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National Educational Policy (NEP) 2020 – The Inevitable Change

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ABSTRACT

The transformational reforms in higher education under the National Educational Policy NEP 2020 highlights the policy requirements of holistic, multidisciplinary and futuristic education. It focusses on bringing about the catalyzing of quality research and the possibilities and requirements for the equitable use of technology for better reach in education. The views from educational experts in the NEP conclave which is the starting of series of webinars that are to be conducted to make all the stakeholders and the public informed about the NEP and to get the inputs for effective implementation of the policy are presented in this paper.

1. Introduction

This is the National Educational Policy reformed after 34 years. NEP 2020 is the outcome of an extensive and in depth report submitted by Committee members with inputs from people countywide at all levels.

The key reform points projected are:

- Holistic and Multidisciplinary Education with
 - Flexibility of subjects
 - Multiple Entry / Exit for programmes
- Credit Transfer - Academic bank of credits
- Higher Education Institutions to function as autonomous universities with intensive research and teaching initiatives
- Graded autonomy at the academic, administrative and financial levels.
- Multidisciplinary Education and Research University (MERU) models to be initiated
- Internationalization of Education with students from abroad and setting up of Indian campuses abroad and foreign campuses in India.
- NRF and NETF to work together for quality improvement
- Integration of vocational, teacher and professional education
- Use of technology in
 - Education planning
 - Teaching, learning and assessment
 - Administration and Management
 - Regulation – Self disclosure and minimum human interface
- Virtual labs

The highlights are follows:

- NEP is designed in order to keep the next and current generations future-ready
- Focus from 'what to think' is shifted to 'how to think' in the new education policy.
- Critical thinking and innovative thinking develop when aided with passion
- Main step is implementation and all stakeholders should have strong determination to implement it
- Up-skilling and career development of teachers
- Focus on 'dignity of labour'
- Professional changes need re-skill and up-skill which is aided by NEP
- Reducing the gap between research and education

2. EDUCATION - FUTURISTIC, MULTIDISCIPLINARY AND HOLISTIC

The National Educational Policy 2020 is framed with the future trends kept under concern. The path taken considered the aspirations of the people at all levels. A bottom-up approach with multidimensional perspective is followed. The separation between hands-on and minds-on in the present scenario is addressed. Multidisciplinary approach is given significance, like integrating

arts and humanities with Artificial Intelligence (AI), Machine Learning (ML) and STEM courses. The holistic vision of education is in establishing a synergy and seamless transformation from the pre-school to higher education level. There is no hard separation between Arts and Science, curricular and extra-curricular and Vocational and mainstream. The main drawback of the present educational scenario and the effectiveness of the new policy is based on the present practical scenario of life. The need for skill development rather than theoretical knowledge. Multidisciplinary approach with multilingual skills of Indians is advantageous compared with monolingual skills. The NEP focusses on passion, empowerment and will develop global students maintaining their Indian ethos and values. The futuristic educational policy is in line with the sustainability policy to attain in 2030.

3. QUALITY RESEARCH – NEED FOR CATALYZING

The important aspect of education is research. Both feed to each other. Currently research is not scaled, has less quality and is not distributed. Day to day aspects and environment should inspire research. Research can be done bilingually, which inspires to take up big problems with self-confidence, deep content and methodology. There is a need to create a research culture. Three areas which need focus are the present scenario, the role of higher education institutes and the role of government. In the present scenario research and education are separated. Most of the Ph.D holders are not conducting research and students have lesser research opportunities. There are only 15 researchers per lakh in India, which is a very low ratio. Higher education institutes need to encourage and empower faculty to innovate in teaching, service and in their respective disciplines. Faculty have to be provided incentives like promotions, strong tenure, tenure track systems, increased salary, reduced teaching and recognition of outstanding work. Students should be involved in research to inculcate critical thinking and innovation.

Government initiative should have the NRF funding in a strong, merit based equitable manner and provide mentoring to faculty in institutes through established researchers. NRF should be the convening link for the researchers, government and industries making aware of problems to be solved and capability available to solve them. Recognition and reward to the talents through national seminars can be facilitated. Use of research funds has to be governed independently by top researchers to improve quality. The positive aspects prevailing now should be considered and the need has to be addressed. The research centres and institute are separate, the institutes have been marching ahead. There are large number of research support schemes and huge number of fellowships available in India added with several research grant schemes. The need is that NRF has to bring convergence of all these systems.

The quality of research depends on capacity building, faculty, post-doctoral fellows and inter institutional collaboration. Research is being done desperately due to various pressures and not with curiosity. Higher education is pursued as a postponement of unemployment. Initiatives such as UGC-CARE are trying to enforce quality of journal papers published avoiding predatory journals. Transdisciplinary research needs to be encouraged. There is a need to improve research quality and inculcate research culture without compromising on research ethics. Research helps in knowledge generation and also to teach better. Research funding, should be based only on scientific quality of proposals, Funding should be able to support the proposal and to be dispersed in slots. Poorly performing principal investigators should not be funded again and research should be evaluated based on quality output. High risk projects are to be encouraged and start-up grants for new faculty members can be provided. The present faculty evaluation in terms of counts, which generally makes them work for short term goals and avoid collaboration. It is the need to consider impacts and not volumes of the work and to have review of tenure tracks. The industry academia interaction lack technology for industry integration. The local ecosystem which includes the labs, institutes and the locality are to be focused. Support for equipment acquirement and support staff for the research faculty plays a significant role. Strong clusters of industry and academia are to be initiated.

4. USE OF TECHNOLOGY FOR BETTER EDUCATIONAL REACH

The online teaching practices need to be considered for addressing the equitable use of technology for better reach. The parallel usage of online will be an enhancer and also inexpensive. Usage of recorded lectures and notes along with chat sessions and tutorials will enhance the classes. Utilizing MOOCs, enabling spectacular teachers and to work in partnership are to be encouraged. The possibility of online under graduate courses could also be experimented. Focus on learning by doing and peer to peer learning to be considered. Utility of labs, workshops and assessment centres / providers country wide can be used while offering online courses for students spread throughout the country. The network connectivity requirement is accomplishable with the fast developing technology and the digital policy that our country is trying to achieve. It is essential to focus on the course delivery process. The areas to focus are the e-resources, course based intervention, delivery and evaluation. The facilities focussed are the mobile Apps, TV channels, courses available in regional languages, Facebook sessions, online counselling and podcasts. Integrated regulations for ODL and online programmes need to be considered as both have commonalities in many

aspects. Flexibility should be made available at the institution level and then across institutions considering credit transfers and credit repositories. For the entry / exit options provided, exit is acceptable but for entry policies need to be specified. Curriculum with majors and multidisciplinary minors provide flexibility to follow passion. Considering ICT the points focussed are information at fingertips, better reach using TV, augmented reality and games to enhance learning, The challenges are based on the readiness of the institution in terms of ICT infrastructure and technical support, readiness of faculty in terms of gadgets and technical support, readiness of students to adapt and library readiness for remote access. Opening up the institute facilities to the industry and a healthy collaboration is essential.

5. CONCLUSION

National Educational Policy is the backbone for the sustained development of any nation and the framing though done after a long time has come in right time and with the required perspective. The areas of focus and the views of experts has been culminated to showcase the need and the versatility of the framed policies. The success results in every stakeholder's dedication and thrive in bringing out their best to implement the framework for the overall upgradation of the future generation.

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