

Original Article

National Education Policy 2020: A Study of Silent Features of NEP with reference to Higher Education in India.

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Abstract

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 marks an innovative reform in India's education system, aiming to transform it into an inclusive, multidisciplinary, and globally competitive environment. This paper examines the silent features of NEP 2020 with special reference to higher education system in India. It searches structural changes, governance reforms, multidisciplinary approaches, quality enhancement measures, and the integration of technology and research. The paper also highlights implementation challenges and suggests strategies to achieve the policy's transformative goals.

Introduction

The execution of previous education policies have concentrated largely on issues of access and equity. The incomplete plan of the National Policy on Education 1986, modified in 1992 (NPE 1986/92), is appropriately dealt with in this Policy. A major development since the last Policy of 1986/92 has been the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009 which laid down legal foundations for achieving universal elementary education.

The education system seeks to nurture well-rounded individuals who can think and act rationally, demonstrate compassion and empathy, and show courage and resilience. NEP 2020 aims to cultivate scientific temper, creative imagination, and strong ethical values, thereby preparing engaged, productive, and responsible citizens capable of contributing to an equitable, inclusive, and pluralistic society envisioned by the Constitution. A quality educational institution is one where every student feels welcomed and supported, where a safe, stimulating learning environment prevails, diverse learning opportunities are provided, and adequate physical infrastructure and resources are accessible to all learners. Achieving these standards should be the objective of every institution. At the same time, there must be seamless integration and coordination among institutions and across all stages of education.

Objectives of the Study:

1. The objective of the present research article is to study the Silent Features of NEP with reference to Higher Education in India.
2. To explore structural changes, governance reforms, multidisciplinary approaches, quality enhancement measures, and the integration of technology and research. To highlights implementation challenges and suggests strategies to achieve the policy's transformative goals.

Research Methodology

The present study is descriptive in nature. This research study is purely based on secondary data. This data is collected by review of various types of literatures like, Policy documents of Ministry of Education, Government of India (2020), Periodicals, journals and websites of UGC etc. These related data was then analysed and reviewed to arrive at the inferences and conclusions.

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Silent Features of NEP 2020: Higher Education

1. Important Principles of NEP 2020

These points emphasize an education system that supports the holistic development of every learner by nurturing individual potential, creativity, critical thinking, ethics, life skills, and respect for diversity. It prioritizes foundational literacy and numeracy, conceptual understanding over rote learning, flexibility in subject choices, and multidisciplinary learning without rigid separations between academic streams. The approach promotes multilingualism, technology integration, formative assessment, equity, and inclusion while valuing local context and Indian cultural roots. Teachers are placed at the centre of this system, supported by strong regulation, continuous improvement, research, and innovation, with education viewed as a public service backed by a strong and well-funded public education system.

2. Vision for Education

- Rooted in Indian ethos, promoting equity, inclusivity, and global awareness.
- Emphasizes respect for fundamental duties, constitutional values, and a deep-rooted pride in being Indian.
- Focus on developing responsible, global citizens committed to human rights and sustainable development.

3. Quality in Higher Education

- Education should not just focus on academic knowledge but also on developing well-rounded individuals with ethical values and intellectual curiosity.
- Curricula should be flexible and multidisciplinary, encouraging creativity and research, and offering diverse career opportunities.

4. Institutional Restructuring

- Aim to increase the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) to 50% by 2035.
- Shift towards large, multidisciplinary institutions offering education in both general and vocational streams.
- Affiliated colleges will be phased out over the next 15 years in favour of more autonomous and multidisciplinary institutions.

5. Holistic Education

- Multidisciplinary programs will blend the arts, sciences, humanities, and vocational training.
- Institutions like IITs will incorporate more humanities and soft skills into their curriculum.
- Students will have flexibility with multiple entry/exit points and an Academic Bank of Credit (ABC) to track their progress.

6. Research and Innovation

- **National Research Foundation (NRF)** will be established to foster a culture of research and provide funding for competitive projects.
- HEIs will focus on interdisciplinary research, linking industries and academia to drive innovation.

7. Student Support

- Comprehensive support services, including academic and career counseling, stress management, and accessible medical care.
- Emphasis on creating an inclusive environment for students from socio-economically disadvantaged groups (SEDGs) and gender equality.

8. Internationalization

- Increase the number of international students in India and vice versa.
- Encourage Indian universities to set up campuses abroad and facilitate foreign universities' operations in India.
- India will be promoted as a global hub for higher education.

9. Vocational Education

- Vocational training will be integrated into all levels of education, preparing students for practical and skill-based careers.
- The government aims for 50% of learners to have exposure to vocational education by 2025.

10. Regulatory and Governance Reforms

- Establishment of Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) to regulate, fund, and accredit institutions.
- Increased autonomy for institutions to innovate and focus on excellence.

11. Commercialization of Education

- All institutions must operate on a non-profit basis with transparent fee structures and audit mechanisms to prevent commercialization.

12. Faculty Development

- Universities and colleges will be equipped with modern infrastructure and teaching tools.
- Faculty will have the freedom to design curricula and teaching methods within a clear framework, promoting professional autonomy.

13. Promotion of Indian Languages and Culture

- Strong focus on preserving and promoting Indian languages, arts, and culture in the curriculum.

- Language diversity will be celebrated through initiatives like the three-language formula and teaching in Indian languages.

14. Professional Education

- Integration of professional courses like law, healthcare, and agriculture into multidisciplinary institutions.
- Emphasis on emerging fields such as AI, biotechnology, and sustainable living to enhance employability.

Key Areas of Change:

- **Multidisciplinary:** The policy envisions a shift from specialized, rigid disciplines to more flexible, holistic, and interdisciplinary learning.
- **Accessibility:** Efforts to improve access for students from all regions, backgrounds, and socio-economic statuses, with a focus on rural and disadvantaged areas.
- **Research and Innovation:** The creation of research hubs and the introduction of the NRF to increase India's contribution to global scientific and academic advancements.
- **Inclusivity and Diversity:** Strong emphasis on gender, socio-economic diversity, and the inclusion of marginalized groups within the education system.

Possible Impact:

- **Increased global competitiveness:** By promoting multidisciplinary studies and international collaborations, India aims to become a global leader in higher education.
- **Improved accessibility:** With the aim to expand higher education institutions and offer education in multiple languages, more students will have access to quality education.
- **Cultural preservation:** By focusing on Indian languages, arts, and cultural heritage, the policy supports the long-term preservation of India's rich history.

Conclusion

The National Education Policy envisions a transformative higher education system that is rooted in Indian values while being globally competitive. By promoting multidisciplinary learning, research and innovation, inclusivity, institutional autonomy, and the use of Indian languages, the policy aims to develop well-rounded, ethical, and skilled individuals. Overall, it seeks to expand access, improve quality, and make India a vibrant knowledge society and a global education hub. The National Education Policy 2020 represents a paradigm shift in India's approach to higher education. Its emphasis on flexibility, research, technology integration, and holistic learning is expected to enhance India's global academic standing. However, the success of NEP 2020 depends on effective implementation, adequate funding, and continuous monitoring. If executed strategically, NEP 2020 could transform India's higher education landscape into one that nurtures creativity, critical thinking, and innovation.

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