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# New Education Policy in Higher Education – Issues and Challenges

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**ABSTRACT:** New Education Policy in higher education 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. 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.

KEYWORDS: NEP, higher education, gender inclusion fund, transgender, zones, special, students

#### I. INTRODUCTION

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.<sup>1</sup>

### NEP – 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. <sup>2</sup>

# NEP-Highlights for Higher Education

S. No.	NEP for Higher	Education –	Key Highlights
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Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education to be raised to 50% by future



Around 3.5 crore seats to be added in higher education

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- 3 Undergraduate education can be of 3 or 4 years with multiple exit options and appropriate certification at different stages
- Academic Bank of Credits to be established to facilitate Transfer of Credits for lateral admission to other institutes
- 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
- The National Research Foundation will be created as an apex body for fostering a strong research culture and building research capacity across higher education
  - 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.
- 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 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).<sup>3</sup> 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 has aimed at almost doubling the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education to 50 per cent by the year in future, as compared to the current GER of 26.3%. It also has provision for greater autonomy to the academic institutions offering quality higher education.<sup>4</sup>

As per the National Education Policy (NEP) 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.<sup>5</sup>

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



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#### II. DISCUSSION

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.<sup>5</sup>

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).

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.

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.<sup>6</sup>

National Education Policy 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.

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.<sup>7</sup>

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.<sup>8</sup>

# SALIENT FEATURES OF NEP: HIGHER EDUCATION

1. THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF THE POLICY: recognizing, identifying, and fostering the unique capabilities of each student, by sensitizing teachers as well as parents to promote each student's holistic development in both academic and non-academic spheres. according the highest priority to achieving Foundational Literacy and Numeracy by all students by Grade 3.; flexibility, so that learners have the ability to choose their learning trajectories and programmes, and thereby choose their own paths in life according to their talents and interests; no hard separations between arts and sciences, between curricular and extra-curricular activities, between vocational and academic streams, etc. in order to eliminate harmful hierarchies among, and silos between different areas of learning, multidisciplinarity 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.;9 creativity and critical thinking to encourage logical decision-making and ethics and human& Constitutional values like empathy, respect for others, cleanliness, courtesy, innovation; democratic spirit, spirit of service, respect for public property, scientific temper, liberty, responsibility, pluralism, equality, and justice; promoting multilingualism and the power of language in teaching and learning; life skills such as communication, cooperation, teamwork, and resilience; 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, removing language barriers, increasing access for Divyang students, and educational planning and management; respect for diversity and respect for the local context in all curriculum, pedagogy, and policy, always keeping in mind that education is a concurrent subject; 10 full equity and inclusion as the cornerstone of all educational decisions to ensure that all students are able to thrive in the education system; synergy in curriculum across all levels of education from early childhood care and education to school education to higher education; teachers and faculty as the heart of the learning process – their recruitment, continuous professional development, positive working environments and service conditions; <sup>11</sup> a 'light but tight' regulatory framework to ensure integrity, transparency, and resource efficiency of the educational system through audit and public disclosure while encouraging innovation and



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out-of-the-box ideas through autonomy, good governance, and empowerment; outstanding research as a corequisite for outstanding education and development; continuous review of progress based on sustained research and regular assessment by educational experts; a rootedness and pride in India, and its rich, diverse, ancient and modern culture and knowledge systems and traditions. Education is a public service; access to quality education must be considered a basic right of every child; substantial investment in a strong, vibrant public education system as well as the encouragement and facilitation of true philanthropic private and community participation<sup>12</sup>

#### 2.THE VISION OF THIS POLICY

An education system rooted in Indian ethos that contributes directly to transforming India, that is Bharat, sustainably into an equitable and vibrant knowledge society, by providing high-quality education to all, and thereby making India a global knowledge superpower. The curriculum and pedagogy of our institutions must develop a deep sense of respect towards the fundamental duties and Constitutional values, bonding with one's country, and a conscious awareness of one's roles and responsibilities in a changing world. To instill a deep-rooted pride in being Indian, not only in thought, but also in spirit, intellect, and deeds, as well as to develop knowledge, skills, values, and dispositions that support responsible commitment to human rights, sustainable development and living, and global well-being, thereby reflecting a truly global citizen.<sup>13</sup>

#### III. RESULTS

# $3. QUALITY \ UNIVERSITIES \ AND \ COLLEGES: A NEW AND FORWARD-LOOKING VISION FOR INDIA'S HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM$

Quality higher education must aim to develop good, thoughtful, well-rounded, and creative individuals. It must enable an individual to study one or more specialized areas of interest at a deep level, and also develop character, ethical and Constitutional values, intellectual curiosity, scientific temper, creativity, spirit of service, and 21st century capabilities across a range of disciplines including sciences, social sciences, arts, humanities, languages, as well as professional, technical, and vocational subjects. A quality higher education must enable personal accomplishment and enlightenment, constructive public engagement, and productive contribution to the society. It must prepare students for more meaningful and satisfying lives and work roles and enable economic independence. Some of the major problems currently faced by the higher education system in India include:

a severely fragmented higher educational ecosystem; less emphasis on the development of cognitive skills and learning outcomes; a rigid separation of disciplines, with early specialisation and streaming of students into narrow areas of study; limited access particularly in socio-economically disadvantaged areas, with few HEIs that teach in local languages limited teacher and institutional autonomy; inadequate mechanisms for merit-based career management and progression of faculty and institutional leaders; lesser emphasis on research at most universities and colleges, and lack of competitive peer-reviewed research funding across disciplines; suboptimal governance and leadership of HEIs; an ineffective regulatory system; and large affiliating universities resulting in low standards of undergraduate education <sup>15</sup>

This policy envisions the following key changes to the current system:

- o moving towards multidisciplinary universities and colleges, with more HEIs across India that offer medium of instruction in local/Indian languages;
- o moving towards a more multidisciplinary undergraduate education;
- o moving towards faculty and institutional autonomy;
- o revamping curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, and student support
- o reaffirming the integrity of faculty and institutional leadership positions
- o establishment of a National Research Foundation o governance of HEIs by independent boards having academic and administrative autonomy;<sup>16</sup>
- o "light but tight" regulation by a single regulator for higher education; o increased access, equity, and inclusion 17



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#### IV. CONCLUSIONS

Increase GER in higher education to reach at least 50% by 2035. The aim will be to increase the Gross Enrolment Ratio in higher education including vocational education from 26.3% (2018) to 50% by future. Holistic Multidisciplinary Education The policy envisages a broad-based multi-disciplinary holistic education at the undergraduate level for integrated, rigorous exposure to science, arts, humanities, mathematics and professional fields having imaginative and flexible curricular structures, creative combinations of study, integration of vocational education and multiple entry/exit points. 18 A holistic and multidisciplinary education will help develop well-rounded individuals who possess critical 21st century capacities in fields across the arts, humanities, languages, sciences, social sciences, and professional, technical, and vocational fields; an ethic of social engagement; soft skills, such as communication, discussion and debate; and rigorous specialization in a chosen field or fields. Such a holistic education shall be, in the long term, the approach of all undergraduate programmes, <sup>19</sup> including those in professional, technical, and vocational disciplines. The undergraduate degree will be of either 3 or 4-year duration, with multiple exit options within this period, with appropriate certifications- 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 shall be the preferred option since it allows the opportunity to experience the full range of holistic and multidisciplinary education in addition to a focus on the chosen major and minors as per the choices of the student. 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. Model public universities for holistic and multidisciplinary education, Multidisciplinary Education and Research Universities (MERUs) will be set up and will aim to attain the highest standards for multidisciplinary education across India<sup>20</sup>. A number of initiatives will be taken to ensure optimal learning environments are created that are engaging and supportive, and enable all students to succeed. All institutions and faculty will have the autonomy to innovate on matters of curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment within a broad framework of higher education qualifications that ensures consistency across institutions and programmes and across the ODL, online<sup>21</sup>, and the traditional 'in-class' modes. HEIs shall move to a criterion-based grading system that assesses student achievement based on the learning goals for each programme, and also move away from high-stakes examinations towards more continuous and comprehensive evaluation. Universities and colleges will set up highquality support centres and will be given adequate funds and academic resources to encourage and support students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Professional academic and career counselling will be available to all students, as well as counsellors to ensure physical, psychological and emotional well-being.<sup>22</sup>

Rationalised Institutional Architecture A new vision and architecture for higher education has been envisaged with large, well-resourced, vibrant multidisciplinary institutions. Higher Education Institutions will be transformed into large multidisciplinary universities, colleges, and HEI clusters/Knowledge Hubs, each of which will aim to have 3,000 or more students. A university will mean a multidisciplinary institution of higher learning that offers undergraduate and graduate programmes, with high quality teaching, research, and community engagement. The definition of university will allow a spectrum of institutions that range from Research intensive Universities, Teaching-intensive Universities and Autonomous degree granting Colleges (ACs). The system of affiliation will be phased out over 15 years and a stage-wise mechanism for granting graded autonomy to colleges, through a transparent system of graded accreditation, will be established.<sup>24</sup> Over a period of time, it is envisaged that every college would develop into either an Autonomous degree granting College, or a constituent college of a university. National Research Foundation(NRF) A new entity will be set up to catalyze and expand research and innovation across the country. The overarching goal of the NRF will be to enable a culture of research to permeate through our universities, helping to develop a culture of research in the country through suitable incentives for and recognition of outstanding research, and by undertaking major initiatives to seed and grow research at State Universities and other public institutions where research capability is currently limited. The NRF will competitively fund research in all disciplines. Successful research will be recognized, and where relevant, implemented through close linkages with governmental agencies as well as with industry and private/philanthropic organizations<sup>23</sup>

Financial support for students: Efforts will be made to incentivize the merit of students belonging to SC, ST, OBC, and other SEDGs. The National Scholarship Portal will be expanded to support, foster, and track the progress of students receiving scholarships. Private HEIs will be encouraged to offer larger numbers of free ships and scholarships to their students. Open and distance learning will be expanded, thereby playing a significant role in increasing the Gross Enrolment Ratio to 50%. Measures such as online courses and digital repositories, funding for research, improved student services, credit-based recognition of MOOCs, etc., will be taken to ensure it is at par with the highest quality inclass programmes. Internationalization of education will be facilitated through both institutional collaborations, <sup>25</sup> and



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student and faculty mobility and allowing entry of top world ranked Universities to open campuses in our country. Motivated, Energized, and Capable Faculty NEP recognises that the success of higher education institutions is the quality and engagement of its faculty. HEIs will have clearly defined, independent, and transparent processes and criteria for faculty recruitment. Faculty will be given the freedom to design their own curricular and pedagogical approaches within the approved framework. Excellence will be further incentivized through appropriate rewards, promotions, recognitions, and movement into institutional leadership. Faculty not delivering on basic norms will be held accountable. Effective Governance and leadership in HEIs Through a suitable system of graded accreditation and graded autonomy, and in a phased manner over a period of 15 years, all HEIs in India will aim to become independent self-governing institutions pursuing innovation and excellence. Measures will be taken at all HEIs to ensure leadership of the highest quality and promote an institutional culture of excellence. Institutional governance based on autonomy - academic, administrative and financial -is envisioned with each higher education institution having an Board of Governors. All leadership positions and Head of institutions will be offered to persons with high academic qualifications and demonstrated administrative and leadership capabilities along with abilities to manage complex situations Regulation There will be a single overarching umbrella body for promotion of higher 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). Regulation will be 'light but tight' to ensure financial probity and public-spiritedness to eliminate conflicts of interest with transparent self-disclosure as the norm not an inspectorial regime. The regulatory body will function through a faceless intervention through technology for regulation & will have powers to penalise HEIs not conforming to norms and standards. Public and private higher education institutions will be governed by the same set of norms for regulation, accreditation and academic standards. Teacher Education: The 4-year integrated stage-specific, subject- specific Bachelor of Education offered at multidisciplinary institutions would be the way forward. A new and comprehensive National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education, NCFTE 2021, will be formulated by the NCTE in consultation with NCERT. By future, the minimum degree qualification for teaching will be a 4-year integrated B.Ed. degree that teaches a range of knowledge content and pedagogy and includes strong practicum training in the form of student-teaching at local schools. Stringent action will be taken against substandard stand-alone Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs). <sup>27</sup>A National Mission for Mentoring shall be established, with a large pool of outstanding senior/retired faculty – including those with the ability to teach in Indian languages - who would be willing to provide short and long-term mentoring/professional support to university/college teachers. Professional Education All 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. Technology in Education An autonomous body, the National Educational Technology Forum (NETF), will be created 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 will be done to improve classroom processes, support teacher professional development, enhance educational access for disadvantaged groups and streamline educational planning, administration and management. Technology-based education platforms, such as DIKSHA/SWAYAM, will be better integrated across school and higher education.<sup>28</sup> HEIs will play an active role in conducting research on disruptive technologies and in creating instructional materials and courses including online courses in cutting-edge domains. Online Education and Digital Education: A comprehensive set of recommendations for promoting online education consequent in the recent rise in epidemics and pandemics in order to ensure preparedness with alternative modes of quality education whenever and wherever traditional and in-person modes of education are not possible, has been covered. A dedicated unit for the purpose of orchestrating the building of digital infrastructure, digital content and capacity building will be created in the MHRD to look after the e-education needs of both school and higher education.

Adult Education The policy aims to achieve 100% youth and adult literacy by 2030. Promotion of Indian languages To ensure the preservation, growth, and vibrancy of all Indian languages, several initiatives are envisaged. More HEIs, and more programmes in higher education, will use the mother tongue/local language as a medium of instruction, and/or offer programmes bilingually, in order to increase access and GER and also to promote the strength, usage, and vibrancy of all Indian languages. An Indian Institute of Translation and Interpretation (IITI) will be established. Sanskrit and all Indian language institutes and departments across the country will be significantly strengthened. National Institute (or Institutes) for Pali, Persian and Prakrit will be set up. Efforts to preserve and promote all Indian languages including classical, tribal and endangered languages will be undertaken. Financing Education Education is a public service and must not be a commercial activity or a source of profit. Multiple mechanisms with checks and balances will combat and stop the commercialization of higher education. All education institutions will be held to similar standards of audit and disclosure as a 'not for profit' entity. The Centre and the States will work together to



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increase the public investment in Education sector to reach 6% of GDP at the earliest. The Central Advisory Board of Education will be strengthened to ensure coordination to bring overall focus on quality education. The remodeled and rejuvenated CABE shall also be responsible for developing, articulating, evaluating, and revising the vision of education in the country on a continuous basis, in close collaboration with MHRD and the corresponding apex bodies of States. It shall also create and continuously review the institutional frameworks that shall help attain this vision. Ministry of Education: In order to bring the focus back on education and learning, it may be desirable to re-designate MHRD as the Ministry of Education (MoE).<sup>30</sup>

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