# International Journal of Multidisciplinary Comprehensive Research

## A critical study of NEP 2020 - salient features and challenges in the higher educational system

**Dr. Shamsher Singh [1*], Dr. Gurmeet Kaur [2]**

[1] HOD, Department of Management Studies, Droan College of Education & Technology, Uttarakhand State, India

[2] Principal, Department of B.Ed, Droan B.Ed College, Uttarakhand State, India

\* Corresponding Author: **Dr. Shamsher Singh**

## Article Info

## Abstract

Well defined and futuristic education policy is essential for a country at college levels due to the reason that education leads to economic and social progress. Different countries adopt different education systems by considering the tradition and culture and adopt different stages during their life cycle at college education levels to make it effective. The National Education Policy 2020 (NEP) 2020, which was approved by the Union Cabinet of India on 29 July 2020, outlines the vision of India's new education system. The new policy replaces the previous National Policy on Education, 1986. The policy is 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. Shortly after the release of the policy, the government clarified that no one will be forced to study any particular language and that the medium of instruction will not be shifted from English to any regional language. The language policy in NEP is a broad guideline and advisory in nature; and it is up to the states, institutions, and schools to decide on the implementation.

The new policy introduced many reforms in the Indian education system beginning with reformation at central level and renaming the Ministry of Human Resource and Development to Ministry of Education. The NEP proposes revision and revamping of education structure, including its regulation and governance, to create a new system aligning with the inspirational goals of 21st century education. The NEP Proposes sweeping changes including opening up of Indian higher education to foreign universities, dismantling of the Universities Grants Commission and the All India Council for Technical Education. The policy, while focusing on various facets of education, also tries to bridge the gap between education and technology. The biggest highlights of the NEP 2020 are that there would be single regulation for higher education institutions with setting up of Higher Education Commission of India that will eventually replace the existing regulatory bodies like the UGC or AICTE. The long-term plan of the policy is to do away with the current system of colleges affiliated to universities and numerous tiny colleges that are pedagogically unviable and financially costly would be merged with larger HEIs. The NEP 2020 aims to address various gaps existing in the education system of India and through this policy, India is expected to achieve sustainable development goal 2030 by ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education.

## 1. Introduction

The NEP 2020 replaces the National Policy on Education of 1986. In January 2015, a committee under former Cabinet Secretary T.S.R. Subramanian started the consultation process for the New Education Policy. Based on the committee report, in June 2017, the draft NEP was submitted in 2019 by a panel led by former Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) chief Krishnaswamy Kastrurirangan. The Draft New Education Policy (DNEP) 2019 was later released by Ministry of Human Resource Development, followed by a number of public consultations. T74 Draft NEP was 484 pages. The Ministry undertook a rigorous consultation process in formulating the draft policy: "over two lakh suggestion from 2.5 lakh gram panchayats, 6,600 blocks, 6,000 Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) 676 districts were received."

The National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020), launched on 29 July 2020, outlines the vision of India's new education system. NEP 2020 focuses on five pillars: Affordability, Accessibility, Quality Equity, and Accountability – to ensure continual learning. It has been crafted consistent with the needs of the citizens as a demand for knowledge in society and economy called for a need to acquire new skills on a regular basis.

Thus providing quality education and creating lifelong learning opportunities for all, leading to full and productive employment and decent work as enlisted in United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 2030, forms the thrust of NEP 2020. The NEP 2020 calls for key reforms in both school and higher education that prepare the next generation to thrive and compete in the new digital age. Thus, there is much emphasis upon multidisciplinary, digital literacy, written communication, problem-solving, logical reasoning, and vocational exposure in the document. India, being a growing liberal country for educational reforms, currently has about 845 universities and approximately 40,000 higher education institutions (HIEs), reflecting the overall high fragmentation and many small sized HELs in the country which are affiliated to these universities. It is found that over 40% of these small-sized institutions are running single program me against the expected reform to a multidisciplinary style of higher education, which is an essential requirement for the educational reforms in the country for the 21st century. To boost the growth of the Indian education sector, the present government decided to revamp it by introducing a comprehensive National Education Policy 2020. This is in line with the Prime Minister's recent call on leveraging the Fourth Industrial Revolution to take India to new heights. The currently introduced National Education Policy 2020 envisions an India cantered education system that contributes directly to transforming our nation sustainably into an equitable and vibrant knowledge society, by providing high quality education to all.

## Salient Features of NEP 2020: Higher Education
National Education Policy 2020 has been announced on 29.07.2020. The National Educational Policy 2020 proposes various reforms in higher education including technical education. A number of action points/activities for implementation in higher education are mentioned in the National Education Policy 2020. The biggest highlights of the NEP 2020 are that there would be single regulation for higher education institutions with setting up of Higher Education Commission of India that will eventually replace the existing regulatory bodies like the UGC or AICTE. The long – term plan of the policy is to do away with the current system of colleges affiliated to universities and numerous tiny college that are pedagogically unviable and financially costly would be merged with larger HEIs. The policy aims to instil greater institutional autonomy through independent Board of Governor and all standalone professional educational institutional autonomy through independent Board of Governor and all standalone professional educational institutions to become multidisciplinary by 2030. All the HELs would convert itself into multidisciplinary institutions with minimum student strength of 3000 by 2030. The policy promotes flexibility in choice of subjects and there will be no rigid separations between arts sciences, curricular and extra – curricular activities, and vocational and academic streams. Many institutions will be set up to regulate institutions, provide accreditation to HELs, develop learning outcomes for higher education programmes and provide funding to HELs based on transparent criteria. This policy would not disturb the existing alliance with foreign universities and the transition of students to UK HELs will be unaffected. The NEP has also paved way for foreign universities to set up campuses in India through institutional collaboration and exchange of students and faculty. Details of the salient features of NEP 2020 are as follows-

## 1. 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 2035.

## 2. 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. A holistic and multidisciplinary education will help develop will-rounded individuals who posses 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.

## 3. Undergraduate degree will be of either 3 or 4-Year duration
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 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.

**Table 1**

| 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 |

## 4. Academic Bank of Credit (ABC)
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 HEIs can be awarded taking into account credit earned.

## 5. Multidisciplinary Education and Research Universities (MERUs)
Multidisciplinary Education and Research Universities (MERUs) will be set up and will aim to attain the highest standards for multidisciplinary education across India.

## 6. Optimal Learning Environments
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 qualification that ensures consistency across institutions and programmes and across the ODL, online, 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 examination towards more continuous and comprehensive evaluation.

## 7. High-Quality support centres
Universities and colleges will set up high-quality support centres and will be given adequate funds and academic resources to encourage and support students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

## 8. Professional academic and career counselling
Professional academic and career counselling will be available to all students, as well as counsellors to ensure physical, psychological and emotional well-being.

## 9. 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 NRP will competitively fund research in all disciplines.

## 10. Financial support for student
Efforts will be made to incentivize the merit of students belonging to SC, ST, OBC, and 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 number of free ships and scholarships to their students.

## 11. Open and distance learning
Open and distance learning will be expanded, thereby playing a significant role in increasing the Gross Enrolment Ratio.

Measures such as online courses and digital repositories, funding for research, improved student services, etc. will be taken to ensure it is at par with the highest quality in-class programmes.

## 12. Faculty
Faculty NEP 2020 recognises that the success of higher education institutions in 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, promotion, recognitions, and movement into institutional leadership.

## 13. 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 pursing innovation and excellence. 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.

## 14. Regulation
Regulation there will be 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.

**Table 2**

| 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 institution |

## 15. 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. 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 a Board of Governors.

## 16. Single overarching umbrella body
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.

## 17. 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 2030, 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 gin the form of student-teaching at local schools. Stringent action will be taken against substandard stand-alone Teacher Education Institutions' (TEIs).

## 18. Establishing a National Mission for Mentoring
Establishing 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.

## 19. 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.

## 20. Creation of an autonomous body
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 DISHA/SWAYA, will be better integrated across school and higher education.

## 21. Online 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.

## 22. Promotion of Indian Languages
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 in 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 al Indian languages including classical, tribal and endangered languages will be undertaken.

## 23. Stop the Commercialization of Higher 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 increase the public investment in Education sector to reach 6% of GDP at the earliest.

## 24. Strengthened of the central Advisory Board
The Central Advisory Board of Education will be strengthened to ensure coordination to bring overall focus on quality education. The remodelled 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.

## Major Challenges in the Implementation of New Education Policy 2020
### 1. Opening universities every week is a strenuous task
India today has around 1,000 universities across the country. Doubling the Gross Enrolment Ratio in higher education by 2035 which is one of the stated goals of the policy will mean that we must open one University every week on an ongoing basis is an undeniably massive challenges.

### 2. Lack of infrastructure and funding
The nation education policy 2020 aims at making our home country a global choice for education by providing high quality, different variety and dynamic education hub to all the people in abroad. The policy focuses on raising expenditure in the education sector to reach 6% of GDP at the earliest. The education policy is not a newly structured policy; rather it is a compilation of different phases. Time by time it has been reshaped, restated and recapitulated several times. As per the analysis by accountability initiative, the education budgets fell in 16 large states in 2020-21. In nutshell, it sheds light that there is a consistent lack of political will for public investment I education. Presently, economy is slow along with the ongoing covid-19 crisis, the biggest query arise here is that how will the government implement the new economic policy 2020? How will it make huge investment with such decrease in allocated amount in budget 2020-21. It requires a heavy investment for upcoming years which includes targets like achieving 6% GDP in education, digital literacy, trained teachers, infrastructure, and increasing the gross enrolment ratio to 50% by 2035. Funding would have been a great challenge for the government, even if COVID like contingent situation occurs or not. This is because of the difficult to achieve targets under NEP 2020. Even in the past it has been seen the govt was not able to fully fund the education system.

## 3. Current emphasis on healthcare and economic recovery

Economists have been calling for large stimulus packages amounting to double-digit percentages of GDP, despite the strain on the exchequer. While the National Education Policy is a 20-year journey, one worry that we may be off to a stumbling start over the next 2-3 years, when government and budgetary priorities are claimed by the more urgent but equally important needs of healthcare and economic recover.

## 4. Mother tongue as a medium of instruction

The new education policy 2020 has advised that mother tongue/local language/home language/regional language should be used as a medium of instruction till class 5 preferably till class 8 and beyond it wherever possible but this new policy comes with a lot of challenges. Although the government has not made it mandatory but it has lead to a huge controversy and left us with a lot of question. If the policy is implemented the way it is proposed then it will also pose a challenge for higher education institutes where the medium of instruction is not mother tongue but usually a common language like English or Hindi, the language barrier will be created among the students and it may happen they find it difficult to communicate with each other. Eventually, it becomes a tug of war for students as well as the teachers. Language is used as a vehicle to protect the culture of a particular place but at the same time one should not forget that English is a Global Language of communication and empowerment and the government needs to seek a midway out to create a balance between the two thereby ensuring that people stay connected with the roots as well be able to communicate with the outside world confidently.

## 5. Vocational Education and skilling

National education policy 2020 has mandated vocational courses starting from $6^{th}$ grade and states that every child will be taught skills like local crafts, carpentry, cooking, gardening, etc. One of the major challenges with regard to vocational training is the lack of proper resources. For introducing vocational courses in school, majorly 3 things will be required i.e. infrastructure, set up and trained personnel and the same question arises who will bear these additional costs because this requires high investment. Another concern is that there is a majority of students who belong to unprivileged sections. It is feared that this policy might have an adverse effect when in practice; firstly it can lead to distractions especially for the poor students who would opt for low skilled jobs at a young age which will lead to more dropout rates.

## 6. Lack of trained teachers

NEP 2020 has brought about a paradigm shift in the way of learning which a welcome change is. To make this extremely creative curriculum successful it has to be transacted by the teachers very effectively and efficiently. The most common challenge we will be facing is lack of trained teacher. The current uninspiring job profile, exploitation, and disincentivized service conditions leave the teachers unmotivated and dispirited which in turn affects their way of teaching. Providing training to the teachers in contrast with the new curriculum also comes with a lot of challenges. At The Grass root leve, a large number of teachers are stuck in administrative work and other responsibilities leaving little or no time for such kinds of training programs. Although any

NEP2020 talks about the teacher's education and training where a (National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education) NCFTE 2021 will be implemented but it's a far-sighted dream. The present reality is that it will be a tough fight for everyone in the upcoming years. But imparting training to such a large number of teachers is a tedious talk. The major question arises here is who will be imparting training to these teachers? Do we have competitive skilful trainers available and if we have are they sufficient to provide training to such a large number of teachers. Who will ensure that the new curriculum implemented and to which extent?

## 7. Digital divide consider unpredictable

The new policy emphasizes the use of technology, digital literacy, and coding from an early age. While there is a ton of spotlight on utilizing technology in each part of the education sector- teaching, learning, and appraisal, setting up virtual labs, preparing schools, coaching, and setting up discussions- the strategy ignores the digital partition between the urban and rural. The Digital divide is considerably more unpredictable when seen from the focal point of sex, class, rank, and metropolitan country provincial contrasts. According to NSSO's $75^{th}$ round national survey (2017-18), there exists a significant male-female digital literacy gap in rural and urban areas with respect to the ability to operate a computer and use the internet.

## 8. Inter-disciplinary higher education demands for a cultural shift

In higher education, the NEP 2020's focus on inter-disciplinary learning is a very welcoming step. In India, education has for decades been very isolated and monotonous. For the entire higher education system to be composed of "exception" professors who are curious about, respect and lean in to other disciplines while being experts in their own in not an easy task. This requires a cultural shift in the entire higher education ecosystem, over the next 15-20 Years.

## Conclusion

The new education policy has a laudable vision, but its influence will depend on whether it is able to effectively merge with the government's other policy initiatives-Digital India, Skill India and the New Industrial policy to name a few-in order to effect a coherent reconstruction. The National Education Policy, 2020 aims to shift towards more scientific approach to education. It will help to cater ability of the child in different stages of development. This includes cognitive development, social and physical development. When implemented, the policy will bring India at par with leading countries of the world. The New Education Policy 2020 is a commendable stop by the government to achieve the goal of providing quality education and having a skilful, talented, and professional youth population. The New Education Policy 2020 that has been proposed last year is yet to be implemented. It is an ambitious move to revive the Indian education system with a modern approach. No matter how good this may look, the implementation of any policy has its own importance. An efficient implementation can make a policy a huge success and on the other hand, if the implementation is not good, it can be huge disaster. The review paper discusses the challenges issues in the implementation of NEP 2020. The on-ground reality is that the most important 3 pillars- infrastructure, funding and a

well-detailed plan strategy are still missing. Many other factors have been discussed in this review paper and each factor is genuine in its own term. The analysis of the goods and beds very important to point out. The NEP 2020 may look good on the paper but is it much more complicated in a real-world environment.

## References

1. Narayan B. NEP. Teaching students in mother tongue will help inculcate human values in tem' Outlook, 2020.
2. National Education Policy Ministry of Human Resources and Development, Government of India, 2020, 7.
3. Prasa H. National Education Policy 2020: Major Impact on Your Child's Curriculum & Future, University, 2020.
4. Ralhan BD. Challenges in implementing the National Education Policy 2020, Entrepreneur India, 2020.
5. Singh B. Opinion: The language conundrum of National Education Policy 2020, ET Government, Economic Times, 2020.
6. www.business-standard.com/article/education/nep-2020-why-learning-in-mother-tongue-is-effective-but-hard-to-implement-120081200399_1.html.
7. NEP. Challenges, Criticisms, Way Forward. (2020, August 7) Indian Policy Collective, 2020.
8. Digital Literacy in India: Structural Constraints and the NEP 2020 – SPRF. (September 4) SPRF, 2020.
9. https://sprf.in/digital-literacy-in-india-structural-constraints-and-the-nep-2020/
10. Chari R. (August 30). NEP 2020: Empowering the teacher. Times of India, 2020b.
11. https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/blogs/edutrends-india/nep-2020-empowering-the-teacher/