

NEW EDUCATION POLICY 2020 AND INNOVATIVE LEARNING IN EDUCATION SYSTEM: A CRITICAL REVIEW

Dr. Chaganti Rami Reddy

Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, Sri Krishnadevaraya University, Anantapuramu, Andhra Pradesh

DOI: 10.37648/ijrssh.v10i03.047

Received: 17th August, 2020; Accepted: 09th September, 2020; Published: 20th September, 2020

ABSTRACT

Higher education faces many more challenges today than ever before in its history. Colleges and universities are challenged to serve a variety of students, from those who are academically gifted to those who are under-prepared for college-level work. As innovation diffuses within the higher education system and touches every element of a higher education institution, the innovation process needs to be better managed. The economic success of any nation largely depends on the quality of education provided by its educational institutions. This is even more pertinent for India, where more than 50 percent of its 1.36 billion citizens are under the age of 25 and 65 percent are under 35 years of age. Consequently, this makes India's higher education system the third largest in the world (in terms of number of students). The problem is that we as a nation are not effectively able to utilise such a large pool of prospective employees and assimilate them into the workforce. Of the educated citizens of India, a mere 45 percent are employable. While this statistic represents a big jump from the 33 percent employability five years ago, the situation still remains concerning. These abysmal numbers do not come across as a surprise because the disparity can be seen clearly when we look at the demand and supply gap in the higher education system of India. With the largest population in the world between the age bracket of 5 to 25, India requires hundred- thousands of universities, schools and colleges to reach out to the dynamic talent pool it has. India today stands at the crossroads where it can either become the growth engine of the world, leveraging its demographic dividend, or lose out on the opportunity. The level of excellence in higher education will be a key factor in determining the role that India will play, globally, in the immediate future.

Keywords: Education; Innovative learning; Autonomy; Privatization; challenges

INTRODUCTION

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 HEIs 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. It is also noted that over 20% of the colleges have annual enrolment less than 100 students making them nonviable to improve the quality of education and only 4% of colleges enroll more than 3,000 students annually due to regional imbalance as well as the quality of education they offer. Some of the reasons found for the fragmentation of the higher education (HE) system in India are: It is predicted that India will be the third largest economy in the world by 2030-2032 with estimated GDP of ten trillion dollars. It is evident that the ten trillion economies will be driven by knowledge resources and not by the natural resources of the country. 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 centered education system that contributes directly to transforming our nation sustainably into an equitable and vibrant knowledge society, by providing high quality education to all

INTER-DISCIPLINARY HIGHER EDUCATION DEMANDS FOR A CULTURAL SHIFT

In higher education, the National Education Policy 2020's focus on inter-disciplinary learning is a very welcome step. Universities, especially in India, have for decades been very silo-ed and departmentalized. The National Education policy 2020 has many initiatives to improve the quality and the broadness of the education system in India.

The objectives of this study on National Education Policy 2020 are:

- ❖ To highlights and overview the policies of the newly accepted higher education system (NEP 2020).
- ❖ To compare National Education Policy 2020 with the currently adopted policy in India.
- ❖ To identify the innovations in new national higher education policy 2020.
- ❖ To predict the implications of NEP 2020 on the Indian higher education system.
- ❖ To discuss the merits of Higher Education Policies of NEP 2020.
- ❖ Suggestions for further improvements for the effective implementation of NEP 2020 to realize its goal.

Targets & Timelines:

Here are the policy's key targets as well as the deadlines set for some are

- ❖ The entire policy will be implemented by 2040.
- ❖ 100% Gross Enrolment Ratio from Pre-School to Secondary level by 2030.
- ❖ Teachers to be prepared for assessment reforms by 2030.
- ❖ Common standards of learning in public and private schools.
- ❖ Mission to focus on foundational numeracy and literacy of all students by Grade 3.
- ❖ Universalizing early childhood care and education by 2030.
- ❖ Vocational training for at least 50% learners by 2025.

Opportunities of NEP 2020:

New education Policy begins with the unfinished agenda of NEP — 1986. NEP — 1986 was rooted in a very different India. Over the years, remarkable strides have been made in terms of access and equity. Near universal levels of enrolment at primary levels, and subsequent increase in enrolment at higher education levels (GER: 26.3%) have been achieved. However, there has also been a drop in the quality of learning in public school systems, followed by an exodus of elite and middle classes. This also led to the weakening of accountability mechanisms. Despite poor returns on learning, the pay-structures in public systems have seen a gradual increase.

School Education: Revamping of 10+2 structure to 5+3+3+4. New pedagogical and curricular structure to include pre-primary years. It's a good departure as this was ignored in education policy documents, and referred to in informal sense. NCERT will focus on the development of new curricular and pedagogical structure for ECCE. Policy also delves deep into the development and training of Anganwadi trainers through short-term and long-term programs. A positive thrust towards formalisation of ECCE structure and delivery. Focus on attaining foundational numeracy and literacy by grade 3. Ministry of Education (MoE) will strengthen this, and run it in a mission mode through a separate national mission. A separate national book policy to develop libraries around the country and instil love of reading in children. Public libraries in India are scarce. If this could be strengthened through the public education policy, it's a plus. Mid-day meals to see an upgradation in nutrition component, wherever possible, local alternatives to be provided. Eggs are still a contentious policy issue, policy plays it safe by steering clear to avoid any unnecessary controversy. Design of programs and interventions to alleviate issue of dropouts in conjunction with the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment. Medium of instruction section for some reason has received lot of undue attention. However, the section remains fairly

flexible to avoid all sort of controversy. Half-baked understanding and market push towards English and paternal perception of 'quality' could've led to this flexibility. Policy also doesn't thrust/force/prefer any particular language over the other and encourages learning multiple languages. It also recommends teaching foreign languages at secondary level: Korean, Japanese, Thai, French, German, Spanish, Portuguese, and Russian. Policy inserts a new term called SEDGs (socio-economically disadvantaged groups). This hitherto hasn't been used as a social category in technical documents. Though later sections highlight categories as caste, tribe, disability, transgenders and have passing references to term minority. Technical criticism aside, policy envisages ample initiatives to be targeted at these groups to increase enrolment and retention. PARAKH, a new body to focus on assessments as NAS (National Achievement Survey) and SAS (State Achievement Survey). PARAKH could be an important instrument to look at learning gaps and support targeting of various ministry goals and programs.

Higher Education: It's important to view the policy in context of what has been happening in public universities, and recent debacle of universities of eminence. There has been continuous erosion of university autonomy by the state. Perverse state violence unleashed upon one of the best public universities in India didn't happen in some distant past. Political appointments of university leaders who are at best the instruments of state, as opposed to being focused on teaching, learning, research or administration. Though the document highlights regulatory autonomy, it would be worrisome if the document also meant financial autonomy. This 'imagined' autonomy is envisaged through replacement of UGC (University Grants Commission) and AICTE (All India

- ❖ Council for Technical Education). New body Higher Education Commission of India is based on the idea of division of functions and separation of activities
- ❖ Policy also argues against commercialization of education. However, in the same breadth allows for foreign universities to come to India. There has been significant increase in number of private universities by Indian providers. If the idea was to increase competition, it makes sense. However, insertion of the statement doesn't.
- ❖ Focus on futuristic curriculum makes sense, and a separate body dedicated to focus on integrating technology in institutions is a necessary direction.
- ❖ National Research Foundation is another great idea. However, if these spaces get filled by individuals who are driven by ideological agendas, little could be expected.
- ❖ Indian Universities will be allowed to set up campuses elsewhere in the world — there is a strong potential for this to develop in gulf -markets. There is a huge demand for quality education by Indian diaspora.

The New Education Policy 2020 given the opportunities and milestones offered are irrefutable, apprehensions pertaining to its scope and usefulness also exist, questioning the sanguinity shown in the same which is discussed below.

THE THREE LANGUAGE FORMULA: INCREASED LINGUISTIC AMBIGUITIES:

The NEP encompasses a provision wherein the mother tongue should be the medium of instruction up till class five. This becomes problematic on three levels: first, the state gets complete autonomy in deciding the languages; second, it imposes Hindi and Sanskrit in all Indian states and last, it poses a problem for children of transferable employees. Dealing with the first drawback, the state can choose any two languages as the medium of instruction as long as they are native to India. This provision is not only vague but also poses a challenge for each state which now has to individually decide which language is indigenous for them. These ambiguities become prominent in states like Goa which witness the complex politics of scripts (Ferrao, 2020). Furthermore, such guidelines leave a crucial decision on to the state governments which most of the time fail to have sufficient expertise about the needs of the youth and an ability to look into the need of the hour. What is also alarming is that the NEP does not provide any procedure for checks and balances, making it impossible to take corrective actions quickly. The second problem of the Three Language Formula focuses on mainstreaming and pressuring all states with two languages: Hindi and Sanskrit. The policy promotes these two languages by making them widely available in all schools, while disregarding other vernacular languages. This creates a psychological impact on the students while also forcing them to perceive certain languages as superior (Agarwal, 2020; Ferrao 2020). This strategy has invited widespread criticism, especially from the South, who see this as a move to impose Hindi on non-Hindi speaking states. This specification is also in direct contravention with a Supreme Court Judgement. The way this formula

is laid out is reminiscent of the anti-Hindi agitation in 1965 against the center's intention to make Hindi an official language. Finally, there is a lack of clarity of education in the mother tongue in the case of students whose parents are transferable. There is a large quantum of inter-state movement in our country in the case of members of the armed forces, government jobs, etc. If every state has its own medium of instruction (given the heterogeneous nature of India) it will be almost impossible for these children to be able to fare well in this education system.

DIVIDE AND RULE: AMPLIFIED INEQUALITIES:

Clubbed with the Three Language Formula is the caveat of English being optional till grade eight. These two policies perpetuate inequality and impede the progress of the marginalized sections (Agarwal, 2020). This quandary arises especially because English is equated to employability and privilege in our country. If public schools will teach in the native languages and not give an opportunity to the backward and marginalized sections to learn English, they will find themselves in a cycle of disempowerment, exclusion, and alienation. This claim can be substantiated via studies that show that most students from economically weaker sections drop out of private schools due to their inability to communicate in English. On the other hand, there will be less scope of quality English education available to those who have meagre affordability. Class-based inequality will widen in India as those who are able to afford English education will move ahead of the talent in the hinterland. It is important to give sufficient credit to English for the crucial role it has played in India's economic growth. Hence, it is necessary that everyone just does not have a right to education, but also a right to English medium education. This policy not only defeats the vision of an equal education which is paramount for an evolving, prosperous, and equitable society but also breeds gender inequality to some extent. Being a patriarchal society, parents prefer their sons to a private school over their girl child. This will increase the gap between the two genders in society, a society in which men consider women as their subordinates. This becomes an issue when the NEP and public schools are not adequately equipped to cater to the needs of the economy and the marginalized in particular

PRIVATIZATION: FROM AFFILIATION TO AUTONOMY:

Many academicians, educational experts, and organizations have upbraided the NEP due to the possibility of privatization of higher education which leads to the denial of social justice. Most universities in India follow a system of affiliation to the government which does not give them complete autonomy in their operations. The NEP aims to phase out the system of affiliation to any university in fifteen years. This will not only grant the institutes complete freedom to take decisions regarding the fee structure, functioning, etc., but will also pave a way for privatization (Agarwal, 2020). This proposal to transform the education system will adversely impact the access that students have to higher educational institutes in India. The consequences of the same will be especially prevalent in villages and other backward areas that will no longer be able to afford college due to high tuition fees. This will become similar to colleges in the United States which are mostly privatized and charge exorbitantly high fees. This causes most American students to take student loans and even to give up on their dream to attend college due to a lack of financial resources. There is a clear parallel that can be drawn for Indians belonging to lower-income households. Thus, in the long run, the NEP instead of uplifting the poor will instead aid in furthering the gap between the former and the rich, which will in turn act as a hindrance in the growth and development of the country.

NEP FINANCING: A UTOPIAN POSSIBILITY:

The implementation of the policy will require improved as well as expanded infrastructure to make way for vocational courses and choice-based modules in school. The promise of greater hands-on training, incorporation of AI, and teaching coding to students in the school will put a major strain on the country's finances. Under the NEP-2020, the government has promised that 6% of India's GDP will be spent towards education. This claim seems to be extremely utopian and farfetched as the policy does not have any clear roadmap with respect to how this funding will be achieved (Rozario,2020). Furthermore, the current expenditure on education by the government is less than 1% of the GDP. Adding to the chaos is the pandemic which has sent the economy into doldrums and slowed down growth. All this clearly shows that the vision of NEP finding its finances is far from reality. The policy neither provides any mechanism to hold the government accountable to their promise of funding, nor does it lay out a means to combat corruption. This clause is indeed a promise up for speculation

SILENCE ON THE RTE ACT:

Another aspect that drew the attention of many across the nation is that the NEP is absolutely silent about the Right to Education Act. While the act extensively talks about the universalization of education, it fails to make primary and secondary education a legal right. Hence, there is no mandatory mechanism for the central and state governments to make this a reality (Agarwal et al., 2020). In other words, a lack of legal backing due to silence on the RTE highlights the little chance of actual evolution of the education system. This policy fails to solve the challenge of significant dropouts post elementary levels, especially amongst girls, by being silent on the RTE Act.

CONCLUSION:

Higher education is an important aspect in deciding the economy, social status, technology adoption, and healthy human behaviour in every country. Improving GER to include every citizen of the country in higher education offerings is the responsibility of the education department of the country government. National Education Policy of India 2020 is marching towards achieving such objective by making innovative policies to improve the quality, attractiveness, affordability, and increasing the supply by opening up the higher education for the private sector and at the same time with strict controls to maintain quality in every higher education institution. By encouraging merit-based admissions with free-ships & scholarships, merit & research based continuous performers as faculty members, and merit based proven leaders in regulating bodies, and strict monitoring of quality through biennial accreditation based on self-declaration of progress through technology-based monitoring, NEP-2020 is expected to fulfill its objectives by 2030. All higher education institutions with current nomenclature of affiliated colleges will expand as multi-disciplinary autonomous colleges with degree giving power in their name or becomes constituent colleges of their affiliated universities. An impartial agency National Research Foundation will fund for innovative projects in priority research areas of basic sciences, applied sciences, and social sciences & humanities. HE system will transform itself as student centric with the freedom to choose core and allied subjects within a discipline and across disciplines. Faculty members also get autonomy to choose curriculum, methodology, pedagogy and evaluation models within the given policy framework. These transformations will start from the academic year 2021-22 and will continue until the year 2030 where the first level of transformation is expected too visible.

REFERENCES:

1. Article by Prakash Kumar (2020). NEP 2020 Provides Multi-pronged Strategy To Check School Dropout Rates. Outlook India. <https://www.outlookindia.com/website/story/opinion-national-education-policy-2020-a-blueprint-for-self-reliantindia/358711>
2. Article by Maidul Islam (2020). What the New Education Policy will mean for universities in India. The Wire. <https://thewire.in/education/new-education-policy-university>
3. Kumar, K. (2005). Quality of Education at the Beginning of the 21st Century: Lessons from India. Indian Educational Review
4. Draft National Education Policy 2019, <https://innovate.mygov.in/wpcontent/uploads/2019/06/mygov15596510111.pdf>
5. National Education Policy 2020. https://www.mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/nep/NEP_Final_English.pdf referred on 10/08/2020.