

Management of Higher Education in India: Reflections in NEP 2020

Grismika Neog, Manaswini Buragohain, Silka Rani Bora and Dr. Amar Upadhyaya

Department of Education, Dibrugarh University, Dibrugarh, Assam, India

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ABSTRACT

The National Education Policy (NEP), 2020 is a major turning point in India's higher educational management system. NEP 2020 was developed with the aim to provide high-quality education in India. This paper explores critical aspects of the provisions of NEP 2020 on higher educational management system in India which mainly includes the creation of Indian Higher Education Council (HECI), financial management, management in multidisciplinary and holistic education, management in technology integration, management in the structure and lengths of degree programmes, emphasis on research and innovation, management in governance and leadership. It also discusses several challenges in implementation the provisions of NEP 2020 in India such as barrier in technology, infrastructural upgradation, faculty training, financial disparities, innovation and research. By using descriptive research methodology and based on secondary data, this paper concludes that NEP 2020 has potential to change the Indian higher educational management system by aligning with global standards.

Keywords: NEP 2020, Higher Education, Management, Policy, India

INTRODUCTION

The word "management" is often used in diverse contexts. Management is both a science and an art. Its development of specific concepts, generalizations, and methodologies that have a more or less universal application for which it received the status of a science. It is considered an art as performance of managerial roles requires a set of skills that are unique to each individual. According to Frenchman Henri Fayol, management is made up of five functions: planning, organizing, leading, co-ordinating and controlling (Rastogi et al. 2009)

Keeping an overall concept of management in view, educational management is the process of organizing, coordinating, leading, and regulating an institution's operations through the use of people and material resources in order to effectively carry out the tasks of teaching, research, and extension activity (Beegum, 2022). As the 20th century came to its end, education management gave way to a more positive and optimistic viewpoint that reflected a closer combination of teaching and management. Particularly in high-performing institutions, extensive research and meta-analyses of national structures have resulted in a more sophisticated approach to educational management (Lysokon et al. 2024)

Achieving full human potential, creating an equitable society, and advancing national development all depend critically on high-quality education. The key to India's ongoing growth and leadership on the international platform in the areas of economic development, social justice and equality, scientific and technical advancement, national integration, and cultural preservation is universal high-quality education. (Umachagi & Selvi, 2022)

Higher education is the term used to describe the education that students get in colleges and universities after completing secondary school. After the United States and China, India has the third-largest higher education system globally (Verma and Zaidi, 2023).

India's educational heritage is strongly established in antiquity, with the 'Gurukul system' representing one of its earliest forms. This primitive education system later formed the backbone of formal education system in the country. And by about the 6th century BCE, universities, such as Nalanda and Takshashila, began to emerge and drew students from various Asian nations, as well as those outside. The medieval period before 1200 A.D. established religious institutions as centre of learning, with students coming from wide-ranging areas, including

China, Central Asia and the Middle East. After the 12th century, Islamic governance revolved around geography, law and administration, among others. However, a shift in higher education has taken place since the time of colonial era. They established universities in cities — Calcutta, Mumbai and Chennai in 1857 — based on the example of the University of London. In present higher education system, the quality control of higher education is currently being governed by the University Grants Commission (UGC). The National Policy on Education (NPE) 1986 and its revised action plan 1992 had laid down guidelines for the governance and development of higher education in India (Patil, 2021).

Educational bodies of MHRD for educational management system in India are Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE), National Council of Education Research and Training (NCERT), University Grants Commission (UGC), Council of Science and Industrial Research (CISR), All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), Distance Education Council (DEC), Association of Indian Universities (AIU), National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA) (Sharma and Sharma, 2015).

To bring reform in the Indian education system, the National Policy on Education, 1986 has been replaced by NEP 2020 (Dutta and Mondal, 2023). In light of the significance of education in the country, the National Education Policy 2020 was created with the goal of providing high-quality education. The nation's school and higher education sectors are expected to undergo significant changes as a result of this policy. The government wants to universalize education from preschool to secondary school and attain a 100% GER (Gross Enrolment Ratio) in schooling by 2030 (Singh and Baghel, 2020). The NEP 2020 aims to develop human resources who would produce value propositions, NPE 1986 established a pool of educated and skilled human resources who contributed to the value chain (Ratnaparkhi and Rudrawar, 2023).

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is a major turning point in Indian higher education, which emphasizes a comprehensive strategy meant to promote multidisciplinary learning and creativity. (Aithal and Kakde, 2024)

OBJECTIVES OF THE PAPER

The paper will explore the critical aspects of provisions of NEP 2020 on management of Higher education in India. The paper also aims to explore the challenges in implementing the provisions of NEP 2020.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study used a qualitative document analysis approach based on secondary data sources to examine the management of higher education in India under the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. Data were collected through a systematic review of the NPE 1986, NEP 2020 document, official publications, and policy directives from the Ministry of Education, government reports, peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and other relevant academic publications. Sources published between 2015 and 2025 were chosen based on their relevance, authenticity, and contribution to higher education management. The collected documents were critically reviewed and analysed using a reflexive thematic analysis approach. The data were organized under key themes, including governance, institutional autonomy, quality assurance, multidisciplinary education, research and innovation, technology in higher education, inclusivity and financing. The findings were interpreted by comparing the provisions of NEP 2020 with existing literature and implementation experiences to identify gaps, strengths and challenges for improving higher education management in India.

ANALYSIS & RESULT

4.1. The critical aspects of provisions of NEP 2020 on management of Higher education in India

i) Management in organizational setting

According to NPE 1986, UGC was the regulatory body of higher education. Now, as per NEP 2020, the new regulatory body for higher education is Higher Education Commission of India (HECI).

A major shift in NEP 2020 will plan to establish the Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) as an umbrella organization for higher education—with the exception of medical and legal education. The goal of HECI is to overhaul the higher education industry; the Bill will divide the funding and academic facets of the industry. The new Bill states that HECI will not have any financial authority. It is anticipated that HECI will consist of four separate verticals: the National Accreditation Council (NAC) for accreditation, the Higher Education Grants Council (HEGC) for funding, the General Education Council (GEC) for standard-setting, and the National Higher Education Regulatory Council (NHERC) for regulation. Many educationists have envisioned the need for a single umbrella organization to ensure consistency in educational standards. This is thought to be the best course of action for simplifying education policy. However, in order to guarantee the quality of higher education, institutions must be evaluated according to pertinent criteria such as academic excellence, industry connections, research, and placements. (Kurein and Chandramana, 2020)

ii) Financial Management

One of a higher education institution's major responsibility is to use the money wisely and for the intended purpose, particularly if they are entirely or significantly funded by the central or state government (Thyagarajan et al. 2019)

As per NPE 1986, resource support was given for implementing programmes of educational transformation, reducing disparities, adult literacy, scientific and technological research, etc. In order to do this, real needs will be calculated on a regular basis, and starting with the eighth plan, education spending will be increased to more than 6% of the national revenue. More funds will be obtained by fundraising, requesting recipient communities to maintain school facilities, raising tuition at higher education levels, and making economical use of available resources (Gandhi, 2015).

Now, for the academic success of students from Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes and other SEDGs will get incentives. The National Scholarship Portal will be expanded to support, promote, and track the progress of scholarship winners. There will be pressure on private universities to provide their students with increasingly numerous fellowships and scholarships. To track the academic progress of students who have received scholarships, the National Scholarship Portal's features and operations will be extended (Medha and Bera,2023)

iii) Management in Holistic and Multidisciplinary Education

Earlier, Higher Education focused on flexibility and specialization and given special attention in interdisciplinary program (Basuri,2023).

As per NPE 1986, in order to improve coherence in higher education governance, promote interdisciplinary research across general, agricultural, medical, technical, legal, and other professional education sectors.

Now, according to NEP 2020, a comprehensive and diverse education would seek to integrate the development of all human abilities, including intellectual, artistic, social, physical, emotional, and moral. A well-rounded person with essential 21st century skills in the arts, humanities, languages, sciences, social sciences, and professional, technical, and vocational domains will be developed with the aid of such an education. They will also acquire soft skills like discussion, debate, and communication; a difficult specialization in one or more fields; and an ethic of social engagement. By 2030, each district should have at least one hefty multidisciplinary Higher Education Institution (HEI), according to NEP 2020. Multidisciplinary education and research universities (MERUs) were created to offer a thorough education comparable to that of esteemed establishments. (Dubey, 2023). The flexible and creative curriculum of all HEIs must integrate credit-based courses and projects in the fields of value-based education, environmental education, and community involvement and service in order to achieve such a comprehensive and multidisciplinary education. As part of a comprehensive education, students at all HEIs will have the opportunity to participate in research internships. This will allow students to actively engage with the practical side of their education and, consequently, further enhance their employability. (Kurein and Chandramana, 2020)

iv) Management in technology in Higher Education

As per NPE 1986, there was limited access of higher education particularly in socioeconomically disadvantage area. Significant emphasis will be placed on improving teaching methodologies through the introduction of audio-visual aids and modern electronic equipment.

Inadequate integration of digital tools and technologies is hindering the effectiveness of the educational process. Many educational institutions lack the necessary infrastructure and skills to effectively integrate technology into teaching and learning. (Pundir et al.2024).The extension of open and lengthy learning will be a key factor in raising the overall enrolment rate to 50%. To guarantee adherence to the best academic programs, steps will be implemented, including MOOC-based credit recognition, student development, research financing, online courses and digital archives, etc. The National Educational Technology Forum (NETF), an independent forum, will be established to facilitate the open exchange of ideas about the use of technology to enhance planning, management, assessment, and learning. At every educational level, technology will be properly integrated to enhance teaching methods, promote teacher growth, expand educational opportunities for underprivileged populations, and organize educational planning, management, and administration. Platforms for technology-based education, such as SWAYAM and DIKSHA, will be more effectively incorporated outside of the classroom and higher education. Research on disruptive technologies, instructional materials, and courses that integrate online courses on the periphery will be greatly aided by HEIs. (Sonwal, 2021)

v) Management in the structure and lengths of degree programmes

Earlier in NPE 1986, higher education was offered in two options: a three-year honors bachelor's degree and a three-year pass bachelor's degree.

Now, the duration of any undergraduate degree at any institution will be three or four years under the National Education Policy 2020. During this period, a student can withdraw from the degree. The student must have a diploma degree from any educational institution after completion of two years of study, earns a degree after three years of study, a certificate for students who finish one year of study in any professional or vocational program of their choice. In order to save academic results digitally, the Indian government would also assist in the establishment of an Academic Bank of Credit. This will make it possible for the educational institutions to count the credit and include it in the student's degree at the end (Rajubhai, 2020).

vi) Management in Research and Innovation

Research is considered as an important means of renovating and renewing the educational processes in higher technical institutions as emphasized in National Policy on Education, 1986. It considers research mainly as a means of creating quality manpower to undertake research and development (R&D) functions. The policy recommends that research activity should be geared to the improvement of existing technologies, development of new indigenous technologies and improvement of production and productivity. It also suggests the creation of an appropriate system for monitoring and forecasting technological developments. In addition, the policy stresses the need for cooperation, collaboration and networking among the educational institutions at different levels and between institutions and user systems. It also highlights the importance of promoting appropriate maintenance practices and fostering a systematic culture of innovation and continuous improvement in higher technical institutions.

NEP 2020 shifts the focus towards research work, starting from the undergraduate level of higher education (Singh, 2024). The NEP 2020 states that it is crucial to foster a culture of research and innovation inside institutions of higher learning. It helps organizations create centres of excellence, innovation hubs, and specialized research clusters. These initiatives seek to promote innovative research and learning in a variety of fields. By fostering an atmosphere that is conducive to research, the strategy aims to significantly expand knowledge and enhance the positions of Indian institutions internationally (Dubey, 2023).

vii) Strengthening Governance and Leadership management

The vision and future development of the relevant institution or institutions must be tactically decided by the

vice chancellors and senior officers (Thyagarajan et al. 2019).

As per NPE 1986, in order to improve consistency in the governance of higher education, the policy suggested creating a national coordinating organization.

In order to improve decision-making, transparency, and accountability, the NEP appeals higher education institutions to strengthen their governance and leadership. Universities are urged to implement creative management techniques, which will empower academic leadership and foster a more dynamic learning environment. The policy recommends the creation of institutional governance frameworks that will guarantee effective decision-making and liability at all levels. (Sen, 2024)

viii) Management in inclusivity and equity

The NPE 1986 differentiated the focus of inclusive education into different categories of marginalized communities and had separate sections for their challenges. The NEP 2020 has moved away from the traditional marginalization categorization and has to some extent recognized the interconnection and multidimensionality of these exclusionary locations and most importantly putting them into the wider category of Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs).

There is no equality in GER amongst the various social groups. According to earlier research, there is a bigger difference in GER between males and females in Indian higher education. Additionally, there are regional differences; some states have high GERs, while others lag much behind the national average, indicating serious inequities in the higher education system (Hoque, 2022). The policy promotes inclusion in addressing gaps by giving underprivileged groups—such as females, pupils from low-income households, and people with disabilities - equal chances (Mishra, 2024).

ix) Autonomy and accountability

India's higher education system features a hierarchical structure where affiliated colleges are largely controlled by universities, lacking the autonomy to design their own curricula (Jaysawal, 2023).

The NPE 1986 encouraged a gradual transition towards institutional autonomy while acknowledging the flaws in the conventional affiliation structure. In order to promote academic independence, creativity, and greater university-college collaborations, it aimed to increase the number of autonomous colleges and support autonomous departments within universities. However, it also emphasized that in order to preserve academic standards and efficient governance, institutional autonomy must be matched with strong accountability systems.

NEP 2020, which strongly supports more autonomy for educational institutions, supports a gradual shift from linked colleges to autonomous enterprises. This provision not only permits curriculum enrichment but also imagines the possible conversion of independent degree-granting institutions into universities with a strong emphasis on teaching or research (Dubey, 2023)

4.2. The challenges in implementing the provisions of NEP 2020

i. A focus on interdisciplinary education: College and university teachers do not receive formal training or pedagogical orientation under the current educational system. This urgently necessitates a redesign of the curriculum to make it more adaptable and natural in order to facilitate the instillation of basic and higher-order thinking and skills at various educational levels. The goal of the policy is to replace single-disciplinary higher education institutions with multidisciplinary ones. Good intentions have been used to pave the way for achieving this objective. (Mehta, 2022)

ii. Technological barrier: Technological barrier is one of the major causes hindering the implementation of NEP 2020 in many remote areas of India. NEP 2020 focuses on e-Learning, which is a challenge for the institutions to implement as even now there are areas where there is no internet access. (Kaur, 2024)

iii. Upgradation in Infrastructure: Infrastructure is an important factor to implement the objectives of NEP 2020. Institutes require to upgrade the infrastructure like classrooms, laboratories, libraries to support the focus of NEP 2020 regarding technology enabled learning and research. (Avasthi et al. 2024)

iv. Faculty training: For the effective implementation of NEP 2020 the teachers have to be trained properly so that they could develop holistically and adapt themselves with the new education system. When the teaching faculty is trained properly, only then they would be able to teach students fulfilling the objectives of the new education policy. (Kaur, 2024)

v. Finance: With the limited resources available, implementing all of the NEP 2020 recommendations for higher education will be a challenge. To ensure that students from low-income backgrounds can also be admitted, private universities must provide additional scholarships; however, NEP makes no mention of how this can be done. This suggests that more public money for higher education is required, which is actually not feasible given the current situation. The budget increase for education from 3% to 6% of GDP is just insufficient to cover the requirements of implementation. (Mehta, 2022)

vi. Focus on innovation and research: NEP 2020 prioritize research and innovation for which institutions require sufficient investment, research infrastructure and personnel, research culture and ethical considerations. Institutions require to create innovative knowledge and intellectual property, creation of job as well as fostering entrepreneurship so as to contribute to the development of the nation and fulfilment of national goals. (Avasthi et al., 2024)

CONCLUSION

According to the findings of the current analysis, the new NEP 2020 is a major change in higher education management through the promotion of integrated governance, multidisciplinary education, technology-based learning, research and innovations, autonomy, and inclusiveness. Unlike NPE 1986, which mainly concentrated on expanding access, improving quality, and increasing institutional autonomy, NEP 2020 suggests some structural reforms in Indian higher education to respond to the changing needs at national and global levels. Yet, as per the analysis, some implementation problems, including financial constraints, infrastructure problems, unequal capacity of institutions, and faculty development issues, will continue with NEP 2020. Thus, the success of NEP 2020 will be determined not only by its vision but also by proper implementation and monitoring of its provisions.

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