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Reshaping Higher Education: A Study on Educational Policies and Curriculum Reforms at the Undergraduate Level under National Education Policy (NEP)-2020

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Abstract: NEP 2020 plays a prime role in exploring multidisciplinary approaches and promoting inclusive education along with fair access to learning resources. The policy focuses on the overall development of students. It has become most demanding at the same time trending and widely discussed educational policies in the 21st century. The title of the paper is "Reshaping Higher Education: A Study on Educational Policies and Curriculum Reforms at the Undergraduate Level under National Education Policy (NEP)-2020". The paper has three objectives. First, it discuss about the major salient features of the policy on higher education. Second, it examines the various components of curriculum for Four Years Under-Graduate Programme (FYUGP). Finally, it highlights the effects of the curriculum reforms for Four Years Multidisciplinary Undergraduate Programme. The investigator uses secondary sources to analyze and interpret data to address the existing problem. The study shows that Holistic Multidisciplinary approaches, multiple entry/exit with degrees, and set up Research Universities are some key features of NEP 2020 on higher education. The study also looks at the various curriculum components of the FYUGP at the undergraduate level such as languages, AEC, major-specific discipline, internship/project reports, etc. Further, the investigator mentions about impacts of curriculum reforms for FYUGP in higher education like choice and flexibility, technology-based education, and employability, etc.

Keywords: National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, Undergraduate level, Curriculum reforms, Higher Education, Multidisciplinary Approaches, Holistic Development.

1 | INTRODUCTION

Education enables individuals to excel in various aspects, including personal, social, emotional, spiritual, economic, political, and cultural spheres. Without proper education, we can't think about the Upliftment and civilization of the nation. That is the reason, from time to time various commissions,

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policies, and government initiatives have been taken to give a better healthier, and peaceful standard of life.

Higher education refers to the education where emphasis on developing the students' critical thinking, reasoning ability, and fostering cultural and social values and students may able to enrol after completing the higher secondary level .The prime motto of the higher education is to develop the personality as well as employability. If we turn the pages of the past then we find that from the Vedic periods to the 21st century various commissions, acts, programmes, and polices have been implemented and formed to expand knowledge in various aspects of higher education. The Government of India, implementing numerous recommendations to build a fruitful mankind for the nation. In this paper, the investigator is going to discuss one of the latest or trending policies of the country that is National Education Policy 2020 also called as NEP2020.

The National Education Policy is the most demanding and widely discussed policy of the 21st century and takes the place of 34-year old National Policy on Education (NPE) 1986. The policy intends to transform and redesign the various educational structures including governance and regulations. This policy places emphasis on Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4, which is highlighted on "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" by 2030 (NEP Draft, 2020 p.3). Access, Equity, Quality, Affordability, and Accountability are the major pillars of the policy. This policy has the potential to develop the uniqueness of each individual and shows direction towards modernization and employability.

In June 2017 Committee for the draft of National Education Policy was inaugurated under the chairmanship of renowned Scientist Dr. K. Kasturirangan submitted the draft National Education Policy to the Human Resource Development Minister on 31st May 2019 and The Union Cabinet of India approved the policy on 29 July 2020 (Kalyani, 2020).

The policy has replaced earlier 10+2 system of education with a new 5+3+3+4 structure that is more flexible, comprehensive, and holistic. This recent structure is divided into four stages known as Foundational Stages which consists of age 3-8years. Under this stage, 3years for Anganwadi or pre-school and 2 years in primary school which collectively cover 5 years. The next stage is Preparatory Stage, which consists of 3 -5years (8 to 11 years old). Middle Stage is the third stage where covering 11 to 14 years, which means 6 to 8 grades of students, are included in this stage. Secondary Stage is the final stage, consisting two stages, first stage includes 9 and10 grades and the second stage includes 11 and 12 grade which is 4 years in total.

2 | LITERATURE REVIEW OF THE STUDY:

Jain, Khare, Goel, & Goel (2023) tried to identify the impact of higher education prior to and after the implementation of the NEP 2020 in some selected educational institutions. The research showed that the NEP 2020 policy is reflected more in certain areas, such as multilingual education, advanced technology, professional development of teachers, improved assessment and evaluation, and multiple entry and exit options in study, than in the previous education system before implementation of new education policy.

Malik. Chinmaya (2023), The paper studied the National Education Policy's goals and relevance of the present education system, and also pointed out effects of policy on different stakeholders such as teachers, students, parents, and educational institutions. Again tries to find out the gaps between the policy and the real-life circumstances.

Dhokare, Jadhav,& Gaikwad (2022) examined that educational institutions need to adopt innovative and technology-based teaching methodologies, curriculum, and evaluation techniques related to the new policy goals. The research mentioned educational reforms, pedagogical shifting, and enrichment

of research on higher education and discussed how these changes will help in overall development of the personality and the nation.

Raju. S.R.(2014), The investigator carried out a study to find out the various opportunities and challenges of the NEP 2020 on higher education. The paper mainly highlighted major reforms in higher education including innovation, creativity, employability, multidisciplinary opportunities, inclusion, globalization, technology advancement, and life skills development. Along with the opportunities, the investigator discussed challenges regarding the implementation of the policy.

3 | OBJECTIVES OF THE PAPER:

To reflect the various reforms educational policy and curriculum in the higher education at the undergraduate level, researcher identify following objectives for better result of the study.

1. To discuss about the major salient features of NEP 2020 on higher education
2. To identify the various components of curriculum for Four Years Under Graduate Programme(FYUGP)
3. To highlight the impact of the curriculum reforms for Four Years Multidisciplinary Undergraduate Programme.

4 | METHODOLOGY:

The researcher employs a descriptive research design within the qualitative research methodology. This paper basically consists of a conceptual discussion of reshaping Higher Education: A Study on Educational Policies and Curriculum Reforms at the Undergraduate Level under NEP-2020. So, the researcher collects data or information using secondary sources such as the NEP 2020 draft, articles, research papers, websites, newspapers, and other printed or e-resources.

5 | DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS:

1. To discuss about the major salient features of NEP 2020 on higher education.

The NEP 2020 plays an important role in expanding higher education into multidisciplinary approaches. The policy lights up each and every corner to expand the knowledge of the existing education system. It is emphasizes on first class education, advanced technology, innovative research initiatives, multilingualism, work-based and career oriented education, community engagement, and an updated assessment and evaluation system at the undergraduate level. Here are some major salient features of the NEP 2020 on higher education discussed below:

i.Increase Gross Enrolment Ratio:

NEP 2020 stated that the policy will raise the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education up to 50% by 2035 including vocational education.

ii.Versatile or Multidisciplinary education:

The policy aims to provide a well-all rounded education at the undergraduate stage, it combine science, arts, humanities, mathematics, and professional subjects through a flexible curriculum. The versatile or multidisciplinary education supports the students in all-round development and equips 21st century skills in several fields such as languages, art, social science, science, technical, professional, technical skills and soft skills.

iii.Multiple entry/exit with degrees:

The policy offered several entry and exit options for undergraduate students in higher education with proper recognition of degrees. Certificates will be provided to those learners who will complete one year course including vocational/professional programs. A diploma will be offered or awarded to those

learners or students who complete two years of study in a particular course. A Bachelor's degree will be granted after completing three year programme and lastly a four -year multidisciplinary Bachelor's degree will be provide after completion of four-year programme and which allows the opportunity to experience a fully multidisciplinary education with a major and minor subjects as their preferences.

iv.ABC Account:

ABC stands for Academic Bank of Credit, the policy keep provisions to create an ABC account for students. This account will store marks in form of credits from the various courses offered by the higher educational institutions. After finishing the course or programme, students will receive score or grade based on their total credit score.

v. Research Universities (RUs):

NEP 2020 recommended that Research Universities should be set up at the undergraduate and higher education level and motivate the students to explore multidisciplinary courses and engage students with research activities.

vi.Rationalised Institutional Architecture:

The policy has been planning to create innovative and unique well-resourced, colourful multidisciplinary institutions in the higher education sector and convert them into multidisciplinary universities, colleges, wisdom hubs, or clusters. The universities and Hubs will offer high-quality teaching, research, community engagement, and an exchange programme for undergraduate and graduate students. The policy also suggests that multidisciplinary universities will be categorized into Teaching-intensive Universities, Autonomous degree-granting Colleges, and Research-intensive Universities for the knowledge enhancement of the students (NEP Draft, 2020).

vii.Establish Research Foundation:

Another important feature is creating the National Research Foundation (NRF) for higher education to encourage the culture of research-based among undergraduate and graduate students across the country irrespective of streams. National Research Foundation will provide funds to the students to explore innovative and indebt study of respective streams and the foundation also closely links with the private and public agencies and organizations to explore more into research areas.

viii.Financial support for the disadvantaged group of students:

Another commendable effort of the policy is to provide financial support to ST, SC, OBC, and other backwards and disadvantaged students to foster and pursue their dream education. The policy will expand the National Scholarship Portal for those students so that they can easily receive scholarships or funds. The policy will once again request that private higher educational institutions keep scholarship provisions for the disadvantaged group of students.

ix.Provisions of distance education:

The policy will keep an eye on expanding and improvement of quality of distance education and open learning and expecting to increasing 50% GER ratio. The policy will take rigorous initiatives and actions like creating online repositories, establishing an online library, providing grants for research, improving student services, online courses, and create online learning platform to ensure excellence in education.

x.Internationalization:

Another important salient feature is the internationalization of education. It provides opportunities to collaborate with top-class universities and allows high-ranking universities to open campuses in our country. This way, students can experience and explore that matches the level of education what is offered in foreign countries.

2. To identify the various components of curriculum for Four Years Under Graduate Programme (FYUGP)

The policy recommended several components of the curriculum for the Year Undergraduate Programme (FYUGP) to ensure holistic, quality, and accountability of the undergraduate students in the higher education curriculum. The components are discussed below-

a) Languages:

One of the important components of the FYUGP curriculum is language. Language helps the students to think freely, freshly, and brings quality and clarity to thoughts. Languages build the core elements for learning the courses. The policy suggests studying Indian Languages such as Sanskrit, Pali, Persian, and Prakrit, and modern Indian languages like English at the undergraduate level.

b) Foundation Courses/Ability Enhancement Courses:

Another essential component of FYUGP is foundation courses and Ability Enhancement Courses (AEC). Foundation courses will help the students to deeper understanding of the knowledge and further it will help to apply ideas in the societal development. AEC courses focus on developing basic skills that are necessary for any future career.

c) Skill Development Courses/Vocational Courses:

Skill Development/Enhancement courses will help to improve skills in a specific field of study. The main goals of these courses are to enhance the occupational skills, experiential learning, practical utility, and life skills to increase students' employability and self-predictability. The choice between value-based or skill-based courses varies by university. Each University have the freedom to offer these courses based on its own requirements, demands, expertise, accountability, and needs.

d) Major Discipline Core Courses:

Discipline-based introductory courses work as a bridge for students who don't have basic ground knowledge of the specific area of discipline. This component of the curriculum of FYUGP will provide introductory ideas of disciplinary courses to the undergraduate students.

Major discipline core courses are those courses that a student compulsorily to study for his/her degree. It is the core course for the undergraduate students and it helps them to build fundamental knowledge, increase expertise, and helps to acquire debt understanding in the specific discipline. All the universities have to maintain uniformity in terms of curriculum, assessment, and evaluation, and purposes so that institutions will transfer common credit and mobility.

e) Major Discipline Elective Courses:

Another crucial component of the curriculum of FYUGP is major discipline elective courses. Here, elective courses are provided under the major discipline courses to explore more detailed knowledge of the core discipline. Major discipline elective courses are also known as discipline-specific electives. Institutions can offer their own elective courses based on their specialization, expertise, availability, requirements, needs, and student demand.

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f) Minor Discipline Courses:

Minor discipline courses are the second specialization courses needed to choose to pursue an additional major discipline. These minor discipline courses also provide expertise knowledge and skills

in a particular field. In FYUGP, students may select related subjects to the major discipline course or may choose distinct courses from the major discipline courses.

g) Generic Elective Courses:

These courses do not relate to the major or discipline-specific courses. The prime focus of the courses is explored more experience and learning beyond the elective courses linked to their major and minor specific discipline.

h) Project work/Dissertation/Internship/Entrepreneurship:

Another integral part of the FYUGP curriculum is project work and a dissertation. These courses or work aim to develop a culture of research and solve real-life problems. It will help the undergraduate students engage and explore grassroots problems through systematic analysis and interpretation. Internship and Entrepreneurship will be the most prominent part of the curriculum at the undergraduate level.

i) Extra- Curricular and Extension Activities:

FYUGP also emphasizes extra-curricular activities and extension as an integral part of the curriculum at the undergraduate level. These co-curricular activities will help the students develop character building, personality development, be free from mental and physical discomfort, and cope with themselves and society. These extension activities also help them to improve positive thinking, collaborative learning, teamwork, and so on.

3. To highlight the impact of the curriculum reforms for Four Years Multidisciplinary Undergraduate Programme.

NEP 2020 focuses on changing the curriculum for the Four-Year Undergraduate Programme. It promotes the growth of multidisciplinary learning across the nation. The reforms in the curriculum have had a great impact at the undergraduate level after the implication of the policy. Some of the impacts of the curriculum reforms are discussed below-.

1. Choice and Flexibility: NEP 2020 gives opportunities to choose courses and subjects as per the needs, requirements, and according to life goals. The policy offers flexibility to select different disciplines in a particular period and promotes multi-disciplinary learning.
2. Interdisciplinary Approach: Another important impact of curriculum reforms is to promote interdisciplinary approaches. Interdisciplinary approaches enable the students to learn different academic disciplines in a single course. It motivates students to collaborate with various branches of knowledge, faculty members, and develop a better understanding of real-life consequences.
3. Research and Innovation: After the implementation of NEP 2020, students have increased awareness about the culture of research and innovation. These research and innovation approaches help the undergraduate students to mould critical thinking, inquiry ability, and systematic analysis of existing knowledge.
4. Employability: The policy will create more employability and practical skills, life skills in various disciplines. The policy offers some internships, project works, and entrepreneurship skills-related courses to increase employability among the students.
5. Technology-based learning: The technology-based learning helps the undergraduate students to familiarize themselves with advanced technological platforms so that they can access resources, and data easily for the betterment of individuals as well as society.
6. Online and Digital Learning: NEP 2020 also includes provisions to enrich online and digital learning through online libraries, digital repositories, online book banks, and collaboration with MOOCS, DIKSHA/SWAYAM technology-based platforms..

7. Quality Improvement: NEP 2020 focuses on improving quality in several areas. These include research, teaching, management, assessment and evaluation, infrastructure, professional development, faculty development, and management.

6 | CONCLUSION:

In conclusion, we can say that NEP 2020 plays an important role in the improving quality education. It encourages all teachers, students, educational institutions, and other stakeholders to adopt multidisciplinary approaches to holistic development. It is not just a policy, it is the blueprint of the future education system and if all the recommendations will implement in a proper and positive way then the education system will create a unique and innovative milestone in the 21st-century education history. The Government will allocate more funding to infrastructure, faculty and professional development, research activities, monitoring, and management fields for effective implementation.

Along with higher education, the policy also reflects on the ECCE, school education, research and innovative areas, online and digital education, teachers' education, primary and secondary education, etc. Its main motto is to explore access, accountability, and mobility, and create multidisciplinary educational hubs and centres across the country.

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