International Journal of Applied Research

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New education policy 2020: Transforming the regulatory system in higher education

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Abstract
It is well known defined, visionary and fotoristic education policy is a must for every country because education is the key driver of economic and social progress. Recently Government of India announced its new Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020), Which intended to transform our nation sustainably into an equitable and vibrant knowledge society by providing high quality education to all, It is a welcome step, which will bring about a paradigm shift India's education system and will transform it into a modern, progressive and equitable one.
The world is undergoing rapid changes in the knowledge landscape. With various dramatic scientific and technological advances, such as the rise of big data, machine learning, and artifict on intelligence, many unskilled jobs worldwide may be taken over by machines, while the need for a skilled workforce, particularly involving mathematics, computer science, and data science, in conjection with multidisciplinary abilities across the sciences, social sciences, and humanities, will be increasingly in greater demand. With climate change, increasing pollution, and depleting natural resources, there will be a sizeable shift in how we meet the world's energy, water, food, and sanitation needs, again resulting in the need for new skilled labour, particularly in biology, chemistry, physics, agriculture, climate science, and social science. The growing emergence of epidemics and pandemics will also call for collaborative research in infectious disease management and development of vaccines and the resultant social issues heightens the need for multidisciplinary learning. There will be a growing demand for humanities and art, as India moves towards becoming a developed country as well as among the three largest economies in the world.

Keywords: New education policy 2020, NEP 2020, visionary and fotoristic education policy

Introduction

Indeed, with the quickly changing employment landscape and global ecosystem, it is becoming increasingly critical that children not only learn, but more importantly learn how to learn. Education thus, must move towards less content, and more towards learning about how to think critically and solve problems, how to be creative and multidisciplinary, and how to innovate, adapt, and absorb new material in novel and changing fields. Pedagogy must evolve to make education more experiential, holistic, integrated, inquiry-driven, discovery-oriented, learner-centred, discussion-based, flexible, and, of course, enjoyable. The curriculum must include basic arts, crafts, humanities, games, sports and fitness, languages, literature, culture, and values, in addition to science and mathematics, to develop all aspects and capabilities of learners; and make education more well-rounded, useful, and fulfilling to the learner. Education must build character, enable learners to be ethical, rational, compassionate, and caring, while at the same time prepare them for gainful, fulfilling employment.

The gap between the current state of learning outcomes and what is required must be bridged through undertaking major reforms that bring the highest quality, equity, and integrity into the system, from early childhood care and education through higher education.

The aim must be for India to have an education system by 2040 that is second to none, with equitable access to the highest-quality education for all learners regardless of social or economic background.

This National Education Policy 2020 is the first education policy of the 21st century and aims to address the many growing developmental imperatives of our country. This Policy Proposes the revision and revamping of all aspects of the education Structure, including its

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regulation and governance, to new system that is aligned with the aspirational goals of 21st century education, including SDG4, while building upon India's traditions and value systems, The National Education Policy lays particular emphasis on the development of the creative potential of each individual. It is based on the principle that education must develop not only cognitive capacities - both the 'foundational capacities 'of literacy and numeracy and 'higher-order' cognitive capacities, such as critical thinking and problem solving — but also social, ethical, and emotional capacities and dispositions.

Emergence of NEP 2020
Long back India's first Education Policy was introduced in the year 1986. About thirty-four years thereafter, a new policy called National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) is introduced by the Government of India. NEP 2020 thus replaces National Policy on Education of 1986. The policy signifies a huge milestone for India's education system, which will certainly make India an attractive destination for higher education world-wide.

The Government of India had taken initiative in January 2015, and the actual consultation process for the New Education Policy was started under the chairmanship of former Cabinet Secretary Shri. T. S. R. Subramanian. Based on the committee report, in June 2017, the draft NEP was submitted in 2019 by a panel led by former Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) Chairman Dr. K. Kasturirangan. The Draft New Education Policy (DNEP) 2019 was then released by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), followed by a number of public consultations. Thereafter, the Ministry undertook a rigorous consultation process in formulating the draft policy. In the process of emergence the new policy document has been updated, revised and finally approved on 29th July, 2020.

National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020), which was approved by the Union Cabinet of India on 29th July, 2020, outlines the vision of India's new education system. The policy envisions an India-centred education system that contributes directly to transforming the nation sustainably into an equitable and vibrant knowledge society, by providing high quality education to all. The policy provides a comprehensive framework for elementary education to higher education as well as vocational training in both rural and urban India. The policy aims to transform India's education system by 2021. The policy unequivocally endorses and envisions a substantial increase in public investment in education by both the Central government and all State Governments.

NEP 2020: What's it about?
National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) will bring in ambitious and dramatic change that could transform education system in the country. It will bring about revolutionary changes in the education system of India.

Transforming the Regulatory System of Higher Education
Regulation of higher education has been too heavy-handed for decades; too much has been attempted to be regulated with too little effect. The mechanistic and disempowering nature of the regulatory system has been rife with very basic problems, such as heavy concentrations of power within a few bodies, conflicts of interest among these bodies, and a resulting lack of accountability. The regulatory system is in need of a complete overhaul in order to re-energize the higher education sector and enable it to thrive.

To address the above-mentioned issues, the regulatory system of higher education will ensure that the distinct functions of regulation, accreditation, funding, and academic standard setting will be performed by distinct, independent, and empowered bodies. This is considered essential to create checks-and-balances in the system, minimize conflicts of interest, and eliminate concentrations of power. To ensure that the four institutional structures carrying out these four essential functions work independently yet at the same time and work in synergy towards common goals. These four structures will be set up as four independent verticals within one umbrella institution, the Higher Education Commission of India (HECI).

The first vertical of HECI will be the National Higher Education Regulatory Council (NHERC). It will function as the common, single point regulator for the higher education sector including teacher education and excluding medical and legal education, thus eliminating the duplication and disjunction of regulatory efforts by the multiple regulatory agencies that exist at the current time. It will require a relook and repealing of existing Acts and restructuring of various existing regulatory bodies to enable this single point regulation. NHERC will be set up to regulate in a 'light but tight' and facilitative manner, meaning that a few important matters particularly financial probity, good governance, and the full online and offline public self-disclosure of all finances, audits, procedures, infrastructure, faculty/staff, courses, and educational outcomes will be very effectively regulated. This information will have to be made available and kept updated and accurate by all higher education institutions on a public website maintained by NHERC and on the institutions' websites. Any complaints or grievances from stakeholders and others arising out of the information placed in public domain shall be adjudicated by NHERC. Feedback from randomly selected students including differently-abled students at each HEI will be solicited online to ensure valuable input at regular intervals.

The primary mechanism to enable such regulation will be accreditation. The second vertical of HECI will, therefore, be a 'meta-accrediting body', called the National Accreditation Council (NAC). Accreditation of institutions will be based primarily on basic norms, public self-disclosure, good governance, and outcomes, and it will be carried out by an independent ecosystem of accrediting institutions supervised and overseen by NAC. The task to function as a recognized accreditor shall be awarded to an appropriate number of institutions by NAC. In the short term, a robust system of graded accreditation shall be established, which will specify phased benchmarks for all HEIs to achieve set levels of quality, self-governance, and autonomy. In turn, all HEIs will aim, through their Institutional Development Plans (IDPs), to attain the highest level of accreditation over the next 15 years, and thereby eventually aim to function as self-governing degree-granting institutions/clusters. In the long run, accreditation will become a binary process, as per the extant global practice.

The third vertical of HECI will be the Higher Education Grants Council (HEGC), which will carry out funding and financing of higher education based on transparent criteria, including the IDPs prepared by the institutions and the

progress made on their implementation. HEGC will be entrusted with the disbursement of scholarships and developmental funds for launching new focus areas and expanding quality programme offerings at HEIs across disciplines and fields.

The fourth vertical of HECI will be the General Education Council (GEC), which will frame expected learning outcomes for higher education programmes, also referred to as 'graduate attributes'. A National Higher Education Qualification Framework (NHEQF) will be formulated by the GEC and it shall be in sync with the National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF) to ease the integration of vocational education into higher education. Higher education qualifications leading to a degree/diploma/certificate shall be described by the NHEQF in terms of such learning outcomes. In addition, the GEC shall set up facilitative norms for issues, such as credit transfer, equivalence, etc., through the NHEQF. The GEC will be mandated to identify specific skills that students must acquire during their academic programmes, with the aim of preparing well-rounded learners with 21st century skills.

The professional councils, such as the Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR), Veterinary Council of India (VCI), National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE), Council of Architecture (CoA), National Council for Vocational Education and Training (NCVET) etc., will act as Professional Standard Setting Bodies (PSSBs). They will play a key role in the higher education system and will be invited to be members of the GEC. These bodies, after restructuring as PSSBs, will continue to draw the curricula, lay down academic standards and coordinate between teaching, research and extension of their domain/discipline, as members of the GEC. As members of the GEC, they would help in specifying the curriculum framework, within which HEIs may prepare their own curricula. Thus, PSSBs would also set the standards or expectations in particular fields of learning and practice while having no regulatory role. All HEIs will decide how their educational programmes respond to these standards, among other considerations, and would also be able to reach out for support from these standard-setting bodies or PSSBs, if needed.

Such a system architecture will ensure the principle of functional separation by eliminating conflicts of interests between different roles. It will also aim to empower HEIs, while ensuring that the few key essential matters are given due attention. Responsibility and accountability shall devolve to the HEIs concomitantly. No distinction in such expectations shall be made between public and private HEIs.

Such a transformation will require existing structures and institutions to reinvent themselves and undergo an evolution of sorts. The separation of functions would mean that each vertical within HECI would take on a new, single role which is relevant, meaningful, and important in the new regulatory scheme.

The functioning of all the independent verticals for Regulation (NHERC), Accreditation (NAC), Funding (HEGC), and Academic Standard Setting (GEC) and the overarching autonomous umbrella body (HECI) itself will be based on transparent public disclosure, and use technology extensively to reduce human interface to ensure efficiency and transparency in their work. The underlying principle will be that of a faceless and transparent regulatory intervention using technology. Strict compliance measures with stringent action, including penalties for false disclosure of mandated information, will be ensured so that Higher Education Institutions are conforming to the basic minimum norms and standards. HECI itself will be resolving disputes among the four verticals. Each vertical in HECI will be an independent body consisting of persons having high expertise in the relevant areas along with integrity, commitment, and a demonstrated track record of public service. HECI itself will be a small, independent body of eminent public-spirited experts in higher education, which will oversee and monitor the integrity and effective functioning of HECI. Suitable mechanisms will be created within HECI to carry out its functions, including adjudication.

Setting up new quality HEIs will also be made far easier by the regulatory regime, while ensuring with great effectiveness that these are set up with the spirit of public service and with due financial backing for long-term stability. HEIs performing exceptionally well will be helped by Central and State governments to expand their institutions, and thereby attain larger numbers of students and faculty as well as disciplines and programmes. Public Philanthropic Partnership models for HEIs may also be piloted with the aim to further expand access to high-quality higher education.

Conclusion

We know that a well-defined, well-designed and comprehensive education policy is essential for a country at school, college, and university levels due to the reason that education leads to economic and social progress. Even today, adoption of appropriate education system is necessary in consideration of the prevailing conditions. Thus, to be precise, it is well accepted fact that a good education policy always leads to good and quality education in a country.

National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) is a welcome and ambitious re-imagination of India's education system into a modern, progressive and equitable one. Built on the foundational pillars of Access, Equity, Quality Affordability and Accountablity, NEP 2020 is aligned to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SD). It aims to transform India into a vibrant knowledge society and global knowledge superpower by making both school and college education more holistic, flexible, multi-disciplinary, suited to 21st century needs. The policy calls for a large-scale implementation of a magnitude never before attempted anywhere in the world. The actual transformations will start from the academic year 2021-22 and will continue untile the year 2030, where the first level of transformation in expected to visible. The mission is aspirational but the successful implementation depends upon how would implementers understand the challenges and try to overcome it. It requires great deal of acceptance, commitment, optimism, change in attitude, and mind-set. No doubt, the Government of India tool a giant leap forward by announcing its new education policy i.e. the National Education Policy 2020 (NEP-2020), almost three decades after the last major revision was made to the policy in 1986. Even, the drafting committee of NEP-2020 has made a great attempt to design the policy that considers diverse viewpoints, global best practices in education, field experiences and stakeholders' feedback. The mission is

aspirational but the implementation roadmap will decide if this will truly foster an all-inclusive education that makes learners industry and future ready.

Summing up, the authors wants to convey the message that the policy has come at the right time and the objective is very noble. But, there lies a world of difference between laying down a policy on paper and following it in spirit. The success of NEP 2020 and the pace of its implementation depend to a large extent on how successfully the government, universities and schools can tide over the practical challenges facing it. To realize the dreams it contains, we Indians must overcome substantial execution challenges in a sustained manner for years and decades to come. Lastly, to say, "National Education Policy (NEP 2020) brings in ambitious changes that could transform the education system. But the key here is good implementation and execution".

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