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National Education Policy 2020 In Higher Education

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ABSTRACT: Higher Education in India is up for an overhaul with the National Education Policy 2020 bringing in multi-dimensional changes – right from the regulatory framework to curriculum structure and research environment. First and foremost, the announcement of the much-awaited National Education Policy (NEP) has cleared the path for setting up a single regulatory body for country's higher education. The regulatory body, that is to be named the Higher Education Commission of India (HECI), will function as the single authority for all public and private educational institutions (except those involved in medical and law education). In addition to this, a National Research Foundation will be created to oversee all research activities to be carried out by the various academic institutions in the country. The NEP 2020 has aimed at almost doubling the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education to 50 per cent by the year 2035, as compared to the current GER of 26.3%. It also has provision for greater autonomy to the academic institutions offering quality higher education.

KEYWORDS: NEP, 2020, higher education, gross enrolment ratio, academic, curriculum, multi-dimensional changes, country

I.INTRODUCTION

Besides the above key changes, the NEP 2020 has proposed to set up an autonomous body – the **National Educational Technology Forum (NETF),** to provide a platform for free exchange of ideas on the use of technology in order to enhance learning, assessment, planning, and administration.[1,2]

The National Education Policy has also emphasized on setting up of a **Gender Inclusion Fund** which is aimed at creating an environment of equitable and fair quality education for girls as well as transgender students. Also, as per the NEP document, Special Education Zones will be created for disadvantaged regions and groups which will make higher education opportunities more accessible for students.[3,4]

NEP 2020 – Highlights for Higher Education

S. No.	NEP for Higher Education – Key Highlights
1	Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education to be raised to 50% by 2035
2	Around 3.5 crore seats to be added in higher education

3	Undergraduate education can be of 3 or 4 years with multiple exit options and appropriate certification at different stages
4	Academic Bank of Credits to be established to facilitate Transfer of Credits for lateral admission to other institutes
5	Multidisciplinary Education and Research Universities (MERUs), at par with IITs and IIMs, to be set up as models of best multidisciplinary education of global standards in the country
6	The **National Research Foundation** will be created as an apex body for fostering a strong research culture and building research capacity across higher education
7	**Higher Education Commission of India** (HECI) will be set up as a single overarching umbrella body for the entire higher education system, excluding medical and legal education. Public and private higher education institutions will be governed by the same set of norms for regulation, accreditation and academic standards.
8	Affiliation of colleges is to be phased out in 15 years and a stage-wise mechanism is to be established for granting graded autonomy to colleges

The National Education Policy has also emphasized on setting up of a **Gender Inclusion Fund** which is aimed at creating an environment of equitable and fair quality education for girls as well as transgender students. Also, as per the NEP document, Special Education Zones will be created for disadvantaged regions and groups which will make higher education opportunities more accessible for students. As per the NEP, the students will now have options of multiple exits during their UG programme. For example, a student can exit just after 1st year of graduation with a certificate in hand. If he/she opts to exit after the second year, an Advanced Diploma will be awarded for 2 years of successful completion of study. As usual, the 3rd year of UG completion will result in a Bachelor's Degree and 4th year of UG completion will be awarded with a Bachelor's of Research.[5,6]

NEP 2020 – UG Exit Options

Option No.	Options	Academic Recognition
1	After 1st year of UG programme	Certificate
2	After 2nd year of UG programme	Advanced Diploma

3	After 3rd year of UG programme	Bachelor's Degree
4	After 4th year of UG programme	Bachelor's with Research

Further, the credits earned at various levels will get credited into a digitalised Academic Bank of Credit. Students can use their earned credits to take admission in another institution to further continue their studies for the remaining year/s of their graduation courses.

HECI – A Single Regulatory Body with 4 Verticals

As per the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, a single regulatory body will guide Higher Education in India. The regulatory body named as Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) will have 4 verticals to deal with different functions of higher education.[7,8]

Serial No	HECI Vertical	Function
1	National Higher Education Regulatory Council (NHERC)	Creating and Implementing Higher Education regulation
2	General Education Council (GEC)	Standard setting for academia
3	Higher Education Grants Council (HEGC)	For funding academic and research activities
4	National Accreditation Council (NAC)	Accreditation to academic institutions

NEP 2020 – Focus on Research

As per the National Education Policy, a central body named National Research Foundation will be created to build a strong research culture and research capacity across different domains in higher education.

To enhance both the quality and capacity of academic research, the government will establish multi-disciplinary Education and Research Universities (MERUs), at par with Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) and Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs).

NEP 2020 – Greater Autonomy and Multi-disciplinary Approach

The policy has envisioned phasing out the system of affiliation over the next 15 years and providing graded autonomy to colleges. Thus, over the coming decade, every college would develop into either an autonomous degree-granting college or a constituent college of a university.[9,10]

Also, the policy aims at focusing on multi-disciplinary culture in institutions offering professional education. For example, stand-alone technical universities, health science universities, legal and agricultural universities etc will be helped to become multi-disciplinary institutions.

NEP 2020 – Use of Technology in Higher Education

National Education Policy 2020 has emphasised the use of technology in multiple ways to enhance the teaching-learning experience and also to make quality education accessible for masses. As per the NEP document, the use of technology will be taken to the next level to "ensure preparedness with alternative modes of quality education whenever and wherever traditional and in-person modes of education are not possible." This step carries special significance in the backdrop of the COVID 19 pandemic, forcing the majority of institutions to switch their teaching-learning mode from in-person offline method to virtual learning in online mode. [11,12]

To promote 'Online Education and Digital Education', a dedicated unit will be set up to facilitate building of digital infrastructure, digital content and also to look after the e-education needs at the level of both school and higher education.

Further, under the 'Open and Distance Learning' will be made more relevant with credit-based recognition of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) to make these courses at par with the highest quality in-class programmes.

The government will also set up an autonomous body – National Educational Technology Forum (NETF), which will work as a platform for free exchange of ideas on the use of technology to enhance learning, assessment, planning, and administration. [13,14]

II.DISCUSSION

National Education Policy 2020 has been announced on 29.07.2020. The National Education Policy 2020 proposes various reforms in school education as well as higher education including technical education. A number of action points/activities for implementation in school education as well as higher education are mentioned in the National Education Policy 2020. Details of the salient features of NEP 2020 are as follows-

    i.   Ensuring Universal Access at All Levels of schooling from pre-primary school to Grade 12;

    ii.   Ensuring quality early childhood care and education for all children between 3-6 years;

    iii.   New Curricular and Pedagogical Structure (5+3+3+4);

    iv.   No hard separations between arts and sciences, between curricular and extra-curricular activities, between vocational and academic streams;

    v.   Establishing National Mission on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy;

    vi.   Emphasis on promoting multilingualism and Indian languages; The medium of instruction until at least Grade 5, but preferably till Grade 8 and beyond, will be the home language/mother tongue/local language/regional language.

    vii.   Assessment reforms - Board Exams on up to two occasions during any given school year, one main examination and one for improvement, if desired;

    viii.   Setting up of a new National Assessment Centre, PARAKH (Performance Assessment, Review, and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development);

    ix.   Equitable and inclusive education - Special emphasis given on Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs);

    x.   A separate Gender Inclusion fund and Special Education Zones for disadvantaged regions and groups;

    xi.   Robust and transparent processes for recruitment of teachers and merit based performance;

    xii.   Ensuring availability of all resources through school complexes and clusters;

(xiii) Setting up of State School Standards Authority (SSSA);

(xiv) Exposure of vocational education in school and higher education system;

xv.   Increasing GER in higher education to 50%;

(xvi) Holistic and Multidisciplinary Education with multiple entry/exit options;

xvii.   NTA to offer Common Entrance Exam for Admission to HEIs;
xviii.   Establishment of Academic Bank of Credit;

(xix) Setting up of Multidisciplinary Education and Research Universities (MERUs);

xx.   Setting up of National Research Foundation (NRF);

(xxi) 'Light but Tight' regulation;

xxii.   Single overarching umbrella body for promotion of higher education sector including teacher education and excluding medical and legal education- the Higher Education Commission of India (HECI)-with independent bodies for standard setting- the General Education Council; funding-Higher Education Grants Council (HEGC); accreditation- National Accreditation Council (NAC); and regulation- National Higher Education Regulatory Council (NHERC);
xxiii.   Expansion of open and distance learning to increase Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER).
xxiv.   Internationalization of Education
xxv.   Professional Education will be an integral part of the higher education system. Stand-alone technical universities, health science universities, legal and agricultural universities, or institutions in these or other fields, will aim to become multi-disciplinary institutions.
xxvi.   Teacher Education - 4-year integrated stage-specific, subject- specific Bachelor of Education
xxvii.   Establishing a National Mission for Mentoring.
xxviii. Creation of an autonomous body, the National Educational Technology Forum (NETF) to provide a platform for the free exchange of ideas on the use of technology to enhance learning, assessment, planning, administration. Appropriate integration of technology into all levels of education.
xxix.   Achieving 100% youth and adult literacy.
xxx.   Multiple mechanisms with checks and balances will combat and stop the commercialization of higher education.
xxxi.   All education institutions will be held to similar standards of audit and disclosure as a 'not for profit' entity.
xxxii.   The Centre and the States will work together to increase the public investment in Education sector to   reach 6% of GDP at the earliest.
xxxiii. Strengthening of the Central Advisory Board of Education to ensure coordination to bring overall focus on quality education.[15,16]

NEP, 2020 aim to increase the GER to 100% in preschool to secondary level by 2030 whereas GER in Higher Education including vocational education from 26.3% (2018) to 50% by 2035.

The Central Sector Scheme Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya National Mission on Teachers and Teaching (PMMMNMTT) was launched in 2014 to address comprehensively all issues related to Teacher Training/ Capacity Building and Professional Development of Teachers. Under the components, the total 95 Centres were established throughout the country through which faculties/Teachers have been trained.[28] Currently, The Standing Finance Committee has appraised the Scheme and recommended for continuation till 2025-2026 with the total outlay of Rs. 493.68 crore. Under the PMMMNMTT Scheme Centres are established on the basis of the proposals received from education institutions, their screening by Screening Committee and approval by Project Approval Board.[17,18]

III.RESULTS

It is a well-known fact that, after independence, the nation has already witnessed national policies like NEP-1968, NPE-1986 and its revised version POA-1992.[28] But, keeping in view the neo-normative standpoints, demands of the 21st century society and new milieu of the millennium, our education must look forward for incorporation of the changes taking

place and addressing the issues in the curriculum to the intended beneficiaries to bring a viable economic and social order in the country for realising the constitutional goals and philosophy of the nation. The nation has got another National Education Policy (NEP-2020) after a gap of 34 years, after prolonged academic debates, discourse and discussion and, ultimately, we are going to address its features in letter and spirit. India, under the dynamic leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in the past eight years has gained a special place for itself at the international arena. It is reflected in reformative steps taken by the government of India in every sphere, including economy, research, defence, health, agriculture and education in toto. In the last eight years of Modi's government, there are many reforms undergone in education and social sectors such as institutional growth of higher educational institutions, Pradhamantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana, Pradhanmantri Kisan Pension Yojana, Jan Dhan Yojana, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Atal Pension Yojana, Ujjwala Yojana, AMRUT Yojana, Digital India Mission, Stand-up India, Namami Gange Yojana, community interaction through Man Ki Baat, and Startup India for innovation and entrepreneurship in India, and many others.[19,20]

The long cherished and the most awaited dream of the National Education Policy (NEP-2020) has become reality by the government of India for further course of action. After declaration of the policy document, over the last two years we have been observing, many national webinars, seminars and academic debates are going on by the policy-takers and stakeholders on the practical understanding and implementation of the policy. The present three-day Akhil Bharatiya Shiksha Samagam (7-9 July), organised for the key stakeholders and the academic, administrative and institutional leaders of the higher education institutions at Varanasi with the joint effort of MoE, government of India, UGC, and Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, shall certainly pave the way for identifying the best implementation strategies, approaches and a concrete roadmap for effective implementation of NEP-2020 in the higher education institutions of India. Right now, for effective implementation of the policy, several task force committees and working groups are assigned to prepare the position papers and curriculum by different apex bodies at different levels of education at a war footing race.[27]

Before the challenges in implementation, when we analyse the present NEP-2020 and its essentialities, basically, NEP-2020 aims to cater multifarious growing developmental imperatives of the nation on one hand and creating a just and equitable society on the other. The policy not only addresses radical reforms to bring quality and integrity into the education system right from early childhood care education (ECCE) to higher education (HE), but also brings a breakthrough in all aspects of education structure, comprising its regulation and governance to create a new education system for the nation in tune with requirements and aspiration goals of 21st century society.[21,22]

In the context of higher education, NEP-2020 has brought tremendous changes in governance and institutional reforms aiming at establishment of multi-disciplinary colleges, universities and clusters of higher education institutions by linking with forthcoming industrial revolution for skilled job creation and augmenting employment avenues. All the way, the policy also focuses for National Research Foundation (NRF) to fund outstanding researches and to actively seed research in universities and colleges. According to NEP-2020, the admission system for all the universities and the undergraduate HEIs will be preferably through National Testing Agency (NTA) in order to reduce the burden of several overlapping examinations conducted by HEIs separately. The process is in true sprit now.[24] The NTA this year has started initiative to conduct Central Universities Entrance Test (CUET) for the undergraduate programmes affiliated under ventral universities, and subsequently, the state universities will join as the state's decision in the coming years to come. The policy aims that the Indian higher education system will consolidate into a smaller number of institutions across the three types of HEIs and HEIs clusters for increasing the gross enrolment ratio (GER) with a target to increase up to 50 percent by 2035 and 6 percent GDP which will also help meet resource efficiency, multidisciplinary capacity, multiple entry and exit, maintaining academic bank of credits and quality higher education in terms of teaching, research and service. Subsequently, NEP-2020 also stresses upon establishing a national educational technology forum for proper use of technology in the domains of teaching, learning, assessment, administration and management systems and also focuses on maintaining virtual labs at various institutional and university level.[24,25]Apart from the major social schemes for the social transformation and economic development of the nation at par with pace of development at international level, the government has also brought a tremendous breakthrough in educational sphere for enhancing quality, equity, access and excellence in an inclusive manner.

Spectacular growth of HEIs and GER

India has quite a large system of higher education in as much as we have today 1,046 universities, including deemed to be universities and private universities as on 24 June, 2022, but under Prime Minister Modi's leadership, since 2014, the number of new universities has been opened with an increase. Likewise, at present, India has total number of 12,429 colleges under 2 (F) and 12 (B) schemes while 747 colleges have been given autonomous status as on 19 December, 2019. The abovementioned data shows the determination of the government under the able leadership of the prime minister to address the issues of gross enrolment ratio (GER). Currently, the GER in higher education in India is 27.1 percent, which is calculated for 18-23 years of age group. Over the last eight years, the nation has witnessed in the increase of GER more than 7 percent.[22]

Digital initiatives

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, a visionary man who believes that future of any nation lies in the development and technological innovations. Government of India under his leadership launched various schemes to enhance technical skills, technical literacy and technological innovations through Digital India Mission as a flagship programme in order to transform India into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy. The same has been addressed in the policy document of NEP-2020. Accordingly, India's higher education is also getting a momentum on the utility of digital learning in the teaching learning process by various digital online platforms such as Sawayam, MOOCs, NDLI, Sawaywam Prabha, e-PG Pathshala, Diksha, Vidya Daan and many others. During the Covid-19 pandemic, when there was confusion and no way out how to continue teaching-learning process, the various digital initiatives of government of India proved very beneficial for the teachers and students. These platforms provided an opportunity to learners to continue their study during lockdown as uninterrupted educational process. And the teaching-learning experiences have been facilitated by students and teachers with blended and flipped techno-pedagogical approaches. Rajiv Gandhi University has also put its strenuous efforts to reach the remote area residing students in hilly terrain dominated Arunachal Pradesh during the critical juncture of Covid-19. The teacyhing-learning community of the university is also organising a series of national and international webinars through digital platforms for augmenting their profession knowledge and skills. The university has also organised more than 20 online educational programmes/webinars. The government of India's vision to make India a digitally empowered nation has come true in higher education scenario, which is one of the target goals of NEP-2020.[23,24]

The University Grants Commission (UGC) and the education ministry both have come forward to ensure quality in higher education, research and innovations. The NIRF and NAAC both are directly involved in measuring quality parameters of institutes of higher education as a whole and providing them ranking. Besides these, the government has also shown its interest towards policy research and governance pertaining to social development through research funding like Impress, Stride, and seed research to the academicians. Specifically, the UGC has taken a very innovative and bold step to promote quality research, stop plagiarism, and avoid duplicity of research and publications by introducing UGC-CARE list of journals for quality academic writings. Rajiv Gandhi University has been striving to achieve all these NEP-2020 policy parameters in tune with quality mandate of research and academic publications.[20]

Physical and mental wellbeing programmes

Our ancient treasure of knowledge kept in our scriptures clearly states that only a physically, spiritually and mentally healthy person can contribute for one's development and as that of the society. The Indian system of fit and healthy living pioneered by Maharishi Patanjali empirically proved it. The present government is determined for all-round and harmonious development of citizens of India and various initiatives have been taken and schemes have been launched like advocating the importance of yoga for healthy living, recognising its universal appeal on 11 December, 2014, the United Nation proclaimed 21 June as the International Day of Yoga by resolution 69/131. The 2020 theme, 'Yoga for health –

Yoga at home' was celebrated keeping in view the Covid-19 pandemic situation as per the direction of the World Health Organisation.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the 'Fit India Movement' on 29 August, 2019, on account of the National Sports Day in order to encourage people to remain healthy and fit by including physical activities and sports in their daily lives. A fitness pledge to everyone was done by the PM on this auspicious day.[23,24] Emphasising on fitness, he added that fitness has always been an integral part of our culture. Healthy India should be our goal and we should call for a strict control on people's lifestyles. From the event of Fit India, it is clear that all higher educational institutions (HEIs) need to focus on special and significant priority to physical and mental fitness of students and faculty in the campus. In consonance to the Fit India Movement, all the higher education institutions of the states have marked this event with grand manner in letter and spirit. In tune with government policies, Rajiv Gandhi University has taken several initiatives like promoting sports by organising Khelo India pragramme, yoga evening classes, meditation, and the prime minister's Pariksha Pe Charcha interaction with students for emotional concerns and anxiety of faculty, parents and students. The government also started a good initiative on the birth anniversary of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel to promote national unity, integrity and cultural exchange among denizens in the name of Rashtriya Ekta Divas held on 31 October, 2015. The students of Rajiv Gandhi University visited the Banaras Hindu University (BHU) under the Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat programme. To promote sanitation and environment protection, RGU made its campus plastic-free and has organised webinars and workshops on depression, anxiety and stress management towards the health and wellbeing of all during pandemic.[21]

IV.CONCLUSIONS

So, in many ways, the policy is expected to meet the requirements of the present generation learners and society of 21st century, still there are many critical questions that are haunted in the minds of the academia in terms of practice, implementation and functioning, etc. We know by this multidisciplinary education we do prospect many opportunities. Conglomerating multiple disciplines like humanities and arts with STEM the assessment of educational approaches in undergraduate education will bring consistent positive learning outcomes in the form of increased creativity, innovation, critical thinking, higher-order thinking, problem solving abilities, teamwork and many more.[25]

On the other way, multiple entry and exit will remove rigid boundaries and will create new avenues for lifelong learning and also to reduce the number of dropouts by splitting up of monopoly of compartmentalisation and stereotype, readymade doze of learning experiences. The way we are heading towards multidisciplinary learning approach in higher education as the policy at least that will empower learner to response contemporary global issues (under global citizenship education) and to become active promoters of peace, tolerance, secure and sustainable societies. And the provision of introducing internship and industrial interface by and large among the undergraduate learners may enable their active engagement with practical side of their learning and will further improve their employability and ultimately suffice the individual sustainable needs. Inculcation of Indian culture and values amongst students and also promoting Indian art forms at all levels will rejuvenate the traditions and infuse a kind of cultural epoch in the education system.

As a whole, there is increase of access, equity and inclusion through a range of measures, including greater opportunities for outstanding public education; scholarships by private/philanthropic universities for disadvantaged students; online education and ODL and all kinds of accessible learning for learners with disabilities. For the effective implementation of the NEP-2020, [26,27]Rajiv Gandhi University has taken appropriate measures in last two years. It has set up taskforce committees for better implementation of the NEP-2020 parameters in the higher education of the state and university affiliated colleges. Two more conclaves on NEP-2020 implementations have been organised by the university administration for the college principals and heads and deans of the departments/faculties for the introduction of multiple entry and multiple exit towards multidisciplinary higher education in the state. In a nutshell, it is to be said that able leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi is guiding India towards making it a 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' by his visionary approach and the NEP-2020 will transform India a New India in the times to come.[28]

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