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REFORMS IN HIGHER EDUCATION – A STUDY OF EDUCATION POLICY 2020

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Abstract: *The shift toward higher quality is the most effective way of developing and maximizing India's vast talent pool. The National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) is being created to address the challenges of making every higher education institution a reputable and best institution for higher education. There is a lack of emphasis on cognitive skill development and learning outcomes. Higher education helps to shape a nation that is enlightened, socially conscious, ethical, knowledgeable, and skilled in devising and implementing effective solutions to its problems. The reforms in India's Higher Education System, regulatory structure, and teaching pedagogy are analysed in this paper.*

Keywords: *Higher Education, Reforms in Higher Education, National Education Policy 2020*

Introduction

Amplification of higher education (HE) results in economic growth, variety, expanded resources, and technological advances; HE contributes to the development of a nation that is liberal, socially conscious, intelligent, and capable of formulating and executing appropriate solutions to its issues (NEP, 2020). Regarding quality, India's HE lags behind other affluent nations. The NEP 2020 focuses on bringing about significant changes to the higher education system (HES) to *provide more employment possibilities, be dynamic, and contribute to the development of an egalitarian, comprehensive, and plural society.* The foundation of the policy lies in *access, equity, quality, affordability, and accountability.* It aspires to transform India into a *thriving hub of knowledge.* NEP 2020 is an excellent reform that refreshes a 34-year-old policy concept and foresees much-needed reforms

in the Indian Education System (IES) while preserving a careful balance between tradition and an interdisciplinary approach (Indian Era, 2020). The recommendation made by the Kothari Commission that at least 6% of GDP be allocated to education spending was disregarded by the administration (Kumar, 2018). Higher education has had a hard time dealing with problems like unintentional growth, educated unemployment, uneven growth, the commercialization of education, financial crises, and the digital divide between quantity and quality, equity and excellence, and creativity and conformity. These problems are long-term threats to HE (Saravana and Padmini, 2020). The Indian HES is divided into several levels, which include:

1. Technical and Vocational Education.
2. Diploma Programs.
3. Education at the undergraduate
2. Education at the post-graduate
3. Doctoral Programs

According to the All-India Survey on Higher Education 2019-20 (AISHE 2021) the Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) for HE in India is calculated to be 27.1% for students between the ages of 18 and 23, with males accounting for 26.9% and girls accounting for 27.3% of the total enrollment. The NEP has increased the GER by 5% over the last seven years, so increasing the GER by 24% over the next 15 years is a difficult mission for the HES that can only be accomplished if the policy is properly implemented.

One of the major issues confronting the HES today is that it has become severely fermented, with less emphasis on developing cognitive skills and learning outcomes. The current pandemic's primary focus is advancing tools and techniques for e-learning and digital classes. There is a lack of teacher and institutional autonomy and inadequate procedures for merit-based career management and promotion of faculty members and administrators of educational institutions. In adequate governance and leadership and an inefficient regulatory framework are additional contributing factors to the problems plaguing the HES. A tight division of subjects, along with early specialization and student segregation, produces specialized fields of study. Some students opt for a particular course simply because there are more employment opportunities without focusing on their interests. There is limited access, especially in socioeconomically disadvantaged areas, as only a few higher education institutions teach in local languages. Despite the critical importance of research, India currently spends 0.69% of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on research and innovation (NEP, 2020). Most universities and colleges focus less on research, and funding for peer-reviewed research across fields is scarce. The total student enrolment currently pursuing PhDs in HE is only 0.5%; the main reason for this low number is the saturated job market for Ph.Ds, and they have very limited opportunities outside of academia (Bhattacharjee, 2019). Large affiliating universities result in low undergraduate standards, the current area of study for improving HE quality.

According to the Word Bank (2022), spending on education in India was 3.9% of the total GDP in 2012 and 3.84% in 2013, an increase from 2015 and nearly constant for four years. It has risen slightly to 4.5 by 2020. HE spending in India has remained largely stable as a percentage of total budgets, with an average of 1.47% over the last 12 years (Economic Survey (2019-2020 and 2020-21); to educational quality, education policy must reform. From 2012 to 2018, India ranked last among the BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) in government education spending as a percentage of GDP. South Africa and Brazil spend more than 5% of their GDP annually on education.

Further, the World Bank reveals that South Africa and Brazil are spending the highest amount as a percentage of GDP on Education among the BRICS countries (World Bank, 2022). South Africa spent 2012 to 2018 around 5.5% of its GDP on education but increased their expenditure to a great extent in 2019 and 2020. China is constant in its spending on education. Russia has increased its spending since 2017. India has seen increased spending on the education sector as a percentage of GDP since 2015 but from 2012 to 2014 there is a slight decrease in India's spending on education. Among the BRICS countries Brazil and South Africa are spending more on education compared to Russia, India, and China.

Indian National Education Policy – An Evolution

In India's pre-independence education system, students were exposed to the Upanishads, Buddhists, and medieval, and modern times. In 1871, the Madrasas of Calcutta established the foundations of modern organized education, which ended in 1944 with the Sergeant Report. As early as 1854, Wood's Dispatch on Education (1854), Lord Macaulay's Minute (1882), The Indian Education Commission (1882), The Indian Universities Act (1904), and the Government of India Resolution (1913) were all in progress (Sime & Latchanna, 2018).

The Education Commission strongly influenced Indian education policies after Independence (Patel, Manjunatha, and Indira, 2012). The University Education Commission was the first to be established in 1948. The Commission aimed to establish universities that provide knowledge and wisdom for long-term development. The Secondary Education Commission was established in 1952 to provide a broader perspective on Indian educational problems and to propose ways to increase production efficiency. The Commission's report urged the diversification of high school curricula and the formation of technical institutions based on a standardized model followed throughout India (Ibid). Indian education needs a fundamental reconstruction, virtually a revolution, with three primary components: an internal transformation, a quality enhancement, and an extension of educational facilities.

Recommendations made by the Education Commission (1964-1966) formed the basis for NPE, which was adopted in 1968. According to a proposal, all children should

have access to free and obligatory education through the age of 14. Teachers with specific training teach secondary education in English, Hindi, and a regional language. Increasing national spending on education to 6% of GDP The 10+2+3 or 10+2+4 structure of the national compulsory education system *Child Centred Approach*, *Operation Blackboard*, and the construction of the *Rural University* model were all part of a new NEP established in 1986 that emphasized eliminating educational gaps and equalizing educational opportunity (Indian Era, 2020). New NEPs in 1992 called for a common entrance exam for professional and technical programs in India, and the NEP of 1986 was amended in 1992. As a result of this policy, the IES is being urged to undergo more radical changes, including a focus on student moral development and the integration of education into daily life (Ranganathan, 2007). 2005 saw the introduction of a new *Common Minimum Program* policy. As India's socio-economic landscape changed dramatically following 1986, it became clear that its educational system must evolve to keep pace. The previous NEP of 1986 will be overhauled by the third NEP 2020, which take effect in July 2020.

Reforms in the Regulatory System

The Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) will supervise all higher education in India, except for medical and legal education (NEP, 2020). The HECI plans to create four separate verticals to ensure the distinct functions of regulation, accreditation, funding, and academic standard-setting are all met. The following are the primary policies and regulations for each of the four regulatory tiers:

1. The regulatory system, which consists of the National Higher Education Regulatory Council (NHERC), is implemented as a single regulator for the HE sector, except for medical and legal education. It will regulate financial integrity, good governance, and the complete online and offline self-disclosure of all funds, audits, procedures, infrastructure, staff, courses, and educational outcomes.
2. The National Accreditation Council (NAC) is the second vertical of HECI; a robust system of graded accreditation will be implemented as benchmarks for all HEIs to achieve quality, self-governance, and autonomy.
3. The third vertical is the Higher Education Grants Council (HEGC), which will deal with higher education funding and financing based on transparent criteria, such as Institutional Development Plans (IDP) prepared by institutions and performance progress. HEGC will oversee awarding scholarships, developing funds for new focus areas, and expanding quality program offerings in HEIs across disciplines and fields.
4. The General Education Council (GEC) will define *graduate characteristics*, which are the anticipated learning outcomes for higher education programs. Both the National Higher Education Qualification Framework (NHEQF) and the National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF) will be developed and linked. In terms of these learning outcomes, the NHEQF will characterize

higher education qualifications leading to a degree/diploma/certificate. The General Education Council will also define facilitative standards for credit transfer, equivalency, and other issues through the NHEQF. Professional standard-setting organizations (PSSOs), including ICAR, VCI, and NCTE, will be urged to join the General Education Council.

5. Every higher education institution will have a Board of Governors (BoG). This board will have the authority to make all nominations, including the appointment of the school's president, and to make all governance decisions without the intervention of politics or the outside world.
6. An Academic Bank of Credit (ABC) focusing on a multidisciplinary approach to education will be implemented, with the ability to digitally store academic credits earned from various approved HEIs. This will enable degrees from HEIs to be awarded based on credits earned in many developed countries.
7. The National Research Foundation (NRF) would oversee funding, mentoring, and the development of 'the quality of research in India. The NRF will enable and promote a thriving culture of research and innovation, as well as research labs and other research institutions. Its objective is to provide funding for Indian scholars working in various fields, including some unrelated to science. Virtual labs, e-courses, and the National Educational Technology Forum (NETF) were established in eight regional languages.
8. There will be a nationwide Common Entrance Exam for university admissions administered by the National Testing Agency (NTA). The school has sole authority over whether to employ the NTAs evaluations in the admissions process. Increasing quality and equity in education is one of its many potential benefits. A common aptitude test and related tests will be given at least twice a year.

Reforms in the HEI

India's NEP aims to consolidate the country's numerous universities, colleges, and other educational institutions into large, multidisciplinary universities and colleges. This will make India's HES less disjointed. According to the policy, single-stream HEIs would be phased out over time. The undergraduate degree will take three or four years, and those who drop out at a certain time will have several options and certifications. HEIs can offer different master's degree programs depending on the student's bachelor's degree. There will be some freedom in how many master's Programs are offered: There is a two-year option for students who have already completed a three-year graduate degree program. The second year is devoted to research. One-year and five-year bachelor's programs are available to students who complete a four-year graduate degree with research. Master's For the Ph.D., program, you will require a master's degree or a four-year bachelor's degree with research

experience. Students pursuing a doctorate can obtain the required teaching experience through teaching assistantships NEP, 2020). As a result, Ph.D., programs will shift their concentration. Professional and technical education will be part of the HES.

HEIs should have access to essential infrastructure and amenities, such as potable water, clean restrooms, blackboards, offices, instructional materials, libraries, laboratories, and comfortable classrooms. Every classroom will access the most advanced educational technology, facilitating enhanced learning experiences. The world's leading universities would be permitted to establish campuses in India and be accorded the same regulatory, governance, and content standards as India's other autonomous institutions.

The following fundamental alterations to the present educational system are included in the NEP 2020:

1. Changing the curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, and student help would provide students with a better experience and ensure that post-graduates have the knowledge, skills, self-confidence, and entrepreneurship training they need to assist society and the country become more productive.
2. Digitizing libraries gives students and staff online access to information on any subject and helps the liberal education paradigm.
3. During an undergraduate degree, each student must do at least one full semester's worth of social engagement helps each student learn about the problems of the poor and prepares them for a life of social responsibility.
4. Encourage local HEI to collaborate with foreign educational establishments on twining programs, dual degree programs, student exchange programs, faculty exchange programs, international research collaborations, the establishment of offshore campuses by Indian educational institutions, and the establishment of the world's top 100 institutes in India
5. Ensure at least one large, interdisciplinary university and college in or near each district and more HEIs across India that offer regional/Indian language programs.
6. Establish an NRF with the goals of funding research that has been evaluated by professionals and promoting research at educational institutions like universities and colleges.
7. Improving the way that higher education institutions are managed by providing them with highly qualified, independent boards that have academic and administrative flexibility and that are supervised by a single higher education authority.
8. Increasing access, equity, and inclusion via a variety of strategies, such as private/philanthropic colleges granting scholarships to disadvantaged students.

9. Internet-based instruction and Open Distance Learning (ODL)
10. Make infrastructure and instructional materials accessible to students with special needs.
11. Programs to help new faculty get started, programs to help faculty grow, and seniors who help new faculty.
12. Reaffirming the university's honesty in academic and leadership positions by making appointments based on merit and letting people move up in their careers based on teaching, research, and service.
13. Recognizing the independence of both the faculty and the institution.
14. Students can choose classes from a wide range of specialized and cross-disciplinary subjects.
15. Teachers are free to make changes to the curriculum and decide how to evaluate students.
16. The marks each student gets for each topic are based on ongoing evaluations by the relevant faculty members of the department, so each student's performance mark is based on how well they do.
17. Transitioning from a fixed undergraduate curriculum to diverse courses.
18. When evaluating faculty, supervisors, peers, and students can give feedback on how they contribute to teaching, research, and practice.

Reforms in Teaching

The NEP encourages using clearly defined, independent, and transparent processes and criteria for hiring faculty and a fast-track promotion system to recognize high-impact research and contributions. There will be new questions on the tests to see if someone is qualified to be a teacher, and the results will be used to hire people. Faculty positions at different schools usually cannot be moved to other schools. This makes them feel like they have a real stake in, connection to, and commitment to their school and community. Within the approved framework, faculty can come up with their own textbook and material choices, assignments, and ways to test and grade students. Giving faculty the freedom to teach and guide new ways will be a key motivator and show their creativity. Early on, the best faculty members with good academic and service records will be found and trained to move up the leadership ladder. Leadership positions should never be empty. Instead, there should be a period of overlap when new leaders take over so that institutions can keep running smoothly.

Education needs to focus on training and growth to keep up with new technology and other changes in today's competitive world. The Policy's goal was to enhance teachers' skills, who play a key role in education, by strengthening and significantly expanding existing institutional arrangements and ongoing initiatives to meet the

needs of enriched teaching-learning processes for quality education. Local, regional, state, national, and international workshops and online modules for teacher development can help teachers learn new things and enhance their skills. Each year, they will have to participate in at least 50 hours of professional development activities. There will be a National Mentoring Mission with a large group of outstanding senior or retired faculty willing to help new faculty members with their careers in the short and long term.

One of the best ways to enhance teaching is to put teacher training in multidisciplinary colleges and universities with integrated four-year programs and strict changes to the curriculum and the way teachers teach. By 2030, all teachers will have to have a B.Ed. Degree, which takes four years to complete. All applications to programs that train teachers will be taken care of by the NTA. Focusing on the quality of teaching and how well it works will enhance the quality of education.

Conclusion

The NEP is an ambitious and forward-looking plan that requires teachers, students, and management to be motivated to make a difference for a better future. Putting policies into action is a problem in every field. A few things still need to be done to give the best education possible. India has privatized higher education more than any other developed country. It is time for the government to intervene with new education policies on a larger scale that can truly generate human capital (Sharma, 2018). The HES must now put research and innovation at the top of its list of priorities by setting up centres for start-ups, technology development, frontier research, and cross-disciplinary research, including research in the social sciences (Sheikh, 2017). There is a need for closer collaborations between industry and every HEI, i.e., greater industry-academic linkages, so students do not have to worry about placement, as it is difficult to find a job that matches their qualifications in today's competitive market. The issues related to HEI's location with high noise pollution, and less area where it is difficult to accommodate basic facilities should be considered as it is also a major reason for declining education quality. Different models of success in developed countries can also be used to make changes to the education system (Aithal and Aithal, 2019) and can be changed to fit the needs of a country. It also depends on the regions or states, which have different amounts of people and things to offer (Sime and Latchanna, 2018). Everyone who has a stake in the HES must be committed and have a way to put any strategy designed by national policy into action.

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