

## Implementing NEP-20 – A Road map for HEIs

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### ABSTRACT

*It is three years plus since the National Education Policy-2020 (NEP-20) was introduced. It aimed at restructuring and reforming the entire Education System to facilitate and fulfil our commitment towards Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4). India committed in 2015 to make education affordable, assessable, world class, inclusive and which could provide lifelong learning opportunity in a multi-disciplinary and collaborative environment by 2030. While intent of NEP-20 was quite good, there is lot to be done on implementation front. Efforts have been made at various levels but picture remains quite hazy. There are issues related to regulatory bodies. Education being in concurrent list of state and centre, at some places political issues posed problems. Besides resources and funding it needed strong will at management level. State to state, institute to institute it lacked level playing field, with the result that some institutes claim to have implemented some part of the policy where as others put the blame on governance level for hold ups. Still if there is will and resources implementation of major part of NEP-20 does not need approval from others and there is possibility for HEIs to implement most of the spirit of NEP if not complete words. This paper examines the current status of implementation. It also tries to provide a blue print of the road map to implement NEP-20 effectively at HEI level within their own resources, and provides abc of NEP implementation in practical terms for HEIs.*

**Keywords-** NEP-20, Sustainable Development Goal, Global Education Development Agenda 2030, Regulatory Framework 1+ EIs., GER

### I INTRODUCTION

The National Education Policy -2020 (NEP-20) was introduced in Aug 2020 and it was widely accepted that the policy was the biggest game changer for the Indian education system. The very foundation on which NEP-20 was framed, was Global Education Development Agenda 2030 which was accepted by India in 2015. **It precisely called for inclusive and equitable quality education and promotion of lifelong learning opportunity for all by 2030.** NEP -20 is very nicely crafted road map to achieve this lofty goal. In last three years, number of conclaves, conferences, seminars, workshops and webinars done on NEP-20 has been phenomenal. Directives, guide lines, documents, orders and instructions issued on NEP-20 at all levels of governance indicated seriousness and urgency for implementing the new policy. On one hand there was race amongst states and institutions to implement the policy at the earliest and on the other hand there were some opposition ruled states like Tamil Nadu, Kerela, Bihar etc who refused to accept the new policy. States like Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh and Utrakhand were first who declared in Aug 2021 that they have implemented NEP 20. Recently with change of Government, Karnataka is reviewing their earlier stand. Despite all the urgency and euphoria for implementation of NEP-20 in words and spirit, it looks a distant dream. One has to understand that the total change in the educational framework as called by NEP-20 in a big country like ours with the third largest education system after China and America, is not an easily task. Then NEP-20 has many aspects which depend on agencies external to the HEI. Also as it happens with big policy documents, interpretations of various aspects in NEP-20 is taking its toll. So its too early to say as to what is the status of

implementation of NEP-20, some people are calling it NEP-23 due to delay caused by Covid-19. But one thing is sure that the HEIs who have really understood the NEP-20 and drew their road map and put sincere effort to implement will be immensely benefited in the long run.

### II INDIAN HIGHER EDUCATION LANDSCAPE

The Indian Higher Education Sector is a massive system of 40.15 million students, 15.2 million teachers, 1113 universities, 51650 colleges, 150 Institutes of National Importance, 11296 standalone institutes and these numbers are continuously growing at unprecedented pace. Then there are number of private coaching institutes who are also significant players in higher education system. Demographic, political, cultural, legal and social problems associate with such a massive number is another area which adds to complexity in implementing a policy like NEP-20 which calls for a total reform and effective transform of the current system.

At policy and governance level Indian Higher Education system is a multilayer system where the lowest level is collage/institute administration, which in turn has the affiliating University to exercise control. Then there are more than 15 Professional Regulating Bodies like AICTE, NCTE etc who regulate programmes run by the concerned Universities and colleges. There is UGC which acts as overarching regulatory body. Each state has a Regulatory Commission of its own for Private Universities and they have acts and ordinances which differ from one state to another. Education being in the concurrent list Governor and Chief Minister have also their say through various

official bodies. HEIs have numerous categories with each governed by their own act, ordinance, policy document and rules. Colleges could be, govt colleges, private colleges, govt aided colleges or govt funded colleges. There are five types of universities i.e. central university, state university, private university, deemed to be university of general category and de- nov category then also Institutes of National Importance. This non cohesive, non-homogeneous educational environment prohibits any simple and uniform system of implementation of NEP-20. Picture looks bleak but challenges and hurdles only provide opportunity and innovative solutions and obviously one who is bent upon finding ways and means normally wins in such difficult environment.

### **III REVAMPING AND SIMPLIFYING REGULATORY FRAMEWORK**

It was proposed in the new policy to revamp the current large & complex regulatory framework and introduce an easier system with a Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) at the apex to regulate the higher education with only four verticals i.e. National Higher Education Regulatory Council (NHERC) in which all regulatory bodies excluding medical will merge, National Accreditation Council (NAC) to be a meta-accrediting body, Higher Education Grant Council (HEGC) for funding and finances and General Education Council (GEC) to frame learning out come from various programmes and also frame a National Higher Education Qualification Framework (NHEQF). Once the revamping is done the regulatory system will become more simple, efficient and effective and help in achieving the goals of NEP-20. But as of now this has not happened. However legislative permission has been given to form some new bodies and concepts to facilitate easy implementation of NEP-20. These are National Education Commission (NEC) headed by the Prime Minister of India, National Research Foundation (NRF) to improve research and innovation. Academic Bank of Credit (ABC) a digital storage for academic credit Special Education Zone (SEZ) for education of underrepresented group/region and Gender Inclusion Fund (GIF) to assist female and transgender children. Not with standing above a lot of initiatives have been taken to stream line regulatory frame work in present form also.

### **IV NEP-20 PRESENT STATUS**

Most of the states, ruled by the party in central govt have shown willingness to implement NEP 20. Some states like MP, UP, Karnataka, Telangana, Utrakhand and Assam etc have gone ahead also in a phased manner to implement NEP-20. Introduction of 4-year undergraduate course with final year for research, option for teaching in regional language and formation of a task force etc are

some of the major steps taken by them. NEP-20 rests on five pillars i.e. accessibility, equitability, affordability, accountability and quality. For the first four pillars major responsibility rests at governance level at state, central and off course at the management of HEIs. With emphasis on distance learning, vocational learning fast expansion of education sector, higher budget for education and various other schemes, the objective of 50% Gross Enrolment Ratio (GRE) by 2030 looks achievable. However, the biggest issue will be Quality which is the soul of NEP-20. Most of the provisions and directives in NEP are aiming at improving quality of education to make it world class. The onus of quality mostly rests with HEIs only. NEP-20 provides the path, ways and means but implementation depends however on HEIs. If we look at the implementation status of NEP-20 there is a lot to do if the goal of sustainability (SDG-4) is to be achieved by 2030. At state govt and Regulatory Bodies level however, there is need to approve ordinances and directives related to NEP-20 on a priority basis and also provide the required support to HEIs in terms of e-infrastructure and quality teachers. But the biggest problem in implement at HEIs is twofold. First the mindset at management and the faculty who have natural resistance for change. The second and most important problem is that most of people have not even read the NEP-20, if read they have not fully understood, if understood there is certain fear that it required up skilling, learning new techniques and above all it demanded lifelong learning and new competencies at teacher's level – for which they are not ready.

### **V ROLE OF HEIs IN IMPLIMENTING NEP-20 – THE WAY AHEAD**

HEIs have the major responsibility to address the core issues of NEP-20, i.e. making quality of academics and research world class, providing opportunity for lifelong learning and achieve global acceptability. The road map to achieve these lofty goals in the core areas has been provided in the NEP-20 document. Irrespective of the support and go ahead from regulatory bodies/government level, many premium institutions and tire I HEIs have started implementing provisions of NEP-20. There is need for tire II & III HEIs or HEIs in tire II & III cities to start implementing NEP as there are many provisions which may be implemented without any external support/approval. Besides the support of government and regulatory bodies, HEIs require four things – Understanding NEP-20 and forming a dedicated Task Force, will to act, Resources and Efforts with dedication and Continuous monitoring & Feedback system. In Implementing NEP-20 the gap between tire 1 institutes and tire 2 & 3 is widening. Almost 70% of the students come from tire 2 and 3 institutes/cities where NEP implementation is getting least attention. For

implementing NEP-20 these HEIs may proceed with the following suggestions: -

- (a) **Task Force-** HEI should form a task force who should study NEP-20 document thoroughly and prepare a road map for the institute with a time frame, mile stones and monitoring system. Sensitizing all teachers is a must.
- (b) **Ordinances/Regulation-** Wherever there is a need to change the ordinance/regulation for HEI or drafting of a new one, it should be done and followed up on priority.
- (c) **Transparency-** Such big reform and transformation of structure cannot be done in isolation. There is need to involve the entire staff of HEI to be a part of it. So the road map needs to be shared with all staff and task force should share the progress periodically with frequency of at least every month. There is need for academic leadership and top management to actively involve in the process. Each mile stone of NEP implementation must be clearly spelt out and status shared.
- (d) **BoS and Academic Council-** These bodies are to play very important role in NEP-20 implementation. Routine meetings and copy past of syllabus and course curriculum need to be given up. Serious frequent meetings will be required, because with NEP 20, there will be requirement of frequent updating, upscaling and continuous evaluation of courses to not only make them outcome based, but also as per the future needs of the industry/society with an effective feedback mechanism. HEI should also ensure a strong Academia- Industry Interface in the institute.
- (e) **Faculty Competence-** Teachers are the most important key to the effective implementation of NEP-20. Unfortunately, this is most weak link too. There is urgent need for all teachers to first understand NEP then prepare for the change. Upscaling, up skilling, re skilling, lifelong learning and capacity building of teachers is the key for success NEP. HEIs have to invest in this with a formal audit of competency balance sheet of the faculty. Effective recruitment of the faculty, security of job, good pay structure, empowerment of faculty and their development/accountability are some areas in which top educational leadership and management will have to look into. Effective appraisal system, inhouse and outside continuous planned training of faculty and will of management to liberally invest in faculty will also be the key factors to effective implementation of NEP-20.
- (f) **Transform from Programme to Course-** NEP-20 aims at **making the education, course oriented and not programme oriented and student centric instead of institute or placement centric.** In the new era a student will have freedom to design his/her own degree and institutes will offer courses to choose from. This flexibility needs strong courses with employability and skills associated. Also courses need to be aligned to the industry needs and should be based on future skills. This will require a very competent BoS and a very vibrant Industry- Institute interface closely linked to BoS. Industry members in BoS cannot be just few non playing names but they have to be active members and contribute with a strong documentation system to record their contribution.
- (g) **Information Cell and Think Tank-** With fast change of technology and frequent changes in policies and new initiatives every day, the information has really become power. The formal bodies like Academic Council, BoS, IQAC have their own routine work and there is need for a high power **NEP-Information Cell** who should gather all information collate them and take out useful operative portions and disseminate in a usable format in a formal manner, may be through IQAC or any such authorize body so that implementation could be monitored. Similarly, a Think Tank of some top academic leaders in HEI should be formed who should make a formal road map on infra, teaching, research, sports, skill and examination work etc and implement/monitor the progress regularly. This should be not part of routine leadership meet but a separate exercise to provide right importance and priority to this task.
- (h) **Gurukul Ways-** To improve quality, HEIs may think of introducing some of gurukul pedagogies. In Gurukul the philosophy was **'n is equal to one'**. That means student was treated as one individual. In present system we have moved to **'n is equal to 30 or 60'**, i.e. students are treated as a group or as a class. HEI will have to find ways and means to build individual profile of each student and bring back 'n is equal to one' mind set.
- (i) **Indian Knowledge System-** The Indian history reveals that we have a very rich treasure of knowledge system and tradition which had made this country a world leader in ancient time. There is strong need to make new generation aware of our rich heritage, knowledge system history and traditions. NEP-20 also advocates this. Universities are autonomous in many ways to modify the syllabus and introduce skill courses, optional electives and take this route to include Indian Knowledge System and traditions in formal education frame work. HEI may think of at least one PhD or other type of research project in some aspect of Indian Knowledge System & Traditions every year.
- (j) **Multidisciplinary Approach –** NEP-20 has opened the path for breaking the boundaries between disciplines. Science, arts, humanities and other non tech subjects in future will play important role in professional degrees. NEP-20 envisages holistic

development of student and a well-rounded personality outcome from the education system. Design of course curriculum will be a tricky subject and has to be dealt carefully. Routine curriculum design has to be given up. Student should have a wide option to choose from and decide his major, minor and skills.

**(k) Skill Development-** NEP-20 aims at producing skilled work force from educational institutions irrespective of disciplines to which it belongs. Skill electives should be so designed that after going through the skill course/courses the student should be competent enough to take up a job in the specific skill after one-year certificate or two-year diploma in a multi exist environment during degree programme.

**(l) Multiple Entry Exit System-** This is part of the lifelong learning aspect of the reform that NEP-20 wants to bring. There is a fear with HEIs, that this will invite exodus and jeopardize economic viability of HEIs which is certainly unfounded. Option to leave after one year of course with a certificate, two years with a diploma, if implemented properly will motivate the person to come back even if he/she leaves, but for this, minimum two employable skills must be given to student every year in each discipline by experts who could be enlisted from outside also.

**(m) Holistic Development- Education should be equally for all four parts of an individual i.e. mind, body heart and soul with appropriate credits for each in the curriculum.** The current system consumes maximum part of curriculum for the mind, with least scope of critical thinking and experiential learning which were part of ancient Indian education system. Skill delivery and hands on training which is food for the body also finds less part in current curriculum. Social concern and spirit-de-corporis provide emotional fulfilment and enlighten heart. It comes from extension and social connect activities in the curriculum with multidisciplinary approach. These have no organized space in the current curriculum. Character and values awake the soul and it should be most essential part of any education system. Current curriculum devotes almost 90% part to the first part i.e. mind, that too through rote learning only. Practical classes contribute a little for skill development in the present system. It is most important duty of BoS now to include all four parts in curriculum with proper credit for each part with a provision to assess and award system with credits for each part. There will be need to spend in skill infrastructure, sports field and skill facilities.

**(n) Returns to Workshop and Lab Culture** – On this not much need to be said. Labs, workshops, hobby clubs and field work have almost closed down. With virtual platforms and edu Tech companies the culture of video games is now in thing. Physical work in academics need to be brought back.

**(o) Technology-** Technology will be a significant facilitator to implement NEP-20 efficiently. Design and establishment of e-structure i.e. smart class rooms, virtual platform for on line learning system, management information system will be very important. Use of disruption culture, new age software tools, and AI support on a continuous basis will propel or push back a HEI depending on how it invests in such facilities. It may be noted that in next 2 to 3 years AI will change the entire culture of research writing, experimentation, analysis and application in a very big way. Father of modern AI, Geoffrey Hinton has already warned that in next 5 years AI industry may reach super human robot stage. HEIs sans AI will be left behind. Requirement is not only on installation of infrastructure but more important will be training of faculty, changing their mind set. Sensitizing faculty and students to the new system and continuous updation will be required. Use of simulation and virtual labs will play a great role in improving the pedagogy and delivery system. HEIs will have to gear up and embrace the new approach with a strong will.

**(p) 4-year Degree Course and Regional Language-** Some people have restricted the entire NEP to these two issues only. A half baked initiative to introduce professional degree in regional language has received poor response with very low admissions. 4-year degree course which has been designed in a hurry, has brought back M Phil in the grab of fourth year. For creation of quality resources in regional language it need to be outsourced to independent private agencies with adequate budget for authentic translation or to experts within and outside HEI with adequate budget and time frame. HEI may take up task of translation of text books for some specific courses in a phased manner within their own resources. Research orientation and aptitude cannot be identified by a high score (7.5 or more) in three-year degree course which is planned now. Also research cannot come as the fourth year matter only. Students with research aptitude and entrepreneur skill have to be identified in the first year and groomed with appropriate subjects in remaining 3 years to take up PhD work after 4 years for start a business venture. HEI may design their own methods to identify such students in first 2-3 semesters and provide them with additional electives and skill courses so that they are effectively groomed as research scholars or potential entrepreneurs.

**(q) Apprenticeship/Internship Embedded Programmes-** UGC has issued the guide lines and made such programmes at par with any other UGC programme. HEIs must make an effort and collaborate with – Sector Skill Council FICCI, CII, AICTE and industries and enter in to MoU to start these programmes.

- (r) **Continuous Evaluation System-** NEP-20 aims at reducing stress of examination on students and promote a continuous evaluation system. Formal examination load need to be reduced by at least 70%. This could be done by effective use of technology online examination as per convenience of the students and inbuilt periodical tests, assignments and projects. There is need to come out of only pen and paper test system and introduce experiential learning, project based learning, assignment based tests and application/research orientation in the curriculum.
- (s) **Academic Bank of Credit (ABC)** – This digital platform provides seamless mobility for students to gather credits from different institutions, and design their own degree and expertise/skill sets. This platform is going to provide the flexibility desired by NEP-20 in formal recognition, credit accumulation, credit transfer, and above all paper less plastic transactions. HEIs must create facilities for Digilocker and ABC platform registration for their students as the first step towards transformation.
- (t) **Research Activities and Research Environment-** In research publication Indian Education Sector has made a definite mark in terms of numbers but in International Ranking poor performance of HEIs shows that there is a lot to be done on quality. A lot has been said about this on various platforms. HEIs can make a beginning by following action; empowering and facilitation of faculty with research potential, generating research environment by providing good weightage for quantified quality teaching and research outputs in appraisal, making research credits in the curriculum effective and realistic, making it mandatory for faculty to earn some minimum credits in research, paper writing, project submission etc. Every year, investing effectively in research infrastructure, introducing an effective research audit for each faculty and dept in quantified terms, making compulsory for faculty to work with either industry or social organisation or with any other body external to HEI and produce a report every year and above all HEI must invest in infrastructure and motivation for research with a plan.
- (u) **Collaboration-** Inter/intra discipline and multi-disciplinary approach in NEP-20 calls for collaboration not only within the HEI departments but also outside in the country and outside the country. Blind MoUs for record will not do. Each department will need to focus on area for collaboration and look for collaboration within and outside the institute and identify the people, process and place (organisation) and make a plan of activities with goals. In internationalization collaboration is going to play a big role.
- (v) **Diversity and local Context-** Irrespective of the discipline, curriculum must have a strong combination of technology related part, business related part and soft skill related part so that student is equipped on all three front in addition to the core knowledge of his/her chosen field. Introducing technology related subjects in arts, humanities is a tricky field on which BoS has to work, Business and management skill is an essential need for everybody in the current era and so is the soft skill. The curriculum should look in to all diverse requirements at the same time make the learning relevant to current and futuristic needs of the society not only at local level but also relevant at global level BoS may modify existing curriculum or include them in the curriculum as skill credits.
- (w) **Ethics, Values and Character Building-** Assignments, group activities and projects with the objectives to address these issues need to be designed and included in the curriculum and credit be awarded.
- (x) **Social Connect/Extension Activities/Sport/Events** – Normally there will be a small group in HEI mostly from NSS or NCC etc who will undertake social work. There will be a small group of students who will be working in sports ground. Similarly, there will be a small group of faculty members supported by some students who will indulge in extracurricular activities/event/conferences. Almost all student minus these small groups mentioned above, will be spectators only in such events. There is need to move from this situation to the system of **“By students for students and all students”**. This can be done if some credits are allotted for these three activities in the curriculum. HEIs may think of some ways and means for this within their own rights.
- (y) **Feedback System** – There is a culture of fake feedback records in many HEIs to hood wink regulatory bodies. With advancement of technology there is need to enforce e-based feedback and analysis system by the HEIs with a transparency for all the five stake holders students, faculty, employers alumni and visitors.
- (z) **NEP –Audit** – HEI may think of regular NEP-audit in addition to normal academic and admin audit periodically from an external expert to find out the real progress.

## VI CONCLUSION

Effective implementation of NEP-20 will pay rich dividends in long run. HEIs may draw their own road map because regulatory bodies may take quite some time for mandatory enforcement HEIs may have many excuses or scope for manipulation and delaying the implementation but this will be detrimental. With implementing NEP-20 on their own, HEIs will not only contribute to overall

good of the Higher Education Sector as a whole but also reap the benefit in following term-

- (a) Improved quality of academics, research and outcomes.
- (b) Well rounded professionals and worthy citizens with good values will come out as pass outs and work as brand ambassador for the institute.
- (c) Will establish the institute as a Center for Knowledge Creation and not only as knowledge dissemination.
- (d) Will inculcate habit of lifelong learning in faculty and students.
- (e) Will take the faculty and students closer to the cultural roots of India and at the same time enhance their global acceptability.
- (f) HEI will be able to contribute significantly in GER
- (g) Research quality will improve and it will be able to benefit society in a bigger way. In addition to **“Lab to library”** there will be **“lab to land”** benefits out of research work.
- (h) A collaborative and multi-disciplinary team culture will develop in the institute.

It can be easily seen that faculty is key to implementing NEP. Their awareness, initiatives, readiness for change, willingness for upscaling, capacity building, learning new skills and above all understanding NEP-20 and acceptance for in a hard work and dedication sustained manner can only pave the way for successful implementation of NEP 20. Willingness of the management to invest is also very important, so a joint effort of management/academic leadership and faculty can only yield effective outcome.

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