NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY- 2020: RETHINKING ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract

The Government of India published, after independence, nation's third policy on education on July 30, 2020. This policy on education titled as "National Education Policy- 2020" (NEP-2020). This much anticipated education policy is a widespread policy covering all level and aspects of education of the country. Part 'Two' of NEP- 2020 covered the area of higher education and detailed about the expectations in this area. For an economically developing country like India, where the demand for a quality skilled workforce is very high it becomes necessary to keep a check on the quality of education provided in the higher education system. Assessment plays a crucial role in improving the quality of education by giving feedback. Normally assessment is done as objectives of education are formulated. Any teaching-learning process is incomplete without a proper assessment mechanism. National Education Policy- 2020 is expecting and suggesting fundamental change in the traditional assessment system in higher education. This paper is an attempt to explore the important recommendations made by National Education Policy- 2020 on 'Assessment' in the area of higher education.

Keywords: Assessment mechanism, Higher education, National Education Policy- 2020.

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1. Introduction

The higher education system in India has an ancient history and it has emerged through different periods. It took a major shift during British rule. The current higher education system of India traces their roots back in the English system of education in the British period in India. The higher education plays an essential role in contouring the future of Indian society. According to world bank survey in 2019, India has the world's third-largest system of higher

education. As per the university grant commission, we have 412 state universities, 124 deemed to be universities, 53 central universities and 361 private universities till April 2020 (UGC, 2020). Despite these huge statistics, the quality of higher education and the access to the higher education is still questionable.

The All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) revealed that Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) among the 18-23 of age group learners in Higher education in India is 26.3%. Where the male GER is 26.3% and females GER is 26.4% (AISHE, 2018-2019).

Table:1 Gross Enrolment Ratio in 2019

Sr. No.	GER	2018-2019
1	All	26.3%
2	Male	26.3%
3	Female	26.4%

Source: AISHE Report 2018-2019 (aishe.gov.in)

 "Ensuring quality higher education is one of the most important things we can do for future generations".

Ron Lewis

Learning and assessment go hand in hand, one without the other is incomplete. Assessments are crucial to the educational process. Without assessment, it is impossible for a teacher to know the student's capability and how to give it a direction. In 2009 Comprehensive and Continuous Education (CCE) was introduced by Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) for school education. CCE gave the assessment mechanism altogether new meaning. From the traditional two examinations annually to continuous assessment, this changes the face of assessment. This also affects the higher education system in India (Wats & Wats, 2009). However, the sole purpose of CCE that is to achieve holistic development of the learners is still not achievable in higher education, due to the fact that higher education deals with various challenges ranging from enrolment and access to the several disciplines to manage. NEP- 2020 has made an attempt to overcome all these challenges.

In his speech in the cabinet meeting on July 29, 2020 Indian Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi stated that, "The 21st century is the era of knowledge. This is the time for increased focus on learning, research, innovation. This is exactly what India's National Education Policy, 2020 does. We are focusing on the quality of education in India. Our attempts have been to make our education system the most advance and modern for students of our country."

(PM Modi on 29th July during the Cabinet meeting on NEP 2020)

2. The journey of NEP- 2020

Below is mentioned in brief the journey of National Education Policy- 2020.

2.1. Under the chairmanship of Late Shri T.S.R. Subramanian, former Secretary of Cabinet, a committee was constituted. In May 2016, this committee submitted a report which recommended initiatives to improve the education sector (Angadi,2020).

2.2. Another committee was constituted in 2017, under Dr. Krishnaswamy Kasturirangan. This committee presented the draft of new policy on education to the MHRD ministry in 2019. This draft was uploaded in the MHRD website in 22 different language in order to accessible for every stakeholder (Angadi, 2020).

2.3. After reviewing, the draft got approved by union cabinet in 29th of July 2020. And thus after 34 years of wait the third policy on education make its way to change the current scenario of education for the betterment.

3. Higher Education in NEP- 2020

The part two of NEP 2020 spread over eleven chapters which canvass various aspects of higher education. The points mentioned in the policy are as follows:

3.1. Restructuring of Institution:

Realizing the various shortcomings in the existing structure of higher education institution, the NEP-2020 mentioned it restructure. The key purpose of this higher education policy is to defragmentation of higher education by transforming higher education institutions into broad multidisciplinary universities (NEP 2020, sec. 10, pg. 34). The restructuring of institution will lead to create a dynamic group of academicians. It will also motivate learners to gain expertise across different disciplines.

3.1.1. Gross Enrolment Ratio: In the year 2018 the Gross Enrolment Ratio in higher education was 26.3% which include the vocational education as well. The aim of NEP 2020 is to increase this GER to 50% by year 2035 (NEP 2020, sec. 10.8, pg. 35).

3.1.2. Multidisciplinary Institution: University will be a spectrum of multidisciplinary institutions which will provide graduate and under graduate programs that emphasis on community engagement, research and high-quality teaching (NEP 2020, sec. 10.3, pg. 34). All the higher education institution to become multidisciplinary institutions and ensure maximum utilisation of resources by larger students' enrolment by 2040 (NEP 2020, sec. 10.7, pg. 35). To increase the enrolment, access and quality these institutions can run Open Distance Learning and online programmes (NEP 2020, sec. 10.10, pg. 35).

3.2. Holistic and Multidisciplinary Education: Holistic Education is a blend of child centeredness, character transformation and the skill and competencies of 21st century. It is only the holistic education that can resolve the various issue faced by the graduates such as unemployment and underemployment ((Ngale & Monaheng, 2019). NEP-2020 talks about providing multidisciplinary education and research-based education in order to give students holistic education (NEP 2020, sec. 11, pg. 36). Holistic education will lead to the all-round development of the learners. It will also facilitate them to grasp the skills of 21st century e.g. creative thinking, scientific temper, problem solving etc, through integrated education.

3.2.1. Different structure of master's Degree: HEIs will have autonomy to offer master's degrees of different structure. It can be of one or two years master programs with research, depending upon the bachelor program done by the student. However, the M.Phil. program to be withdrawn (NEP 2020, sec. 11.10, pg. 38).

3.2.2. Multi-disciplinary Education and Research Universities: To achieve the quality education of global standards, Multi-disciplinary Education and Research Universities (MERUs) will be established (NEP 2020, sec. 11.11, pg. 38).

3.2.3. National Research Foundation: For capacity building in research across higher education and fostering research culture, an apex body will be established named the National Research Foundation (NEP 2020, sec. 11.12, pg. 38).

3.3. Optimal Learning Environments and Support for Students

The introduction of effective pedagogical methods, innovations and educational needs, along with shifts in the individual circumstances of students, will continually challenge criteria for learning experiences providing appropriate facilities and learning support (Valtonen et al., 2020). A conducive classroom environment will act as a catalyst to improve learning outcomes, student's engagement and will help in developing a positive learning culture.

3.3.1. Institutional Development Plan: Every institute will develop an Institutional Development Plan (IDP), that will integrate all the activities varying from curricular content improvement plan to plan for quality of classroom interaction (NEP 2020, sec. 12.3, pg. 39).

3.3.2. Support System: Universities and colleges to established high-quality support centres to ensure the all-round wellbeing of students from disadvantage group (NEP 2020, sec. 12.4, pg. 39).

3.3.3. Financial Support: For tracking, supporting and fostering the progress of students' scholarship program the National Scholarship Portal will be extended (NEP 2020, sec. 12.10, pg. 40).

3.4. Higher Education Commission of India (HECI): An independent body will be established to cover all the higher education system except medical and legal education. HECI will be accountable for funding, standards-setting, regulation and accreditation of higher education India. HECI will be comprise of four independent verticals Higher Education Grants Council (HEGC) for funding, General Education Council (GEC) for standard setting, National Higher Education Regulatory Council (NHERC) for regulation, and National Accreditation Council (NAC) for accreditation (NEP 2020, sec. 18, pg. 46-48).

3.5. Restructuring of University Governance: All the HEIs will be headed by an independent Board of Governors (BoG). The BoG will be consisting of "a group of highly qualified, competent, and dedicated individuals having proven capabilities and a strong sense of commitment to the institution" (NEP 2020, sec. 19, pg. 49). The higher education system needs to build a culture of educational excellence to keep up with the changing times and demands of the professional world, and for that, it needs strong leadership and governance.

4. Assessment Mechanism in NEP-2020:

The Indian education system has been gone through several changes in the past. This lead to a change in the aims and objective of education and so as the purpose of assessment. Most of the assessment strategies adopted in higher education institution in India are of written nature. Indian education system give emphasis on written assessment. Assessment helps to formulate, monitor, guide and revive the aims and objectives of the educational program. The practice of accurate, reliable, justifiable and equitable evaluation is therefore a basic requirement for any education system to be successful (Areekkuzhiyil, 2019).

4.1. National Testing Agency (NTA): A common entrance test will be conducted by NTA, for admission across various university. This test will be for graduate, under graduate admission and for fellowships in HEIs.

4.2. Choice Based Credit System: The assessment system including the final certification will be guided by HEI. For inculcating innovation and providing flexibility the **choice-based credit system** will revised. The grading system will be shift from norm referenced to criterion-based grading system, this will allow a comparable outcome. A continuous comprehensive evaluation system will be followed by HEIs (NEP- 2020, sec. 12.2, pg. 38). In order to provide

uniformity in higher education and achieving greater learning experience for leaners the Ministry of Education inculcate the choice-based credit system. CBCS offers an opportunity for the students to select courses from the specified courses which include core, elective/minor or skill-based courses. All the courses have assigned some specific credits based on the hour of teaching and content of the course. The courses can be evaluated using the grading system semester wise and it also provide flexibility of credit transfer (UGC, 2009).

4.3.　Multiple entry and exit points in bachelor's Degree: All the HEIs will offer creative combinations of subject with flexible curriculum and integration of vocational education. The under graduate programmes will be of 3 to 4 years which allow multiple exits and entry point with appropriate certification as shown in the figure 1 (NEP- 2020, sec. 11.9, pg. 37).
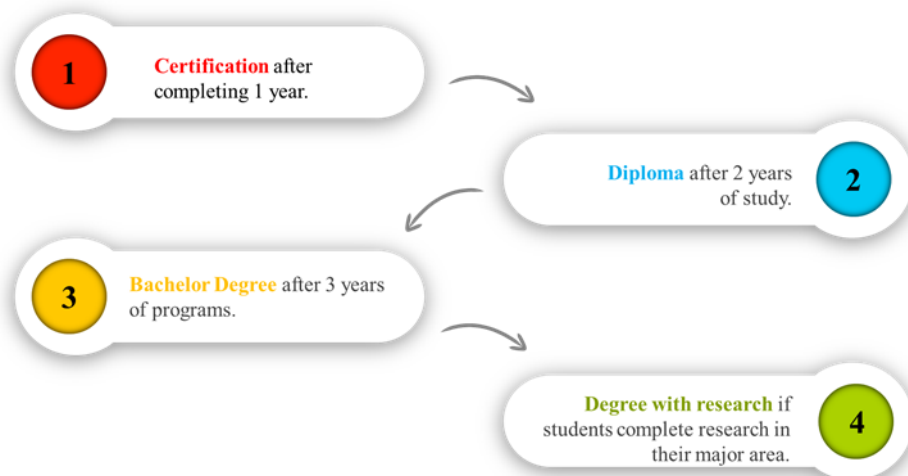

1 **Certification** after completing 1 year.

2 **Diploma** after 2 years of study.

3 **Bachelor Degree** after 3 years of programs.

4 **Degree with research** if students complete research in their major area.

Figure 1: Multiple entry and exit points in bachelor's Degree as per NEP- 2020

4.4.　Academic Bank of Credit: An Academic Bank of Credit is to be initiated, which will be a digital repository for academic credits earned from various institutes. This will allow transfer of credits towards final degree received (NEP 2020, sec. 11.9, pg. 37).

5.　Conclusion

"Efforts and courage are not enough without purpose and direction."

John F Kennedy

Similarly, the educational assessment is only beneficial if it will achieve, its supreme purpose of quality education. Quality education also includes quality learning outcome and without assessment, it is impossible to estimate the learning outcome. Assessing the learning outcome

will shift the focus from teaching to learning. For a better learning the assessment must include various form, which enable to assess all the skills according to the cognitive domain of Bloom Taxonomy that is understanding, application, analysis, generalization and evaluation. The vision behind NEP- 2020 is the same, it talks about assessing the educational method in STEAM that is an integration of Arts with Science, Technology, Engineering and Technology (NEP 2020, sec. 11.2, pg. 36). NEP- 2020 is an educational policy which focuses on learners and their educational needs. If implemented with proper legislation, it will uplift the education system of India to the world level and make India "Vishwa Guru".

Acronyms used in this paper

NEP- 2020	National Education Policy- 2020
CCE	Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation
CBSE	Central Board of Secondary Education
MHRD	Ministry of Human Resource Development (now Ministry of Education)
GER	Gross Enrolment Ratio
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
MERU	Multi-disciplinary Education and Research Universities
NRF	National Research Foundation
IDP	Institutional Development Plan
HECI	Higher Education Commission of India
HEGC	Higher Education Grants Council
GEC	General Education Council
NHERC	National Higher Education Regulatory Council
NAC	National Accreditation Council
BoG	Board of Governors
CBCS	Choice-Based Credit System

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