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Challenges and Salient Features of NEP 2020: Higher Education

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Abstract:

It is an open fact that the education is the backbone of the progress of any country. For sustainable development in the field of education and overall development of the country well designed education policy and its appropriate implementation is needed. As it is also predicted that our country is going to be third largest economy in the world by 2030-2032. This economy will certainly will be driven by a knowledgeable society which needed to be reformed in near future. The NEP has been brought by keeping this bright future into consideration and to meet the future demands of the knowledgeable world. This policy aims to transform India into a vibrant knowledgeable society, suited to 21st century needs of the students and bringing the unique capabilities of each students. After 34 years, this policy has come into existence which is a comprehensive framework for elementary, secondary and higher education. In fact it has covered all the spears of the education and has come with excellent features, yet there may be some challenges in bringing it on the ground. These challenges may be overcome if these are handled with a positive and welfare attitude. Implementation should be guided by the spirit and intent of the policy and has to be executed in a phased manner with careful planning and monitoring.

Keywords: NEP, Salient features, Challenges, GER, MERU, NRF, NETF

Introduction:

After a long period of thirty- four years, our country is having a new education policy which replaces the previous National Education Policy on Education 1986. This policy has been formulated after a long and detailed consultative process. In May 2016, a Committee for Evolution the New Education policy was framed under the Chairmanship Late Shri T. S. R. Subramanian. In June 2017 a Committee under the Chairmanship of Dr. K. Kasturirangan was constituted which submitted the Draft National Educational policy, 2019 on 31 May, 2019. NEP 2020 has been approved by the Union Cabinet of India on 29 July 2020, is the first education policy of the 21st century. This policy

is based on the five fundamental pillars which are Access, Equity, Quality, Affordability and Accountability and it is a comprehensive framework for elementary, secondary and higher education. It focuses on all the spheres of the education. The vision of NEP is to create progressive India for 21st century and making it 'Vishwa Guru' with the multidisciplinary and liberal education. This policy is aligned with the 2030 agenda for sustainable development.

As it is the open fact that the education is the backbone of the progress of any country, this is also predicted that our country is going to be third largest economy in the world by 2030-2032. This economy will certainly will be driven by a knowledgeable society which needed to be reformed in near future. The NEP has been brought by keeping this bright future into consideration and to meet the future demands of the knowledgeable world. This policy aims to transform India into a vibrant knowledge society, suited to 21st century needs of the students and bringing the unique capabilities of each students.

The present paper tries to throw light on the salient features of NEP 2020: Higher Education and the challenges of the policy. Salient features of NEP regarding higher education can be summarized as following:

- ❖ **Increase in GER:** NEP 2020 focuses to increase Gross Enrolment Ratio from 26.3% (2018) to 50% by 2035. This feature will encourage more and more youths to be part of higher education and become the part of knowledgeable society. Each Higher Education Institution (HEI) will aim to have 3,000 or more students in their institutions.
- ❖ **Multidisciplinary Education System with Multiple Entry and Exit Points:** NEP proposes a flexible curricular structure and creative combination of various disciplines for study with multiple entry and exit points. The students of humanities will be able to study the subjects from science stream or others it will help in developing well rounded students who possess critical skills and knowledge which are needed in 21st century. Besides this undergraduate degree will be of either 3 or 4 year duration. Students will have the flexibility to leave the course at any stage and can have the following according to their ability and norms:
 - 1 year- Certificate
 - 2 year – Diploma
 - 3 year – Degree
 - 4 year –Honors
- ❖ **Academic Bank of Credits (ABC):** The digital bank will be established to store the academic credits of the students which they have earned from various recognized Higher Education Institutions. It will enable the students to exchange their earned credits with a certificate/diploma/degree according to their credits and regulations. Thus it will facilitates multiple entry and exit system in higher education, which is a never before feature of

education system.

- ❖ **Multidisciplinary Education and Research Universities (MERU):** These universities will be set up for holistic and multidisciplinary education and will aim to attain the high standards in quality education across the country. It will offer undergraduate, post graduate programs with high quality teaching and research. Single stream HEIs will be phased out over time, they will have to be converted into multidisciplinary institutions or will have to become the constituent institutions of any multidisciplinary university.
- ❖ **Autonomy regarding Curriculum, Pedagogy and Assessment:** All the higher education institutions and faculty will have the autonomy to design and improve the curriculum, they will be given freedom to choose the appropriate teaching and assessment strategy within a broad framework of higher education qualification. This feature of NEP envisages autonomy in higher education which will lead to some innovative curriculum or pedagogy for the betterment of education system.
- ❖ **National Research Foundation (NRF):** To promote and facilitate research culture in the country National Research Foundation has been formulated by the Prime Minister's Science, Technological and Innovation Advisory Council (PM- STIAC) in consultation with MHRD. It aims at increasing the research through HEIs across the country; NRF will fund the research and will coordinate with other funding agencies of the country.
- ❖ **National Educational Technology Forum (NETF):** This forum will be set up as an autonomous body, to boost digital education. It will provide independent evidence based advice on technology based interventions to central and state govt. agencies. This forum will be one centre to discuss and make strategies to increase the use of technology across all levels of education.
- ❖ **Online and Digital Education:** NEP lays emphasis on digital and online education just keeping in view of unprecedented outbreak of pandemic Covid-19. In such conditions there is a need to prepare an alternative mode of education to save the education system. To fulfill this objective digital infrastructure, digital content and capacity building will be created in MHRD.
- ❖ **Teacher Education:** Good teachers are the backbone of a good education system. To improve teacher education system now 4 year integrated B.Ed. will be offered by multidisciplinary HEIs by 2030. The substandard standalone teacher education institutions will be abolished. 2 year and 1 year B.Ed. program will also run. 2 year B.Ed. for the students having Bachelor's degree, 1 year B.Ed. for students, having 4 year undergraduate degree in a specialized subjects.

❖ **Regulation of Higher Education Institutions:** In NEP it has been proposed that there will be an umbrella institution named- Higher Education Commission of India (HECI). Now UGC will not exist but AICTE, NCTE and NAAC will continue with its functioning. Whereas HECI will work with its four independent verticals—

1. National Higher Education Regulatory Council (NHERC) for regulating higher education excluding medical and legal education
2. National Accreditation Council (NAC) will work as a meta- accrediting body
3. Higher Education Grants Council (HEGC) will carry out funding and financing of higher education.
4. General Education Council (GEC) will frame expected learning outcomes for higher education programs.

❖ **India as a Global Study Destination:** To restore its role as a ‘Vishwa Guru’ India will provide premium education at affordable costs. Students from abroad will be welcomed to study in India. An international student’s office will be set up at each HEI for hosting foreign students, and high performing Indian universities will be encouraged to set up their campuses in other countries and selected universities from top 100 universities will be encouraged to operate in India. NEP envisages opening the doors for foreign universities to establish themselves in India and attract the students to take up their courses. This step may be good from the point of view of the students that they will get a chance to study at foreign university in their own country.

❖ **Technology Use and Integration:** Technology plays an important role in the improvement of educational process and outcomes, thus for educational advancement and enhancing the use of technology in the educational settings NEP has envisaged to set up an autonomous body, the National Educational Alliance for Technology, a platform for the use of technology. NEAT will also organize conferences, workshops, etc. in order to seek the views of national/international educational technology researchers, entrepreneurs, learned persons and practitioners.

After discussing the salient features of National Education policy it gives a clear picture that the policy has covered nearly all the issues of the higher education. Policy is good but there may be some challenges in implementing it on the ground. This paper has tried out to bring those issues into notice---

- NEP envisages to increase the GER from 26.3% to 50% by 2035 and besides this it also has been proposed in NEP that in every district or near it there will be on large multidisciplinary university by 2030, to fulfill these objective there will be need of opening of large numbers of universities very soon.

- It will be challenging for all higher education institutions to become multidisciplinary institutions by 2040 and aim to have 3000 or more students.
- Funds are the fundamental requirements to accomplish any planning. NEP aims to increase the public investment in education sector by the center and the states in order to attain the goal of world class education in India. The current public (central Govt. and states) expenditure on education in India is nearly 4.43% of GDP and around 10% of the total Govt. expenditure on education. NEP targets to reach 6% of GDP and 20% of all public expenditures on education however, it will a big challenge.
- This NEP has come at the time when our economy is not doing well due to Covid-19, lockdown, unemployment, world economy and many more may be the reasons but the result is, it would be difficult for our governments to raise the funds for education sector.
- NEP gives freedom to the educational institutions and its faculty members to evolve the curriculum and pedagogy according to their need. Thus there will be need of trained teachers, because only trained teachers would be able to evolve better pedagogy and curriculum for their students
- To implement the policy in full-fledged manner, large pool of teachers is required which could be possible only by earliest recruitment of the teachers at all the levels. Which seems hard to be accomplished.
- Opening the doors for foreign universities may be good for the students but these foreign universities may pose challenge for the local educational institutions and will give them tough fight and our HEIs will have to prove themselves at every step.
- Setting of Indian universities abroad may attract learned teachers and professors to move abroad in lieu of attractive salary and facilities.

Thus after discussing the salient features and the challenges in implementing the policy it can be concluded that there is no doubt that this policy has touched nearly all the aspects of the different levels of education, yet there may be some challenges in bringing it on the ground. These challenges may be overcome if these are handled with a positive and welfare attitude. Implementation should be guided by the spirit and intent of the policy and has to be executed in a phased manner with careful planning and monitoring. Nearly after two year of acceptance of this policy, many steps have been taken towards implementation of this policy too. As the policy says itself that it in the decade of 2030-2040 this policy will be in operational mode. Till then we should hope for the shaping of better future through this policy.

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