

National Education Policies of India: A Comparative Study with respect to Higher Education

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Abstract

In this study, an absolute comparison has been made of the changes in the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 against the National Policy of Education (NPE) 1986 in higher education in India, and presented the differences with the corresponding objective with which it is made. Several excerpts of interviews with expert academicians on the NEP 2020 have also been stated in an attempt to understand the impact, scope and relevance of those changes on the India's higher education sector. The present study is also intended to investigate the quality of higher education that the coming generations can expect through personal reasoning of the reader in reference to the conclusion drawn here.

Key Words: National Education Policy (NEP), National Policy of Education (NPE), Higher Education

Introduction

The New Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has been formulated after more than three decades by the Government of India headed by Shri. Narendra Modi as the Prime Minister keeping in mind the needs of modern India, its requirements in the 21st century, and its integration with the world standards. The NEP 2020 claims to cater completely to the modern world requirements in terms of high-quality education and quality of workforce in general. The policy stresses on multidisciplinary learning and holistic education as the key to achieving the ultimate end Quality Education according to the world standards.

The system of education till now has been very much fragmented and diverse, due to which standard operational procedure, standardised quality and standard outcome has been difficult to formulate and measure. The tasks of administration, regulation and performance appraisal has been posing an increasing challenge to the regulatory authorities as many of the Indian Higher Education Institutes (HEIS) have already adopted to the modern needs, and many have not. So there lacks a standard base to measure the institutes and put them on the same line.

“Higher education plays an extremely important role in promoting human as well as societal

wellbeing and in developing India..” (NEP, p.33). Quality higher education is the key to a happier, cohesive, cultured, productive, innovative, progressive, and prosperous nation. Through this research, an attempt has been made to gauge the efficiency of the changes made in achieving the objectives mentioned, and also tries to forecast its feasibility through a peep into expert opinions about this matter.

Background

Since its independence, India has had three different education policies namely- **National Policy of Education (NPE) 1968, National Policy of Education 1986 and the new National Education Policy 2020**. All the three Education Policies have had different objectives and approaches according to the needs of the then India and its population. The NPE 1968 was formed by the government of India headed by Smt. Indira Gandhi as the Prime Minister with the prominent objectives of education for employability, promote national growth and integration, universalisation of education and emphasis on moral values among other objectives. The NPE 1986 was formed by the government of India headed by Shri. Rajiv Gandhi as the Prime Minister with the prominent objectives of reducing inequalities in education

opportunities, continual learning and specialisation in education, and standardisation in administration and regulation mechanism in HEIs among other objectives.

K. Vinothkumar, (2018) The focus of higher education in 1986 was more towards equality and equity in reach of higher education but now the focus has drifted towards a more holistic and multidisciplinary approach to global education along with increase in Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER). The NEP 2020 aims at catering to the changing spectra and perspective of the industrial revolution, and wants to mould the future Indian workforce into holistic and complete individuals capable of independent decision making, independent action and producing independent progress, and to achieve this, the NEP 2020 has observed a strong need to diversify education and include multidisciplinary knowledge and vocational knowledge along with main subject of study instead of just specialisation of subjects from a young age. Due importance has also been given to inculcating basic vocational skills and soft skills and also inculcation of humanistic value education such as “universal human values of truth (satya), righteous conduct (dharma), peace (shanti), love (prem), nonviolence (ahimsa), scientific temper, citizenship values, and also life-skills...” (NEP 2020, p.37) to make a person a “complete individual”

rather than just a subject expert. Importance has also been laid on internationalisation of education and international integration of Indian HEIs to make India the “Vishwa guru” again.

As we can easily observe the drift in the focus of Higher Education and its outcome requirements, it can be said that these policies should be amended according to the needs and hence, India strongly needed a New Education Policy for the 21st century.

Objectives of the present study

This article will observe the prominent differences in the NEP 2020 and the NPE 1986 in the Higher Education sector of India, and will briefly introspect the changes made in accordance with the objective of NEP 2020.

1. To compare the NPE 1986 and NEP 2020 with respect to Higher Education in India.
2. To evaluate the changes made in accordance with the objective of NEP 2020.

A Comparative summary

After studying NPE 1986 and NEP 2020, some of the main points of differences with respect to Higher Education can be summarised as follows:

Table-1: Main Points of Differences between NPE 1986 and NEP 2020

Basis	NPE 1986	NEP 2020
Vocational / Holistic Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vocational Education system was managed carefully with stages such as Primary stage (class 1-5-SUPW/WE), Secondary stage (class 9-10-SUPW/WE), Tertiary stage (class 11-12-Atal Tinkering Labs was introduced recently in this regard) and other formal programmes such as ITIs and Skill centres were formed. • The formal programs were carefully planned according to the needs of the industry, and their curriculum was formed accordingly. • Emphasis was laid on apprenticeship training and practical knowledge in the special programs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The previous structure continues to exist, but the vocational education is to be included in all the undergraduate programs on a credit basis. • National Committee for Integration of Vocational Education (NCIVE) to be established for the same. • Emphasis to be laid on integrating the 'mainstream education' and vocational training and bridge the gap between them. • The NCIVE's sole duty is to ensure Holistic development in the candidates by compulsorily inculcating vocational training and value education in all the undergraduate programs.

Curriculum

- Curriculum was designed by Curriculum Development Centres (CDCs), and various CDCs were to be set-up to foster the needs of specialisation and application-oriented study.
- Autonomous Colleges were given autonomy in designing curriculum according to the needs of the local population.
- The overall governance and regulation regarding this matter to be done by state councils (discussed in Regulation of Higher Education)
- Periodical orientation programs and seminars were to be conducted for proper updating of the curriculum.
- Accreditation norms to be made to categorise the autonomous colleges and universities into- **Research oriented and Teaching oriented** based on their curriculum.
- Curriculum was to be designed in line with the regulatory bodies that come under the Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) (Discussed in Regulation of Higher Education) and all the HEIs (especially the single stream Institutions) to **become multidisciplinary by 2040.**
- Integration of vocational studies to be done with all undergraduate programs.

System of awarding degree

- Exams and evaluation norms were properly defined in the NPE 1986 and were to be conducted periodically and various degree courses were designed for 3 years, 4 years and so on by the CDCs, and the degree was awarded on successful completion of the prescribed course.
- **Academic Bank of Credit (ABC)** to be created to store the credits of each year of completion of a particular curriculum, and certificates to be awarded for every year of completion.
- Credits of **vocational education, multidisciplinary education and foreign education** to be duly recorded and recognised.
- Focus on **internationalisation of curriculum** to be done and top Indian universities to be allowed to operate in foreign countries, and vice-versa.

Higher Education Institutes and their structure

- Universities, affiliated colleges and constituent colleges existed under the purview of individual state regulatory bodies.
- Focus was made on increasing the number of autonomous colleges in order to give them freedom in designing curriculum and evaluation according to the need of the population and industry.
- Focus is on **ending the fragmentation** of higher education. Graded accreditation norms to be defined to categorise Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) into two categories-**Autonomous colleges (AC) and Universities** (Both public and private).
- Accreditation norms to be clearly made in aspects of curriculum designing and evaluation methodology

and the concepts of 'Affiliated colleges', 'deemed to be university', 'affiliating university', etc. to be scrapped down.

Regulation of Higher Education

- One of the sole objectives of NPE 1986 was regulation of higher education. Decentralisation of Regulation and governance of higher education was proposed and state councils were formed to regulate the state universities.
- An Apex body was created in the centre to overview the progress of state councils.
- Through later amendments, Regulatory bodies such as NAAC, UGC, NCTE, ICMR, etc. emerged to effectively regulate specific types/categories of HEIs.
- Problems such as duplication of efforts, non-standardisation, etc still existed.

Based on the principle of **functional specialisation, Higher Education Commission of India (HECI)** to be set up as an apex body under which 4 regulatory bodies come :

1. **National Higher Education Regulation Council (NHERC) :** General regulation in the matters of administrative and operational importance.
2. **National Accreditation Council (NAC) :** Establish benchmarks for HEIs for administrative and operational autonomy and accrediting the same.
3. **Higher Education Grants Council (HEGC) :** Transparent funding and financing of higher education.
4. **General Education Council (GEC) :** Frame "graduate attributes" and facilitate integration of vocational and mainstream studies.

Apart from these, Professional councils such as ICMR, NCTE, etc. will be collectively called as **Professional Standard Setting Bodies (PSSBs)**

Research and Development

- Proper system of PhD. research/education was formulated and various terminologies such as "research", "development", etc. was properly defined.
- Proper mechanisms were made for encouraging Research through stipends and scholarships. **National Research Foundation** was proposed

- Fresh PhD. students to take creditbased courses in teaching related to their field of PhD. and attain minimum hours of teaching experience as a part of their curriculum.
- Research and Development to be encouraged from the under-graduation phase through giving special research-oriented recognition in the

for the sole purpose of funding research and monetary encouragement of research such as scholarship and stipend.

- Proper chronological mechanism was formed for bridging higher education and research (UG-PG-M.Phil-PhD.)

ABC to those who have completed a research project in the 4th year of Undergraduation.

- M.Phil as programme has been done away with in order to simplify in bridging the gap between postgraduation and research.
- The new **National Research Foundation (NRF)** has been given a new perspective and new roles.

Open Universities

- National Open University framed statutes for the State Governments who had a choice of establishing their own open universities.
- **Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU)** was established after careful planning and the other open universities were to frame policies in line with the IGNOU.
- All the affiliated colleges and universities to be allowed to provide Open Distance Learning and Online courses after attaining proper accreditation for the same.

Teachers Training

- Policies were made for training of teachers for all levels from elementary schooling to higher education.
- **National Council of Teacher Education (NCTE)** was set up to frame rules for B.Ed. and other training qualifications.
- 4-yr., 2-yr., and 1-yr. B.Ed. programmes to be provided by all HEIs based on the no. of years the candidate has taken up under-graduation.
- The program should be multidisciplinary and should include all the elements that are required to make a teacher a '**mentor**'.
- The selection to pre-service teachers training to be done through **entrance exam conducted by NTA.**

Introspection of Points of Difference (Refer Table-1)

The points discussed in the Table-1 have been elaborated and their objectives behind the change have been deduced. Expert opinions have been considered in an attempt to forecast the feasibility of this policy.

1) Vocational/Holistic Education

- NCIVE will inculcate vocational education

and value education in all forms of higher education. Focus will also be on internship opportunities to be provided by the HEIs in those vocational training to facilitate practical knowledge. The *objective* is to achieve holistic development in the individuals rather than just subject experts.

- “Integration of creative combinations of subjects, specialised learning, character development, blended learning, interdisciplinary methods, and flexible curriculums will help

strengthen emotional intelligence, critical thinking and problem-solving skills of students.” Says Mr. Ramananda SG, Vice President, Sales & Marketing, Pearson India (India Today)

- “Emphasis on critical thinking, creativity and stronger conceptual understanding will encourage students to become self-motivated learners. This is much needed for students to acquire skills that will prepare them for the unseen jobs of tomorrow.” Says Mr. Byju Raveendran, Founder & CEO, BYJU’S (India Today)

2) Curriculum

- Graded accreditation norms will be defined to categorise HEIs in terms of teaching approach as- **Research Oriented and Teaching Oriented**. The **objective** is to reduce the differences in various curriculum and to achieve uniformity.
- Curriculum to be designed independently by the HEIs after getting the accreditation from NAC to enable the HEIs to become independent degree awarding institutions. The curriculum is to be designed in line with guidance provided by the GEC. The **objective** is to make the courses multidisciplinary, and to compulsorily include vocational education in all the undergraduate programmes.
- “If implemented strongly, the NEP reforms will empower higher education institutions to make decisions with responsibility and vested autonomy with accountability so that they can contribute more effectively in the implementation of NEP 2020.” Says Dr. Rajesh Kumar, principal, DAV College, Amritsar on autonomy to HEIs (The Tribune)

3) System of awarding degree

- ABC to be created in order to recognise the partial completion of degree curriculum as
 - a) Certificate of completion for 1 year
 - b) Diploma certificate for 2 years
 - c) Bachelor’s degree for 3 years
 - d) Integrated multidisciplinary bachelor’s degree for 4 years with research” for those who complete a research project in the 4th year)

The **objective** is to facilitate free movement of candidates from different disciplines of study based on their interest and to minimise the early specialisation of subjects (currently, the specialisation starts right from grade 11, and this policy aims to remove this)

- Internationalisation is ensured through letting top Indian Universities to establish in foreign countries, and letting top foreign universities to operate in India. The **objective** here is to attain global education standards and to give equal opportunities to all in experiencing international education
- “Allowing global institutes to set up campuses in India is also a positive move as it will increase competition because it will open up our education system and it will also help sustain high talent in the country as students don’t have to move out to pursue education.” Says Prof Mahadeo Jaiswal, Director, IIM Sambalpur (India Today)
- “Multiple-entry and exit system for undergraduate courses is a good step for students, who cannot continue their study due to various reasons. It will reduce the drop-out rate in colleges” Says Dr. Rajesh Kumar, principal, DAV College, Amritsar on the ABC (The Tribune)
- “Government-recognized multiple entry and exit options at the undergraduate level will give more options to the youth. This, supported by an academic bank of credit to digitally store academic credits, will go a long way in providing a favourable environment to students to plan their education.” Says Prof. Malabika Sarkar, Vice Chancellor, Ashoka University (India Today)

4) Higher Education Institutes and their structure

- Graded accreditation norms to be created by the NAC to categorise all the HEIs as **Autonomous colleges and Universities** and give them more autonomy to define curriculum and teaching mechanism by fulfilling certain criteria set by NAC. The **objective** is to have at least one HEI in or near each district in India, and to attain equal minimum quality of all those HEIS
- All the existing HEIs should mould them-

selves according to the guidelines by GEC and NAC in a phased manner. This is done to minimise the quality difference between prominent Institutes like IITs and IIMs and other local institutes so that the whole population can enjoy equity and equality in higher education. The *objective* is to increase the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) from 26.3 % in 2018 to 50% in 2030, and to increase investment in education to 6% of GDP.

- “It envisages an approach to bring about the extraordinary potential of human development and a comprehensive shift in the use of demographic dividend, which is available in abundance in a country like India. That fact that it aims to build a knowledge-based future education system is a proof of the change we hope to achieve.” Says Dr. Rajesh Kumar, principal, DAV College, Amritsar on the impact of increasing the reach of higher education(The Tribune).

5) Regulation of Higher Education

- Restructured regulatory mechanism as described in the table. The *objective* is to increase efficiency in regulation and standardisation of HEIS.
- “A single regulator for higher education combining UGC and AICTE will ensure that higher education institutes can start offering multi-disciplinary courses as per the choice of the student” says Mr. Anindya Mallick, partner, Deloitte India (India Today)

6) Research and Development

- Fresh Ph.D. students to compulsorily attain teaching education and experience. This is because most of the Ph.D. holders go into academia along with further research. The **objective** is to increase the quality of Ph.D. holding teachers also as “mentors” and “guides”.
- Encouraging research from early stages of higher education, easier bridging of gap between post-graduation and Ph.D. by scrapping M.Phil and more encouragement of research through new defined roles of NRF. The **objective** here is to foster the spirit of research and innovation among youth.
- “The primary activities of the NRF will be to:

- a) fund competitive, peer-reviewed grant proposals of all types and across all disciplines;
- b) seed, grow, and facilitate research at academic institutions, particularly at universities and colleges where research is currently in a nascent stage, through mentoring of such institutions;
- c) act as a liaison between researchers and relevant branches of government as well as industry, so that research scholars are constantly made aware of the most urgent national research issues, and so that policymakers are constantly made aware of the latest research breakthroughs; so as to allow breakthroughs to be optimally brought into policy and/or implementation; and
- d) “recognise outstanding research and progress...” (NEP 2020, p. 46) 7) Open Universities

7) Open Universities

- All the HEIs to be allowed to provide Distance Learning and Online Courses after getting the required accreditation by NAAC. The **objective** is to provide equality and equity in Higher education opportunities to the whole population.

8) Teachers Training

- Restructured B.Ed programmes for different years (4-yr, 2-yr and 1-yr) based on their no of years of undergraduate program and revised curriculum to include knowledge of culture, history, politics and other such general knowledge of India. The **objective** is to make teachers the overall mentors and guides to students rather than just subject expert capable of teaching only that particular subject.
- Entrance exam consisting of particular selected subject and aptitude for selection to B.Ed. programmes to be conducted by NTA. The **objective** is to standardise the quality and knowledge of teachers across India.
- “NEP 2020 will bring teachers to the forefront of this change as all its components aim at improving results and classroom turnout ratios” says Dr. Sunita Gandhi, Founder,

Global Classroom Private Limited (GCPL)
& Global Education & Training Institute
(India Today).

Conclusion

The aim of this study was to make a comparison of the new and old education policies of India and observe the changes in contrast to the objectives stated in the NEP 2020. A review was to be made on whether the changes prescribed really cater to the objectives, and to measure their impact through the sayings of expert academicians and industrialists. Through the observations made in this study, it can be concluded that the prescribed changes and modifications suggested in the NEP 2020 has a wide scope and potential to transform and revolutionize the education sector of India and make it a world leader if these policies are implemented effectively and efficiently in all levels.

Limitations of the present study

- 1) This study is focusing only on the NPE 1986 and NEP 2020, and has not taken into consideration the NPE 1968.
- 2) Only higher education sector of India has been focussed in this study.
- 3) This study is purely based on secondary data and relies upon the sayings of prominent personalities. This study does not use any analytics or forecasting tool to measure the impact.

Scope of future study

- 1) To compare all the education policies of India, their amendments and additions and draw out a complete demographical and economic transformation in India in the past years and their response from the education policies.
- 2) To make a full-fledged comparison of the past education policies in terms of its impact of changes made in elementary, primary, secondary and higher education as a whole.
- 3) To achieve mathematical reliability of this study through primary data and use of forecasting statistical tools to measure its impact.

Acknowledgement

We dedicate this work to our parents. We thank almighty and other family members for their blessings, cooperation and support in writing this paper successfully.

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ANNEXURE

List of Abbreviations

ABC- Academic Bank of Credit
AC- Autonomous College
CDC- Curriculum Development Centre
GEC- General Education Council
GER- Gross Enrolment Ratio
HECI- Higher Education Commission of India
HEGC- Higher Education Grants Council
ICMR- Indian Council for Medical Research
IGNOU- Indira Gandhi National Open University.
NAAC- National Assessment and Accreditation Council
NAC- National Accreditation Council
NCIVE- National Committee of Integration of Vocational Education
NCTE- National Council of Teacher Education
NEP- National Education Policy
NHERC- National Higher Education Regulation Council
NPE- National Policy of Education
NRF- National Research Foundation
PSSB- Professional Standard Setting Board
SUPW/WE- Work Experience
UGC- University Grants Commission