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Ref No.:KIJLFIR 2020/V-7/ISS-1/A1

ISSN: 2349 - 2589

Certificate of Publication

KAAV INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF LAW, FINANCE & INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS
A Refereed Peer Review Bi-Annual Online Journal (KIJLFIR)

This is to certify that

SANTHOSHA KUMARA A, Assistant Professor, SDM Law College, Mangalore

has written an article/research paper on entitled

"AN OBJECTIVE OF NEW EDUCATION POLICY TO REVAMP THE
HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM: A REVIEW"

Is Approved by the
Review Committee, and is therefore published in (KIJLFIR)
In Volume 07, Issue 01, Year 2020

Editor-in-Chief
Prof.(Dr) Kirti Agarwal
Kaav Publications





An Objective of New Education Policy to Revamp the Higher Education System: A Review

¹Santhosha Kumara A, ²Preethi A Nayak

¹Assistant Professor, SDM Law College, Mangalore, ²Research Scholar, Alliance School of Law, Faculty of Law, Bengaluru

Received: Jan 03, 2020; Revised: Jan 20, 2020; Accepted: Feb 08, 2020

Article Info

ISSN: 2349-2589
Volume -7, Year-(2020)
Issue-01
Article Id:-
KIJLFIR 2020/V-7/ISS-1/A1

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Abstract

The National Policy on Education was framed in 1986 and modified in 1992. Since then several changes have taken place that calls for a revision of the Policy. The Main aim of the Government of India is to bring out a National Education Policy which can meet the changing dynamics of the population's requirement with regards to quality education, innovation and research, aiming to make India a knowledge superpower by equipping its students with the necessary skills and knowledge and to eliminate the shortage of manpower in science, technology, academics and industry etc,. The main agenda of education policy is to make education affordable for all, and the most important that is free education for girls. It should also develop world class skilled workforce-strengthen higher education-industry partnerships, and it should be Flexible education which has to serve student need and indeed such education should ensures literacy, life skills and employability with the intention that no student should end their educational pursuit due to lack of funds.

Vision and Mission of National Educational Policy

The main vision of National Education Policy 2019 envisions an India-centre education System that contributes directly to transforming our nation sustainably into an equitable and vibrant knowledge society, by providing high quality education to all.¹ The policy aims to universalize the pre-primary education by 2025 and provide foundational literacy/numeracy for all by 2025. The Draft National Education Policy, 2019 is out in the public domain. Drawing inputs from the T.S.R. Subramanian Committee report and the Ministry of

Human Resource Development (MHRD), the K. Kasturirangan Committee has produced the policy document.²

Salient features of NEP 2019

- It proposes new Curricular and Pedagogical Structure, with 5+3+3+4 design covering the children in the age group 3-18 years. Under this, Pre-Primary & Grades 1-2 is considered as foundational Stage; Grades 3-5 as Preparatory Stage; Grades 6-8 as Middle Stage and Grades 9-12 as Secondary Stage. This is an academic

¹<https://innovate.mygov.in/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/NEP-2019-English.pdf>. last accessed on 01.07.2020.

²<https://www.indiatoday.in/education-today/gk-current-affairs/story/draft-national-education-policy-2019-divd-1606269-2019-10-04>



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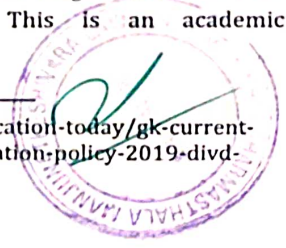
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restructuring only; there will be no physical restructuring of schools³

- It aims at equitable & inclusive education for every child in the country, with a special focus on under-represented groups (URGs).
- Universal Access & Retention with 100% Gross Enrolment Ratio for all school education by 2030.
- Children learn languages, most quickly between 2-8 years, and multilingualism has great cognitive benefits for students. Therefore a three-language formula has been proposed
- It proposes the teaching of other classical languages and literature, including Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, Odia, Pali, Persian, and Prakrit in schools.
- A new independent State School Regulatory Authority (SSRA) to be created
- It aims to consolidate 800 universities & 40,000 colleges into around 15,000 large, multidisciplinary institutions
- The policy proposes three types of Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs): Research Universities, Teaching Universities and Autonomous degree-granting colleges
- It aims to provide autonomy to all higher education institutions. Higher education institutions to be governed by Independent Boards with complete academic and administrative autonomy
- An autonomous body called the National Research Foundation (NRF) to be set up through an Act of Parliament
- Rashtriya Shiksha Aayog or the National Education Commission - apex body - to be constituted. It will be chaired by the Prime Minister and will comprise eminent educationists, researchers, Union Ministers, representation of Chief Ministers of States, eminent professionals from various fields
- MHRD to be re-designated as the Ministry of Education (MoE)
- Increase in public investment by the Central and State Governments to 20% of overall public expenditure over a 10 year period.⁴

³<https://www.indiatoday.in/education-today/gk-current-affairs/story/draft-national-education-policy-2019-divd-1606269-2019-10-04#:~:text=Salient%20features%20of%20NEP%202019,age%20group%203%2D18%20years.>

⁴<https://www.indiatoday.in/education-today/gk-current-affairs/story/draft-national-education-policy-2019-divd-1606269-2019-10-04>

New education policy and higher education system: towards High Quality Liberal Education

Higher education is a critical contributor to sustainable livelihoods and economic development of the nation. Higher education also plays a large and equally important role in improving human well-being, and developing India as envisioned in the Constitution- a democratic, just, socially conscious, self-aware, cultured, and humane nation, with liberty, equality, fraternal spirit, and justice for all. Higher education aims to serve as a hub for developing ideas and innovations that enlighten individuals and help propel the country forward socially, culturally, artistically, scientifically, technologically, and economically. Higher education must develop good, well-rounded and creative individuals, with intellectual curiosity, spirit of service and a strong ethical compass.⁵ The main objective of new education policy is to revamp the higher education system, create world class multidisciplinary higher education institutions across the country - increase GER to at least 50% by 2035⁶. Institutional Restructuring & Consolidation a new vision and architecture for higher education has been envisaged in the Policy with large, well-resourced, vibrant multidisciplinary institutions.

- Consolidation of current 800 universities and 40,000 colleges into about 15,000 large, well-resourced, vibrant multidisciplinary institutions and significantly to expand the reach and capacity while building strong educational communities with all higher education institutions to become multi-disciplinary institutions, with teaching programmes across disciplines in all fields⁷.
- All higher education institutions to consolidated into three types of institutions:
 - a. Research Universities - equal focus on research and teaching
 - b. Teaching Universities - primary focus on teaching with significant focus on research
 - c. Autonomous degree-granting colleges - almost exclusive focus on teaching

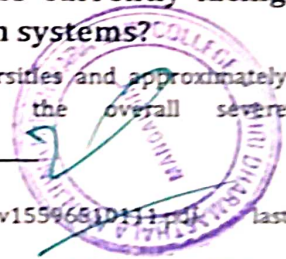
What are the challenges currently facing India's higher education systems?

India has over 800 universities and approximately 40,000 colleges, reflecting the overall severe

⁵<https://innovate.mygov.in/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/mygov15596510111.pdf> last accessed on 01.07.2020

⁶https://mhrd.gov.in/sites/mhrd/files/Draft_NEP_2019_EN_Revised last access on 01/07/2020.

⁷https://www.ugc.ac.in/pdfnews/3563340_PPT-Draft-NEP-2019.pdf



fragmentation and small size of HEIs currently in the country. Remarkably, over 40% of all colleges in the country run only a single programme, far from the multidisciplinary style of higher education that will be required in the 21st century. In fact, over 20% of colleges have enrolment below 100, while only 4% of colleges have enrolment over 3000 (AISHE 2016-17). To make matters worse, thousands of the smaller colleges hardly have any teaching faculty at all, and there is little or no education taking place - thus affecting severely the integrity of the higher education system in the country⁸. Indian higher education system is currently facing several issues like, Fragmentation of the higher education system, too many silos; too much early specialization and streaming of students into disciplines, lack of access, especially in socio-economically disadvantaged areas, lack of teacher and institutional autonomy, inadequate mechanisms for career management and progression of faculty and institutional leaders, the lack of research at most universities and colleges, and the lack of transparent and competitive peer reviewed research funding across disciplines, suboptimal governance and leadership of higher education institutions, and a regulatory system allowing fake colleges to thrive while constraining excellent, innovative institutions etc., the Policy envisages an imaginative and broad-based liberal undergraduate education with rigorous specialization in chosen disciplines and fields.⁹

3-4 year undergraduate degree with multiple exit options

- 4-year programme - Bachelors of Liberal Arts/Education in chosen major and minors
- 3-year programme - Bachelors' degree
- Both 3 & 4 year programmes - lead to a degree with honours with research work
- Exit with a 2 year advanced diploma or a 1 year certificate

Liberal education with broad multidisciplinary exposure

- Imaginative and flexible curricular structures
- Creative combinations of disciplines of study
- Multiple exit and entry points
- Masters and doctoral education provide research-based specializations

Flexible Masters Degree programmes

- 2 years for those with 3 year undergraduate degree

- 1 year for those with 4 year undergraduate degree with honors
- Integrated 5 year programme
- Right to Education

Moving towards a higher educational system

The main thrust of this policy regarding higher education is the ending of the fragmentation of higher education by moving higher education into large multidisciplinary universities and colleges, each of which will aim to have upwards of 5,000 or more students. If higher education is moved entirely into large multidisciplinary HEIs, it would address many of the problems that higher education faces today: like it would give students vibrant communities of scholars and peers in which to learn; it would help break down harmful silos between disciplines; it would enable students to become well-rounded and develop optimally both sides of their brains (artistic/creative and analytic), and would help bring flexibility and individuality into their learning programmes; unit would help develop active research communities across disciplines - particularly cross-disciplinary research, which will be key for the innovations of the 21st century; it would greatly improve (by an order of magnitude) the efficiency of use of resources and of resource sharing, both material and human, across higher education¹⁰.

Thus, regarding the structure of higher education, this Policy places the highest emphasis on moving to large multi-disciplinary universities. The ancient Indian universities of Takshashila and Nalanda which had thousands of students from India and the world studying in such vibrant multidisciplinary environments, and modern universities today, amply demonstrate the great success that such large multidisciplinary research universities can bring. It is time that India brings back this great Indian tradition, that is needed more today than ever to create well-rounded and innovative individuals, and which is already transforming other countries educationally and economically.¹¹

Higher Education: According to the All India Survey on Higher Education, the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education in India has increased from 20.8% in 2011-12 to 25.8% in 2017-18.



⁸<https://innovate.mygov.in/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/mygov15596510111.pdf>, last accessed on 09/07/2020

⁹National Education Policy 2019 - MyGov Innovate innovate.mygov.in › 2019/06 › mygov1559651011

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<https://www.indiaeducation.net/indiaeducation/policy/education-policy.aspx>

¹¹<https://mhrd.gov.in/nep-new>, last accessed on 05.07.2020

GER comparison across countries (2014)¹²

Country	Primary (Class 1-5)	Upper Primary (Class 6-8)	Upper Secondary (Class 9-12)	Higher Education
India	101.4	89.3	62.5	23
China	103.9	100.4	88.8	39.4
USA	99.5	101.9	93.2	86.7
Germany	103.3	101.6	104.6	65.5

The Committee identified lack of access as a major reason behind low intake of higher education in the country. It aims to increase GER to 50% by 2035 from the current level of about 25.8%. Key recommendations in this regard include:

- Regulatory structure and accreditation:** The Committee noted that the current higher education system has multiple regulators with overlapping mandates. This reduces the autonomy of higher educational institutions and creates an environment of dependency and centralised decision making. Therefore, it proposes setting up the National Higher Education Regulatory Authority (NHERA). This independent authority would replace the existing individual regulators in higher education, including professional and vocational education. This implies that the role of all professional councils such as AICTE and the Bar Council of India would be limited to setting standards for professional practice. The role of the University Grants Commission (UGC) will be limited to providing grants to higher educational institutions. Currently, the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) is an accreditation body under the UGC. The draft Policy recommends separating NAAC from the UGC into an independent and autonomous body. In its new role, NAAC will function as the top level accreditor, and will issue licenses to different accreditation institutions, who will assess higher educational institutions once every five to seven years. All existing higher education institutions should be accredited by 2030.¹³
- Establishment of new higher educational institutions:** Currently, higher educational institutions can only be set up by Parliament or state legislatures. The draft Policy proposes that these institutions could be allowed to be set up

through a Higher Education Institution Charter from NHERA. This Charter will be awarded on the basis of transparent assessment of certain specified criteria. All such newly constituted higher educational institutions must receive accreditation as mandated by NHERA within five years of being established.

- Restructuring of higher education institutions:** Higher education institutions will be restructured into three types: (i) research universities focusing equally on research and teaching; (ii) teaching universities focusing primarily on teaching; and (iii) colleges focusing only on teaching at undergraduate levels. All such institutions will gradually move towards full autonomy - academic, administrative, and financial.

Total Public Investment in Education¹⁴

Country	Investment in 2017 (as % of GDP)
India	2.7
USA	5
UK	5.5
Brazil	6

¹²Source: Educational Statistics at Glance (2016), MHRD; PRS.

¹³<https://www.prsindia.org/report-summaries/draft-national-education-policy-2019>

¹⁴<https://www.prsindia.org/report-summaries/draft-national-education-policy-2019>



Drawbacks in the Draft National Education Policy:

The draft policy is silent on the Institutions of Eminence and agencies like the Higher Education Funding Agency., the policy does not address with sufficient clarity curricular, pedagogical and teacher education-related issues that plague the teaching and learning of early literacy in many Indian classrooms, this policy proposes largely oral activities for the pre-primary grades, reading hours for Grades 1-3, with an additional hour for writing starting only in Grades 4 and 5. It contradicts evidence suggesting that young children be taught listening, speaking, reading and writing simultaneously and not sequentially, it also lacks discussion about what it takes to prepare teachers to successfully teach foundational literacy in a multilingual country¹⁵. Instead, the document recommends recruiting volunteers and community members to support the acquisition of early literacy. Volunteers can be used, but cannot be a primary mechanism to deliver foundational literacy to students; it misdiagnoses the causes behind the severe learning crisis - namely poor school and teacher accountability. There is no fundamental reform proposed for revamping the accountability structures for schools. Instead, the NEP provides school management committees (SMCs). SMCs already mandated under the RTE Act are ineffectual, with the democratization of knowledge and availability of technology for easy access to information, the draft should have focused more on how to teach and not only on what to teach¹⁶.

The National Research Foundation (NRF) is tasked with "permeating the culture of research and innovation" and addressing societal challenges. But, there is no mechanism, such as innovative curricula or extension units, for tier II or tier III institutions to work on local problems. It has no access or accountability to people or their representatives and the Constitution puts education in the Concurrent List, giving authority and responsibility to both the States and the Centre. However, the draft had robbed the States by creating an excessively centralized structure of authority and vesting overarching powers with the PM-led Rashtriya Shiksha Aayog (RSA) and in promoting the study of regional languages, the importance of English is neglected. Those who are fluent in the English language live in households with three times higher income than those without any knowledge of English. By ignoring this, the Draft NEP19 has laid out a "language trap", which will create social inequality and impede economic growth due to loss of the demographic

dividend finally the report does not emphasize enough the role and importance of state governments in imparting education to the masses¹⁷.

Challenges in implementation:

Draft NEP recommended doubling of public funding to 6% of the GDP and increasing overall public expenditure on education to 20% from the current 10%. This is desirable but does not appear to be feasible in the near future, given that most of the additional funding has to come from the States. The report has appealed to philanthropists and companies to route their corporate social responsibility (CSR) funds to supplement government efforts, but it forgets that such funds will not be ideologically neutral. Expanding coverage under the RTE Act to include pre-school children is extremely important, but should perhaps be introduced gradually, keeping in mind the quality of infrastructure and teacher vacancies. Amendment of the Act can perhaps wait for a while. The idea of setting up the Rashtriya Shiksha Aayog is crucial in order to integrate the approaches and programs of multiple departments. However, bringing medical or agricultural or legal education under one umbrella is likely to be met with stiff opposition. Language issues have to be handled sensitively in view of their emotional overtones, as witnessed recently.¹⁸

Conclusion

This Policy envisions a complete overhaul and re-energizing of the higher education system in order to overcome the aforementioned eight challenges and thereby deliver high quality higher education, with equity and inclusion, to all young people who aspire to it. The Policy's vision includes the various key changing approaches to the current system. It needs to ensure that the Policy is fully implemented in its spirit and intent, through coherence in planning and synergy across all bodies involved in education. Suggestions of the Draft National Education Policy will play a critical role in the transformation of the Indian education system. It is expected to help India in reaping its demographic dividend. However, the Draft National Education Policy has certain sore points that need to be relooked at for the benefit of teachers and students alike.

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¹⁷<https://www.indiatoday.in/education-today/gk-current-affairs/story/draft-national-education-policy-2019-divd-1606269-2019-10-04>.

¹⁸Article, <https://www.indiatoday.in/education-today> dated 29/04/2019.

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