

Essay No. 7. June 02, 2021

**IMPLEMENTING
NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY-2020
RESTORING INDIA'S STATUS AS A *VISHWA GURU***

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NEW DELHI (INDIA)**

Scholarly Essay from the Book, '**National Education Policy- 2020 :Transforming Higher Education in India**', Editors: Pankaj Mittal and Sista Rama Devi Pani, Publisher: Association of Indian Universities, New Delhi (India), 2021. ISBN No. 81-7520-162-2

PROFILE OF THE AUTHOR

Dr (Mrs) Pankaj Mittal

Dr (Mrs) Pankaj Mittal, Secretary General, Association of Indian Universities, is a notable woman academic administrator in the country. In her illustrious career spanning over three decades, she served the Indian Higher Education System at high offices like Vice Chancellor of Bhagat Phool Singh Mahila Vishwavidyalaya and Additional Secretary, University Grants Commission. She is also a Fulbright Scholar. Her areas of expertise include Policy Planning and Management of Higher Education and Human Resource Management. Dr Mittal has made academic visits to USA, Canada, United Kingdom, Australia, South Korea, Spain, Germany, South Africa, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Mauritius and Philippines. She had led a delegation of 15 Vice Chancellors to UK and Mexico for academic collaborations. She is the recipient of the prestigious President of India Award in 2017 for Digital Initiatives in Higher Education; Honoris Causa from Karnataka State Women's University, Bijapur; and First Padam Shri Subhashini Devi Award 2018 for contributions in Societal Development and Community Engagement from the Chief Minister of Haryana. Dr Mittal is a member of many high-powered committees of MHRD, Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports and various other apex bodies in the country. Dr Mittal has widely published in national and international journals including two edited books. Currently, she is also National Commissioner-Rangers at Bharat Scouts and Guides.

IMPLEMENTING NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY-2020 RESTORING INDIA'S STATUS AS A VISHWA GURU

Pankaj Mittal

The education sector across the world has recently observed transformations in the program structure and outcomes due to rapid scientific and technological advancements. The New Education Policy-2020 (NEP-2020) of India is a remarkable step in the above direction since it is developed on the philosophy and thought of ancient Indian knowledge, wisdom and truth. It has been drafted considering the local and global needs of the country. The NEP-2020, if implemented in letter and spirit, has the potential of transforming India into a Vishwa Guru, the global superpower. The policy emphasises that the curriculum and pedagogy of our education system must be able to develop among students a deep sense of respect towards the fundamental duties and constitutional values; share of bond with one's country; and conscious awareness of one's roles and responsibilities in a changing world.

PRELUDE

Education is the most important attribute for any country to enable it to achieve its full human potential, developing an equitable and just society, and promoting overall national development. The education sector across the world has recently observed transformations in the programme structure and outcomes due to rapid scientific and technological advancements. Therefore, the education system of a country must align itself with the changing employment landscape and global ecosystem. In India, there is a need to focus on universal access to quality education to reap its demographic advantage and for maximising country's talent and resources. The pedagogy should

inculcate critical thinking and problem-solving approach in students thereby making education more experiential and enjoyable. The newly launched National Education Policy–2020 (NEP–2020) in India is a remarkable step in this direction. It has been developed on the philosophy and thought of ancient Indian knowledge, wisdom and truth and drafted considering the local and global needs. The NEP–2020 of India is a forward looking, innovative and student-centric policy documented and prepared by the committee chaired by Padma Vibhushan Dr K Kasturirangan, Former Chairman, ISRO. The policy is most democratic as suggestions were obtained from more than 2 lakh people, starting from the grassroot *panchayat* levels to that of experts.

FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES ENVISAGED IN NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY –2020

The fundamental principles envisaged in the policy, which would be guiding both the education system at large as well as an individual institutions within it, (GOI–2020), are:

- *Recognizing, identifying, and fostering the unique capabilities of each student*, by sensitising teachers as well as parents to promote each student’s holistic development in both academic and non-academic spheres;
- Giving highest priority to *achieving Foundational Literacy and Numeracy* by all students by Grade 3;
- Enabling *Flexibility*, so that learners can choose their learning trajectories and programmes, thereby being able to select their own paths in life, as per their talents and interests;
- Having *No hard separation* between the arts and the sciences, between curricular and extra-curricular activities, between vocational and academic streams, etc. in order to eliminate silos between different areas of learning;
- Implementing *Multidisciplinary and holistic education* across the sciences, social sciences, arts, humanities, and sports for a multidisciplinary world in order to ensure the unity and integrity;

- *Emphasizing on conceptual understanding* rather than rote learning and learning-for-examinations only;
- Encourage *creativity and critical thinking* for logical decision-making and innovation;
- Inculcating *ethics and values both human and constitutional* like empathy, respect for others, cleanliness, courtesy, democratic spirit, spirit of service, respect for public property, scientific temper, liberty, responsibility, pluralism, equality, and justice;
- *Promoting multilingualism and the power of language* in teaching and learning;
- Inculcating *Life Skills* such as communication, cooperation, teamwork, and resilience;
- *Focusing on regular formative assessments for learning* rather than the summative assessment that encourages today’s ‘coaching culture’;
- *Extensive use of technology* in teaching and learning, removing language barriers, increasing access for *divyang (differently abled)* students, and educational planning and management;
- *Respect for diversity and respect for the local context* in all curriculum, pedagogy, and policy, always keeping in mind that education is a concurrent subject;
- *Full equity and inclusion* as the cornerstone of all educational decisions to ensure that all students are able to thrive in the education system;
- *Synergy in curriculum across all levels of education* from early childhood care and education to higher education;
- *Teachers and faculty as the heart of the learning process* – their recruitment, continuous professional development, positive working environments and service conditions;
- *‘Light but tight’ regulatory framework to ensure integrity, transparency, and resource efficiency* of the educational system through audit and public disclosure while encouraging innovation and out-

of-the-box ideas through autonomy, good governance, and empowerment;

- Ensuring *Outstanding research* as a prerequisite for outstanding education and development;
- *Continuous review* of progress based on sustained research and regular assessment by educational experts;
- *Deep-rooted pride in India* and its rich, diverse, ancient and modern culture, knowledge systems and traditions;
- *Education as a public service* – access to quality education must be considered a basic right of every child; and
- *Substantial investment in a strong, vibrant public education system* as well as the encouragement and facilitation of true philanthropic private and community participation.

The NEP–2020, if implemented in letter and spirit, has the potential of transforming India into a *Vishwa Guru*, the global superpower. The policy emphasises that the curriculum and pedagogy of our education system must be able to develop among students a deep sense of respect towards the fundamental duties and constitutional values; share of bond with one’s country; and conscious awareness of one’s roles and responsibilities in a changing world. The NEP–2020 will empower teachers at all levels of education and help them to teach effectively while making use of technology. The policy will also help in recruiting and retaining the best teaching professionals to aid in shaping citizens for the next generation. It envisages a quality education for all, irrespective of their place of residence, origin, caste etc: the policy particularly focuses on the betterment of historically marginalised, disadvantaged and underrepresented groups. This article will highlight the impact expected on implementation of NEP–2020 on governance of higher education; restructuring of universities; reforming of programmes; internationalisation of education; re-energising faculty; and creating opportunities for students.

GOVERNANCE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

At present, the Indian Higher Education System is governed by multiple regulatory bodies comprising of University Grants Commission (UGC), All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) and seventeen statutory professional councils like National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE), Medical Council of India (MCI), Bar Council of India (BCI), Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR), Nursing Council of India (NCI), Council of Architecture (COA), Dental Council of India (DCI), etc. To remove structural overlaps in terms of functioning of these regulatory bodies and to segregate the functions of regulation, funding and accreditation, the policy has recommended setting up of a Higher Education Commission for India (HECI) as an umbrella institution. The commission shall have the following four independent verticals each having its own well-defined roles and functions:

- i. National Higher Education Regulatory Council (NHERC)
- ii. Higher Education Grants Council (HEGC)
- iii. National Accreditation Council (NAC)
- iv. General Education Council (GEC)

The National Higher Education Regulatory Council (NHERC) shall be responsible for regulating the higher education with a view to coordinating and maintaining the standards of higher education in the country. It will function as the common single point regulator for the entire higher education sector including teacher education but excluding medical and legal education. NHERC shall regulate in a “*light but tight*” and facilitative manner based on the concept of public self-disclosure of finances, infrastructure, faculty/staff, courses and educational outcomes, etc.

The Higher Education Grants Council (HEGC) on the other hand will only perform the function of disbursing grants. It will carry out funding and financing of higher education based on transparent criteria after assessing and evaluating the institutional development plans submitted by higher education institutions and the progress made on their implementation. HEGC shall also disburse scholarships

and developmental fund for improving the quality of academic programmes.

The National Accreditation Council (NAC) will take into account the accreditation of Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) in the country. At present, NAAC undertakes institutional accreditation while NBA undertakes program-wise accreditation. The National Accreditation Council will consider both of the above as well as multiple accreditation bodies, if required. The NAC will be a ‘meta-accrediting body’, which will approve the bodies who can further accredited the institutions and their programmes. The accreditation of institutions in future will depend primarily on basic norms, public self-disclosure, good governance and outcomes. The NAC may approve multiple institutions as recognised accreditors while developing a robust system of graded accreditation. It is also proposed that in the long run, accreditation will become binary process as per the global practices.

The General Education Council (GEC) will frame the National Higher Education Qualification Framework (NHEQF) in sync with the National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF). The GEC will frame expected learning outcomes and graduate attributes at different programme levels. It shall also set up norms for credit transfer, equivalence etc. through the NHEQF. The GEC shall also identify 21st century skills that are required to make our students global citizens.

The policy also envisages that the existing Statutory Professional Councils like the Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR), Veterinary Council of India (VCI), National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE), Bar Council of India (BCI), Nursing Council of India (NCI) etc. shall act as professional standard setting bodies. They will be the members of GEC and shall draw the curricula, lay down academic standards, and coordinate between teaching, research and extension in their domain areas. These bodies will set up standards for different professional programmes, which would lead to a profession requiring a license to practice like medical, architecture, law etc. It is felt that this architecture will ensure functional separation and eliminate overlapping of roles between different bodies and will help in effective governance of higher education in India.

RESTRUCTURING OF UNIVERSITIES

The NEP–2020 has recommended that higher education institutions shall be transformed into large multidisciplinary universities, colleges and HEI clusters, each of which should have at least 3,000 students. The aim is to improve quality as well as access in higher education. This will be achieved by giving graded autonomy to around 40,000 colleges and converting them into independent, autonomous degree awarding colleges. The whole procedure will require a lot of mentoring and hand-holding by the affiliating universities as mentors for these colleges so that they can work towards empowering the latter to function independently. A lot of capacity building of teaching and other staff would also be required for this. Further, the NEP–2020 has classified universities into three categories:

- i. Research Intensive Universities
- ii. Teaching Intensive Universities
- iii. Autonomous Degree Awarding Colleges

The Research Intensive Universities will give equal emphasis to research and teaching but would be more research focused. On the other hand, the Teaching Intensive Universities will also conduct both research and teaching, but their main focus will be on teaching. The last category, i.e., Autonomous Degree Awarding Colleges may also indulge in some research activities, but their primary focus will be on teaching of UG/PG courses. Thus, the NEP–2020 will result in realignment of the university structure. The policy suggests that all the universities will be multi-disciplinary in nature, i.e., there will be no programme specific or single faculty universities like Law Universities, Medical Universities, Technology Universities, Agriculture Universities etc. All these universities over the time would be required to add disciplines and academic programmes to become multi-faculty. This will ensure holistic development of students with some basic knowledge of all the fields and give them the freedom of choice, should they wish to pursue any other subject.

While giving impetus to online education, the policy further suggests that the highly accredited institutes will now be able

to conduct both open and distance learning (ODL) and online learning programmes. This will help in improving the GER to 50 per cent as envisaged in the policy and at the same time give a lot of flexibility to the students in terms of pursuing education along with work or for pursuing two degrees at a time. The new UGC regulations on online education issued in early September, 2020, has already given the freedom to run online programmes by NAAC “A” grade universities and has mandated that 40 per cent of the courses in a regular programme can be done through Massive Open Online Courses available on SWAYAM, the Indian MOOCs platform. To remove any type of interference in functioning of the universities, the NEP–2020 also gives autonomy to universities with good accreditation rating to establish a Board of Governors (BoG) to independently govern the university free of any external interference. The Board of Governors shall consist of a group of highly qualified, competent and dedicated individuals having proven capabilities and a strong sense of commitment to the institution. The BoG shall be responsible and accountable to the stakeholders through transparent self-disclosures of all relevant records. Board of Governors can work in an independent manner and will be responsible for taking decisions on behalf of the University including the appointment of Vice Chancellor, which will be done through a rigorous, impartial, merit-based and competency-based process, led by an Eminent Expert Committee constituted by the BoG. The Board of Governors shall also ensure the continuity of university policies during the leadership transition, i.e., whenever the Vice Chancellor completes the tenure and is replaced by a new Vice Chancellor. The restructuring of universities as envisaged in the NEP–2020 shall lead to having large, multidisciplinary universities in future with a lot of autonomy and independence that would certainly improve the quality of higher education.

REFORMING PROGRAMMES

In our ancient Vedic culture, students were taught about 64 *kalas* (*art forms*) which not only comprised of music, dance and art but also included subjects like humanities, languages, science, medicine,

technology, etc. (Kapur and Singh, 2005). The NEP–2020 considers our ancient Vedic system comprising of ‘knowledge of many arts’ as the base for formulation of liberal education for 21st century students. This liberal system of education gives freedom to each student to pursue knowledge in his or her own field of interest without creating any artificial boundaries. Under the domain of liberal education, the NEP–2020 has transformed the three-year graduation programme into a four-year programme, having multiple entry and multiple exit facilities. For instance, if any student leaves the graduation programme midway due to any reason, he will get a certificate on completion of one year, a diploma on completion of two years and can obtain degree if he or she completes the degree course of 3 or 4 years anytime later. The main advantage of this is that a student can resume his education at any point of time in life and from any university in the country by getting re-entry into the system. The studies pursued earlier will not go waste and he can resume the studies from the second or third year if she/he already possesses a certificate or diploma. Moreover, if one is not able to continue studies further, he or she becomes eligible for the job on the basis of the certificate and diploma qualifications. The policy has further abolished the M Phil degree in view of the fact that normally every individual who completes M Phil further goes for a doctorate degree and thus the degree as such is redundant. Moreover, in the earlier UGC regulations, the M Phil degree holders got exemption from UGC-NET to be eligible for appointment as lecturer but in 2010 regulations this was abolished. Thus, the M Phil degree has no much utility.

While advocating for holistic and multidisciplinary education, the policy also emphasises on education through projects in the areas of community engagement, environment education and value-based education. In keeping with the global requirements, the Policy recommended that education should create global citizens who are aware of global issues and work towards resolving them. They should create and promote more peaceful, tolerant, inclusive, secured and sustainable societies.

Another significant reform in the NEP–2020 is regarding admission to PhD programme. Now, the Master’s degree would no longer be

the only criteria for admission in PhD. A Bachelor's degree holder with research would be eligible to directly get admission in the PhD program. Similarly, the duration of Master's degree shall be of 2 years if the Bachelor's degree is of the 3-year duration, but one can obtain a Master's degree in one year if she/he has completed a four-year Bachelor's programme with research. Therefore, a very flexible structure has been given in the NEP–2020 for the benefit of students. The policy also focuses on experiential learning of students through internships. Therefore, it has been made compulsory for students of every program to undergo internships during semester or winter breaks in the industry, business houses, schools, studios, with craft persons, research institutions etc. Institutions are now supposed to allow active engagement of the students with the practical side of their learning which would be helpful in improving their employability and entrepreneurship opportunities. The policy further suggests an integrated BED programme of 4 years so that the students who wish to become teachers can be effectively groomed in the aforesaid duration. The NEP–2020 also emphasises on ensuring the quality of online degree to be at par with the degree obtained via regular mode.

Another significant reform in the NEP–2020 is on assessment and evaluation of students. The policy focuses on continuous assessment and evaluation of students throughout the semester rather than on a three-hour examination at the end of semester. The continuous assessment of students can be done through various techniques like projects, activities, face-to-face interactions, group discussions etc.

The well drafted reforms in the programme structure will not only give a lot of flexibility to the teachers in trying innovative ways of teaching while using different pedagogical tools and technology, but will also give a lot of freedom to the students to learn at their own pace, the subjects of their choice with emphasis on experiential learning.

INTERNATIONALISATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION

The policy emphasises on promoting India as a global study destination providing premium education at affordable cost to restore its status as a '*Vishwa Guru*'. The policy has laid the path for opening of campuses

of high performing Indian universities abroad in order to promote our cultural heritage, ancient knowledge system, and the Indian system of medicine like Ayurveda, Naturopathy, Yoga, etc. Apart from this, the top 100 universities of the world will be allowed to open their campuses in India. A legislative framework for such an entry shall be put in place while giving special dispensation regarding regulatory governance and content norms at par with autonomous institutions in India. To promote research collaboration and student exchanges between Indian and foreign universities, the credits acquired in foreign universities may be considered for being awarded a degree by Indian universities. This is going to be a revolutionary step in view of the fact that around 7-8 lakhs students from India go abroad for their higher education and only about 46,000 students come to India to pursue their higher education and that too only from neighbouring countries like Nepal, Bangladesh and Afghanistan. The primary focus of the policy is to increase the number of inbound students from other countries to India and to take measures to retain the outbound ones who go abroad in large numbers to study in foreign universities. This can also result in the saving of a large amount of foreign exchange for our country. Also, having foreign campuses on Indian soil will help in promoting international collaborations in terms of faculty exchange, student exchange, curriculum exchange, semester exchange, research collaborations while inducing a spirit of competition in Indian universities, which may help in improving the quality of our higher education. To promote the internationalisation of higher education in India, international offices will be set up in universities to ensure an international experience to the foreign students in Indian universities. The NEP–2020 has laid a lot of emphasis on internationalisation of higher education which can help in making India a global hub for providing quality higher education and also result in Indian universities to slide up in global rankings.

RE-ENERGISING THE FACULTY

The NEP–2020 acknowledges the importance of faculty in promoting the quality of higher education and has proposed that the faculty be given the freedom to design their own curricular and pedagogical

approaches within the approved framework. It seeks to empower the faculty to work effectively through innovative teaching, research and service as these will be the key motivators for them to do truly outstanding and creative work. The policy also recognises the need for reducing the student teacher ratio, excessive workload of the teachers to ensure that teaching remains a pleasant activity and there is adequate time for interaction with students, conducting research and performing other university activities. The faculty has been given complete freedom to decide what to teach within the overall framework, how to teach, assess and evaluate students based on continuous evaluation of their students throughout the semester/year, rather than depending upon a three-hour examination. The policy focuses on acknowledging, rewarding and incentivising faculty members based on their performance rather than the number of years spent. To produce good academic leaders and administrators, the policy focusses on identifying good faculty having leadership qualities and administrative acumen and preparing them for leadership roles by training and grooming them for the future roles. Recognising the importance of online teaching and seeing its potential during the COVID-19 lockdown times, the NEP–2020 also focusses on the capacity building of teachers to equip them with the skills and nuances of effective online teaching.

The capacity building of faculty and incentivising them for the good work will go a long way in promoting quality education. The autonomy will also certainly encourage and motivate them to try new technological and pedagogical tools to excel in their teaching.

PROMOTING RESEARCH

The policy while stressing on the importance of research has mentioned that the research and innovation investment in India is only 0.69 percent GDP as compared to 2.8 percent in USA, 4.3 percent in Israel and 4.2 percent in Korea. The policy while stressing on increasing the total funding on higher education to 6 percent of GDP has also strongly emphasised on increasing the research

funding at par with the developed countries. It recognises the need for increasing research funding to universities for inculcating an environment of research and culture of innovation in the country. The policy has recommended establishment of National Research Foundation (NRF) which will completely oversee and monitor funding of research grants to universities. The National Research Foundation will avoid overlapping of research grants from different sources and carry out linkages of universities with various funding sources. 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 the 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.

The establishment of National Research Foundation and increase in the research funding to match with international standards will certainly improve the research output of the country, leading to better world rankings.

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS

The NEP–2020 is a forward-looking and student-centric policy, in which a lot of freedom is given to students in terms of selection of subjects and courses, options of multiple universities and pace for the completion of a programme. Students can now take a break from their studies and resume their education from where they left off at

any point of time. The transfer of credits from online mode to regular mode and *vice versa*; from foreign universities to Indian Universities; and from one programme to another will give a lot of flexibility to the students to choose as well as modify their learning path. The policy focuses on use of open education resources like National Digital Library of India (NDLI), e-pg pathshala, e-pathshala and platforms like SWAYAM for online teaching and learning. The policy further focuses on the need for bridging the digital divide across the country by providing equipment and services in rural areas of the country in the least possible time frame. The NEP–2020 focuses on blended learning, i.e., combination of online and offline learning and addresses the issue of employability of students by focussing on vocational education alongside that of academic learning. It is imperative that vocational education should be integrated with higher education so that the status of vocational programs can be brought on par with regular degree programs. The policy also underlines the importance of giving due prestige, dignity and honour to skill-based education. The most innovative concept introduced in the policy for the students is the establishment of Academic Bank of Credit.

Academic Bank of Credit (ABC) will prove to be a game changer for the students by providing wings to the students for a free flight of knowledge. ABC is conceptualised as a digital/virtual/online entity to function like a Commercial Bank with students as account holders to whom the bank shall provide a variety of services including credit accumulation, credit verification and credit transfer. ABC shall provide credit deposit accounts to all the students who are studying in any recognised Higher Education Institute (HEI) or even to those who are not students at present but wish to pursue education as a learner who wants to upskill. The academic credits earned by a student from multiple institutions, both through online or regular modes, shall be credited to her/his account. After accumulation of credits up to a given threshold, a student can redeem the credits for an academic degree at any convenient time. The ABC shall facilitate student mobility across the system including movement between campus-based education and ODL; movement between skill-based programs and formal degree programmes; and movement between Indian and foreign

Universities. It will also allow the students to learn over a long span of time, thus promoting lifelong learning.

The students who may or may not have enrolled in a higher educational institutions but wish to pursue education in the pursuit of knowledge and want to consolidate their academic records for employment or educational purposes, can register with ABC. It enables a student to accumulate institutional credits from numerous and/or various sources into ones credit account. The ABC shall be a service to facilitate the integration of the campuses and distributed learning systems, by creating student mobility within the inter and intra university system. It will help in seamlessly integrating skills and experiences into a credit-based formal system by providing a credit recognition mechanism, which will help students to plan their own learning objectives and decide the pace at which they would like to learn. It shall promote access, equity, quality, relevance, flexibility, mobility, collaboration, transparency, recognition and integration to improve the competitiveness and efficiency of our education system. ABC shall prove to be a panacea for the students for pursuing quality lifelong education while exercising freedom of subject, freedom of time, freedom of university, freedom of country and freedom of speed.

CONCLUSION

With the new NEP–2020, the country has got an innovative and ambitious policy, which is well-grounded in the roots of Indian Ancient Knowledge system after a long wait of 34 years, or rather, after a whopping 185 years since the infamous minutes of Macaulay in 1835. Since the NEP–2020 focuses on the holistic development of students, it has the potential to restore India’s status as a Vishwa Guru. The essence lies in its implementation in letter and spirit in a time bound manner. For this, all stakeholders, i.e., the central government, state governments, statutory and professional councils, state councils of higher education, universities, colleges, vice chancellors, principals, administrators, faculty and students have to work hard with passion to ensure that the vision set in the policy actually sees the light of the day.

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