and there would be many opportunities to graduate with the proper credentials throughout this time.

### **CONCLUSION**

The NEP - 2020 envisages major changes in the education sector, which include a transition from massification to universalization of higher education, institutional consolidation, multidisciplinary education, flexibility of pursuing higher education, and a total overhaul of the governance framework and regulatory arrangements. Higher education has a significant role in determining a nation's economy, social standing, level of technological adoption, and healthy human behavior. The responsibility of the country's education department is to increase the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) so that all citizens have access to higher education opportunities. The National Education Policy of 2020 is working towards this goal by implementing creative policies to raise higher education quality, affordability, and supply while opening it up to the private sector and enforcing tight quality controls in all higher



education institutions. The National Education Policy has a favorable and long-lasting influence on India's higher education system. The government's decision to let international colleges establish campuses in India is laudable. This would enable students to get a high standard of education in their nation. Establishing interdisciplinary institutions would result in a revitalized emphasis on every discipline, such as the arts and humanities. This kind of education would allow students to study and develop holistically. Hence, learners would possess a strong knowledge basis. The goal of NEP 2020 is to modernize higher education in India. Overall, the NEP 2020 tackles the need to train experts in various fields, from agriculture to artificial intelligence. India needs to be prepared for the future. NEP 2020 provides the door for many young aspirant pupils to have the appropriate skill set. The NEP 2020 is a crucial turning point for higher education. While these proposals are encouraging, the challenges lie in the implementation of these proposals. It will only be revolutionary with effective and constrained implementation.

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