

The National Education Policy 2020: A Paradigm Shift in Higher Education and the Evolving Role of Educators

Malay Kanti Acharya

Assistant Professor, Teacher in Charge, Purba Medinipur B.Ed. College, Email:
acharyamalaykanti@gmail.com

Abstract: *The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 represents the first major overhaul of India's educational framework in 34 years. It seeks to replace the rigid, siloed structures of the past with a multidisciplinary, flexible and student centric model. This paper examines the transformative impact of NEP 2020 on the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) of India, focusing on the introduction of the Academic Bank of Credits (ABC), the Four Year Undergraduate Programme (FYUP) and the emphasis on research led teaching. A qualitative analysis of policy documents, preliminary implementation reports from various universities and a review of global best practices in multidisciplinary education. Preliminary findings suggest that while the policy offers unprecedented academic freedom and global alignment, it presents significant challenges for faculty regarding curriculum redesign, technological adaptation and the transition from teaching to mentoring. The success of NEP 2020 hinges on the empowered teacher. For the policy to reach its goal of a 50% Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) by 2035, HEIs must prioritize faculty professional development and infrastructure readiness to bridge the digital and pedagogical divide.*

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Introduction: The National Education Policy 2020 is designed to transform India into a Global Knowledge Superpower. In the context of Higher Education, the policy addresses the fragmented nature of the current system by proposing the consolidation of HEIs into large, multidisciplinary universities and clusters. The global landscape of higher education is undergoing a profound transformation, driven by the need for multidisciplinary knowledge, digital fluency and ethical leadership. In the Indian context, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 serves as the definitive roadmap for this transition. It represents a fundamental paradigm shift, moving away from the rigid, colonial era structures toward a holistic, flexible and learner centric model.

Key Pillars of Reform in Higher Education: The policy introduces several structural changes that fundamentally alter the student experience. The shift envisioned by NEP-2020 is not merely administrative, it is philosophical. By emphasizing the integration of vocational and academic streams, the policy seeks to break down the silos that have historically restricted intellectual growth. Key pillars of this shift include:

- **Multidisciplinary and Holistic Education:** Breaking the boundaries between Arts, Sciences and Commerce.
- **Multiple Entry and Exit Options:** Allowing students to exit with a Certificate (1 yr), Diploma (2 yrs) or Degree (3-4 yrs), thereby reducing the impact of dropouts.
- **Academic Bank of Credits (ABC):** A digital repository that stores credits earned by students, enabling seamless mobility between different institutions.
- **Technology Integration:** Leveraging AI and digital tools to enhance pedagogy and administrative efficiency.
- **Institutional Autonomy:** Moving toward a culture of research driven excellence and self-governance.

The Evolving Role of the Educator: At the heart of this systemic overhaul is the educator. As the traditional boundaries of the classroom dissolve, the teacher's identity is evolving from a transmitter of information to a facilitator of learning. In this new era, the educator must balance pedagogical expertise with a commitment to continuous faculty development, action research and the cultivation of academic integrity.

Impact on Teaching and Learning: The impact of NEP 2020 is most visible in the shift of the classroom dynamic.

- **From Rote to Research:** The policy mandates a focus on critical thinking and inquiry based learning.
- **Integration of Technology:** With the rise of the National Educational Technology Forum (NETF), digital literacy is no longer optional for faculty.
- **Vocational Integration:** Higher education is now tasked with integrating vocational training to enhance employability, requiring teachers to collaborate with industry experts.

Challenges in Implementation: While the vision is robust, the path to implementation faces hurdles:

- **Infrastructure Deficit:** Transitioning to a multidisciplinary model requires significant investment in labs and digital libraries.
- **Faculty Mindset:** Moving away from a lecture heavy sage on the stage model to a guide on the side requires intensive retraining.
- **Language Barriers:** The push for instruction in regional languages, while inclusive, poses challenges for standardized assessment and resource availability.

Recommendations for Educators: To navigate this transition, teachers and administrators should:

- Engage in Continuous Professional Development (CPD) via platforms like DIKSHA or SWAYAM.
- Adopt Blended Learning models to balance classroom interaction with digital resources.
- Foster Inter departmental Collaborations to create truly multidisciplinary course modules.

Conclusion: The National Education Policy 2020 is not just a policy document but a roadmap for a more equitable and vibrant society. Its impact on higher education will be measured not just by the number of graduates but by the quality of thinkers and innovators the system produces. For the Indian teacher, this is an era of renewed autonomy and immense responsibility. Higher education is evolving from the mere delivery

of facts to the cultivation of critical thinking, ethical reasoning and social responsibility. The role of the educator has moved from a traditional lecturer to a facilitator and mentor. This evolution requires a mastery of AI resilient assessments, action research and inclusive pedagogical strategies. For this shift to be successful, institutions must foster a robust research culture that empowers faculty to lead these changes rather than simply following them.

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