



The Role of NEP 2020 in Shaping Higher Education Reforms: A Vision for New India

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ABSTRACT

The National Education policy 2020 is a revolutionary path of reforming the educational system of India, specifically in the system of higher education. This research paper discusses the implications of the policy toward structural, curricular, and governance reforms and its compatibility with the development vision of India becoming a knowledge-based economy by the year 2047 Viksit Bharat. The study analyzes through a multidisciplinary perspective, how NEP 2020 is promoting the principles of flexibility, equity, and excellence in higher education establishments, including the Academic Bank of Credits (ABC) and multidisciplinary models of learning, digital change and transformation and the proposed National Research Foundation. The paper is also researching institutional reactions and the problem of implementation, including funding shortages, faculty capabilities and regional gaps. Based on literature, conceptual models, and policy reports, with the help of this study, some key enablers and inhibitors are identified that can influence the success of NEP 2020 in different contexts particularly in Tier-II



and Tier-III universities and institutes. In addition, the paper has mentioned the new pathways of the study based on the foundational certificate programs to research based degrees, which makes the further education more modular and open to all. All the findings suggest that NEP 2020 is a promising roadmap but its success depends on making strategic investment, involvement of stakeholders, digital infrastructure and clarity in relevant regulations. This paper is concluded that, through successful implementation, NEP 2020 can change the higher education structure in India into an internationally competitive, student-centered and future focused system that facilitates life-long learning and the national development objectives.

1. Introduction:

The future of higher education in India is at a major crossroad due to the vigorous penetration of technologies, demographic changes, international competitiveness, and the constantly changing socio-economic fabric. In a bid to ease out a revolutionary change, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 was launched to reshape the parameters of education in India through an exemplary policy document. Think big and think ahead to create a holistic, multidisciplinary and multidimensional system is the vision of NEP 2020 unlike its predecessors, which focused only on access and equity but not excellence and innovation. The aim of this paper is to deliberate how NEP 2020 is able to bring the reform in higher education and set India on path of becoming a knowledge superpower eventually leading to vision of Viksit Bharat (Developed India) by 2047. The higher education system of India is one of the largest systems in the world; and has been beset by many challenges consisting of such aspects as rigidity in the academic system, rote learning, poor research output, weak infrastructure system and poor comparison with the international system. These points have acted as a determinant to counter the possibility of Indian universities performing in the international market and adding a significant output in the development of the country. NEP 2020 tries to curb these structural disadvantages by suggesting radical reforms that cut across the curriculum design, pedagogical practices, governance, architecture of the institutions, and research orientation. One of the most important elements of the NEP 2020 is that it envisages a comprehensive and interdisciplinary education, drawing upon India ancient intellectual and educational traditions developed in her ancient universities Nalanda and Takshashila. It promotes the deconstructing of conventional academic silos thus manifold ends up with the whole lot of discipline becoming open to students such as arts, sciences and vocational probation. The outcome of this approach



is projected to be a well-balanced individual who is able to think critically, be creative, communicate and solve problems which in the 21st century with a knowledge-based economy is a much-needed necessity.

The other most important aspect of NEP 2020 is that it is flexible and focused towards students. The policy enables the learner to choose her path as it proposes a flexible system of choice-based credit, availability of multiple entry and exit points, and academic bank of credits. Such fluidity is especially relevant in such heterogeneous and Mult dynamic society as India where socio-economic imbalances tend to disrupt formal education pathways. Therefore, the aim of NEP 2020 is to make higher education more democratic, convenient, and open to special individuals. Research and innovation are at the heart of the policy on higher education, as well. To this end there will establish the National Research Foundation that will give a potent thrust to research culture and funding in universities and colleges. The objective is to position Indian higher education institutions as centers of next generation research and innovation and develop cross-disciplinary and cross-sectoral alliance. The strategic move is vital to the Indian hope of becoming a world giant in science, technology and knowledge creation. Probably the grandest of all the aspirations of NEP 2020 is establishing Multidisciplinary Institution and phasing out fragmented and small-scale college. The policy has the vision of well-resourced large institutions that are either research intensive, teaching intensive or autonomous degree granting colleges under transparent and merit-based structure of governance. Such institutions will meet the high-quality standards of a re-designed National Accreditation Council and a new structure of regulation at the Higher Education Commission of India. This restructuring is meant to make education governance depoliticized, rather it must have accountability, academic freedom, and institutional autonomy. In addition, NEP 2020 lays great emphasis on faculty development, institutional capacity building. It suggests changes in the faculty recruitment, training and career development because they are the foundation of quality education. Faculty members will have better chances to mentor and guide students and conduct research and assist in institutional development through ongoing professional growth, performance pay, and greater autonomy. The other area of change brought by NEP 2020 is technology integration. The policy gives emphasis to the usage of digital tools, online learning and virtual labs to improve teaching-learning experiences and spread the wings of higher education in far-flung places. The digital transition gained momentum during the so-called COVID-19 pandemic, which proves the topicality of this vision. NEP 2020 has also highlighted the need of open educational resources and collaborative digital ecosystem to promote equity and inclusivity in the digital learning. NEP 2020 also points out to a high position of language and culture in the higher education reforms that it envisages. The policy will lead to achieving rooted but globally



competitive citizens by popularizing Indian languages as the medium of instruction, regional knowledge system facilitation, and safeguarding the cultural heritage of India. It is part of the bigger plan of nation-building and the vision of making India self-reliant economically with cultural self-confidence. NEP 2020 also integrates with global frameworks that include the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG-4), that demands inclusive and equitable, quality education and lifelong learning opportunities that cater to all. The approach adopted by the policy of focusing on equity, quality, and lifelong learning can be identified as what India has promised the international community, and elevates the Indian educational status in the global arena. Although NEP 2020 is ambitious in its road map, realization of the same is subject to numerous factors such as sufficient funding, political will, stake holder involvement and effective monitoring mechanisms. The policy should be contextually translated and implemented within the frameworks of States and institutions where the national priorities should be balanced with local needs. In this respect, the current research article will make an attempt at carrying out a wider investigation of the NEP 2020 and how it is developing the course of higher education reforms in India. It analyzes the policy's vision, structural reforms, key objectives, implementation challenges, and its potential to transform India's higher education into a world-class, equitable, and future-ready ecosystem. This paper aims through a futuristic perspective to evaluate the ways in which NEP 2020 can become the blueprint towards achieving the vision of making India a Viksit Bharat by 2047 where education would be seen as the bedrock of the economic boom, societal balance and national rejuvenation.

2. An Overview of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020:

The National Education Policy 2020 represents a historic and comprehensive reform initiative introduced by the Government of India to overhaul the country's education system in its entirety, after a gap of 34 years. The NEP 2020 was approved by the Union Cabinet on July 29, 2020, to replace the former National Policy on Education, 1986 (updated in 1992). It aims at organizing the Indian educational system in the changing requirements of the 21st century and work on the necessities of the learners, teachers, the institutions and the society at a global competitive world. Just like NEP 2020 The vision of NEP 2020 is designed to generate an education system based on Indian ethos which directly makes contributions to switching India into an equitable and vibrant knowledge society, and where education is also inclusive, accessible, affordable, and high standard. Its policy is focused on the holistic, flexible multidisciplinary education that will be aligned with the need of 21st-century learners. It has value-based learning, critical thinking, creativity, ethics, and life skills, and all these are part of it so that it can always



produce individuals who are not only proficient in an education sense but also socially and morally responsible. NEP 2020 is based on four important pillars: Access, Equity, Quality, and Affordability, and will cover all education levels: after foundational phase, higher education, and lifelong learning. In schools, the policy also proposes a new curricular line-the 5+3+3+4 format entailing an elimination of the classic 10+ 2 format. It focuses emphasis on basic literacy and numeracy, early childhood care and education and teaching in the early grades in the mother tongue. Such reforms at the school level provide a basis of a healthy higher education environment. The NEP 2020 has planned to make a full transformation in the sector of the higher education sector by 2040. It seeks to break the barriers of academic divisions and establish a multidisciplinary and research-heavy systems of education. The policy aims at making 100 percent of Gross Enrollment Ratio in school education by 2030 and 50 percent GER in higher education by 2035. It has been suggested that a Higher Education Commission of India be set up to take the place of other regulatory bodies involved, so that governance becomes simpler. HECI will comprise of 4 verticals namely, National Higher Education Regulatory Council, National Accreditation Council, Higher Education Grants Council, and General Education Council. To enhance research and innovation, it is suggested in the policy to establish the National Research Foundation which should focus on financing, mentoring, and establishment of substantial research environment in interdisciplinary commitments. It also proposes the idea of Academic Bank of Credits that is supposed to ease student mobility and life-long learning. The policy supports online and digital learning, especially due to the COVID-19 pandemic to improve the accessibility and flexibility of learning. The second aspect where NEP 2020 is distinct is in its approach towards mother tongue and Indian languages, inclusive education, integration of vocational training as well as globalization of Indian education. It facilitates internationalization by means of academic partnerships, student exchange schemes, and the admission of overseas universities to act in India. The NEP 2020 is a visionary policy that seeks to create a learner-centric, flexible, and multidisciplinary education system which can power India's journey towards becoming a Viksit Bharat (Developed India) by 2047. Future-proof, progressive, and equal society largely depend on its successful implementation.

**3. Literature Review:**

Author (Year)	Summary	Findings
Meenakshi Rathi (2024)	The NEP 2020 aims to transform India's higher education system by 2047, emphasizing digital adoption, research, innovation, flexibility, and choice, with potential to improve access, promote economic growth, and make education more equitable and holistic.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NEP 2020 promotes research and innovation in higher education. • Collaboration between universities and industry encourages economic growth.
Monika Tayade (2024)	The NEP 2020 in India aims to transform higher education through interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary education, faculty autonomy, online education, and vocational training, prioritizing student-centric and holistic development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NEP 2020 promotes interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary education. • Focus on equity, inclusion, and vocational education initiatives.
Kuldeep Singh Tomar (2024)	The NEP 2020 introduces reforms in India's higher education sector, emphasizing multidisciplinary education, technology integration, and 21st-century skills, but faces challenges such as implementation complexities, inadequate funding, and resistance to change.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NEP 2020 promotes research and international collaboration. • Implementation challenges include funding and resistance to change.
<u>N. Nirmala Mani</u> (2021)	The NEP 2020 as mentioned in this paper is the first education policy of the 21st century and replaces the thirty-four-year-old National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluates future of higher education under NEP 2020. • Aims for 50% Gross Enrolment Ratio by 2035.



Kuldeep Singh Tomar (2024)	The NEP 2020 introduces reforms in teacher education, emphasizing multidisciplinary, inclusive, and technology-integrated approaches, with a focus on continuous professional development and a four-year integrated B.Ed. degree to enhance India's educational landscape.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explores NEP 2020 reforms in teacher education. • Identifies opportunities and challenges in implementation.
<u>Verdú & María Angélica</u> (2022)	The NEP 2020 of India has finally seen the light of the day as discussed by the authors, and it is an ideal time to reflect on what the document has in store for the teachers whose service conditions have been neglected, for too long.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overhaul system of teacher education for better quality teachers. • Implementing NEP-2020 reforms may bring drastic changes in education.
Parag R. Kawale (2024)	The NEP 2020 has made significant progress in reforming India's education system, introducing flexible structures, multilingual education, and vocational training, but faces challenges including the digital divide, infrastructure constraints, and variability in state-level implementation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NEP 2020 reforms aim for flexible, inclusive education. • Challenges include digital divide and infrastructure issues.
Diyuk Bora & Santhosh Mathew (2024)	NEP 2020 represents a significant departure from previous policies, emphasizing multidisciplinary learning, flexibility, research orientation, and skill enhancement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NEP 2020 emphasizes multidisciplinary approach and skill enhancement. • Effective implementation is crucial for substantial reforms.



Umar Farooq (2023)	NEP 2020 primarily focuses on higher education, aiming to revamp the country's educational system and enhance its economic and social indicators.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• NEP 2020 aims to enhance higher education quality and accessibility.• Implementation challenges include dropout rates and need for student motivation.
Dr. S. Ramesh (2023)	The NEP 2020 is a comprehensive roadmap for transforming India's education system, focusing on access, quality, and holistic development. It aims to reshape teaching practices, learning outcomes, and educational practices. The policy has the potential to foster a knowledge-driven society and prepare India's youth for the challenges of the 21st century.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• NEP 2020 aims to revolutionize India's education system.• Highlights potential to reshape teaching practices and learning outcomes.
Jaswinder (2025)	The NEP 2020 aims to transform India's education system through early childhood education, vocational integration, multilingualism, and technology adoption, but faces challenges including infrastructure gaps, teacher shortages, and rural access disparities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• NEP 2020 aims to revolutionize India's education system.• Focus on childhood education, vocational integration, multilingualism and technology adoption.



Dipali Bal & Karna Singh (2023)	The NEP 2020 aims to transform India's education system into an equitable, sustainable, and healthy knowledge society, increasing enrolment to 50% by 2035, with a focus on digital age readiness and interdisciplinary contributions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NEP 2020 aims to transform India's education system. • Enrolment target set at 50% by 2035.
Jeetendra Singh Dhurve (2024)	The NEP 2020 aims to provide universal access to quality education, promoting equity, social justice, and national development, with a focus on higher education, emphasizing open, multidisciplinary education and increased enrollment rates.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NEP 2020 aims for holistic, multidisciplinary education. • Focus on improving enrollment and student support systems.
Kamaljit Kaur (2024)	The NEP 2020 has significantly impacted higher education in India, introducing reforms such as reorganised undergraduate programs, interdisciplinary education, vocational training, and technology integration, with potential to revolutionize the current education system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NEP 2020 impacts higher education structure and access. • Emphasizes interdisciplinary education and vocational training integration.
G Prahlada (2022)	This paper evaluates the Indian NEP 2020 for higher education, identifying strengths and weaknesses, and proposing strategies for implementation to achieve holistic and research-oriented progress, including quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of NEP-2020's strengths and weaknesses identified. • Recommendations for effective implementation despite constraints provided.



	university development and regulatory system transformation.	
Monika Chaudhary (2024)	This research paper examines India's NEP 2020 transformative impact on holistic and multidisciplinary education, emphasizing technology integration, research promotion, and infrastructure enhancement to foster holistic student development and culturally responsive education in India.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• NEP 2020 transforms education for holistic, multidisciplinary development.• Emphasizes technology, research, and indigenous knowledge preservation.
Monika Sharma, Pradeep Kumar Solanki (2024)	The NEP 2020 aims to create an inclusive and flexible educational framework in India, promoting multilingualism, skill development, and critical thinking through curriculum redesign and teacher training, empowering students and teachers for the future.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• NEP 2020 promotes inclusive and flexible educational frameworks.• Focus on curriculum redesign, skill development, and teacher training.



Robin (2022)	Recently, the Government of India as mentioned in this paper has proposed a new education policy, NEP 2020, which aims to transform India into an equitable and vibrant knowledge society by providing high quality education to all, it is a welcome step, which will bring about a paradigm shift India's education system and will transform it into a modern, progressive and equitable one.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NEP 2020 aims for equitable, high-quality education for all. • Emphasizes creative potential and multidisciplinary learning for future workforce.
P. Bhaskara Reddy (2023)	This study aims to empower faculty and institutional leaders in India's higher education sector with autonomy, accountability, and professional development, as per the National Education Policy 2020, to enhance quality, relevance, and impact of higher education.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NEP 2020 enhances faculty autonomy and accountability. • National Research Foundation supports research and innovation collaboration.

4. Research Gap:

NEP 2020 has been praised as the transformative framework aimed to alter the face of education in India, especially in higher schooling. While the policy has received considerable attention in policy circles and media debates, there is still a noticeable gap in academic research that offers a systematic, empirical, and analytical assessment of how NEP 2020 is influencing the structural, pedagogical, and administrative reforms in higher education. Most existing studies either summarize policy highlights or offer normative opinions without providing critical insights into its actual implementation, regional variability, or impact on institutional performance. Moreover, research on NEP 2020 has largely focused on the school education segment, leaving the higher education domain relatively underexplored, particularly in the context of multidisciplinary integration, digital transformation, faculty autonomy, and student-centric



reforms. Few studies have examined how universities and colleges are aligning their strategies with the NEP 2020 roadmap, especially with respect to curriculum restructuring, research orientation, and governance reforms. Another crucial gap lies in longitudinal and comparative analysis. There is insufficient exploration of the difference between policy intent and institutional practices, and how factors such as funding constraints, administrative inertia, digital readiness, and faculty preparedness are influencing NEP 2020's on-ground impact. Additionally, there is a lack of region-specific case studies, particularly in Tier-II and Tier-III cities, where higher education institutions face unique socio-economic and infrastructural challenges. Without contextual insights, national-level conclusions may fail to capture ground realities. Hence, there is an urgent need for a critical and contextual analysis of NEP 2020's role in higher education reforms, with a specific focus on implementation dynamics, stakeholder perspectives, and alignment with national development goals such as Viksit Bharat @2047.

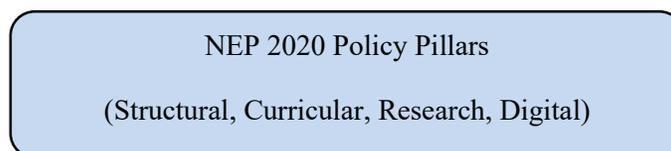
5. Research Objectives:

RO1: To analyze the structural and curricular reforms in higher education institutions initiated in alignment with NEP 2020. *This objective aims to examine how academic institutions are revising curriculum structures, adopting multidisciplinary models, and implementing flexible learning mechanisms as proposed by NEP 2020.*

RO2: To evaluate the role of NEP 2020 in promoting research, innovation, and digital transformation in higher education. *This seeks to investigate the impact of policy initiatives such as the National Research Foundation (NRF) and digital learning frameworks in enhancing research quality, faculty output, and student access.*

RO3: To assess the institutional and governance challenges in implementing NEP 2020 reforms across Indian universities and colleges. *This objective focuses on identifying the barriers administrative, financial, technological, or cultural that may hinder the effective realization of NEP goals, especially in state-run and rural institutions.*

6. Conceptual Framework:



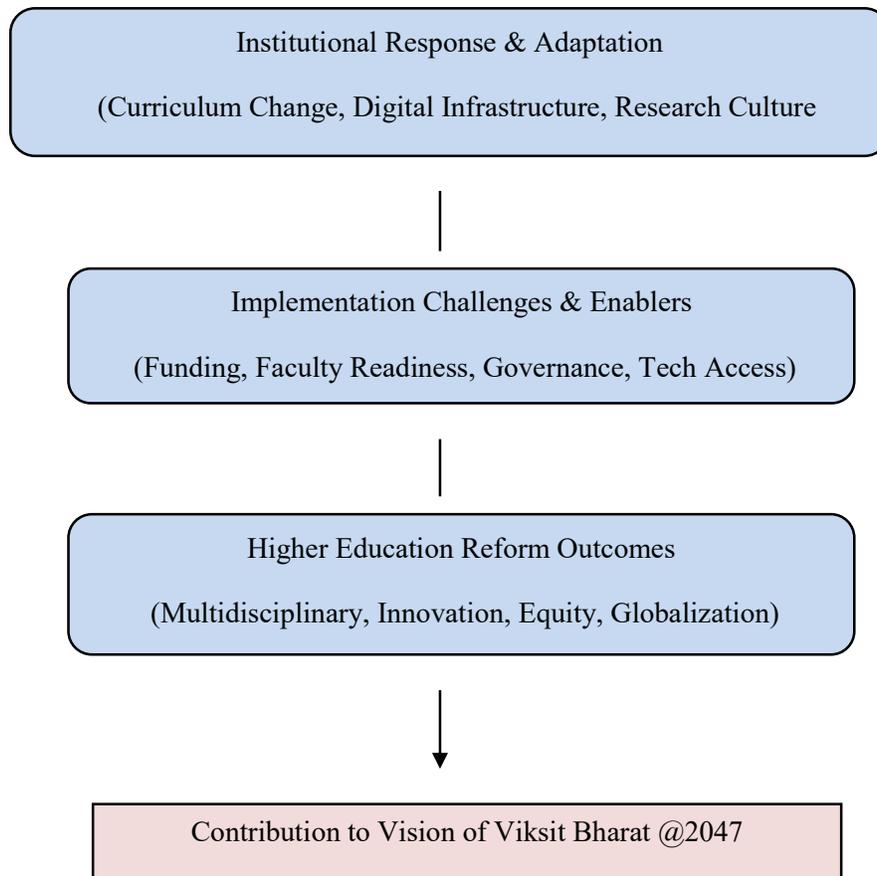


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework illustrates the sequential relationship between NEP 2020's proposed reforms and their potential impact on the future of higher education in India. The framework starts with NEP 2020's key policy pillars, which include structural overhauls, research promotion, digital transformation, and curricular flexibility. These directives influence how institutions respond and adapt through curriculum redesign, investment in digital infrastructure, promotion of research ecosystems, and administrative realignment. This process is mediated by several implementation challenges and enablers such as funding support, faculty training, regulatory clarity, and digital access. These factors significantly determine the effectiveness of reforms in achieving desired outcomes like holistic education, innovation, institutional excellence, and inclusive growth. Finally, the model connects these higher education reform outcomes to the larger national goal of Viksit Bharat @2047 envisioning India as a developed, knowledge-driven, and globally competitive nation.



7. Discussion:

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasis on flexibility, modularity, and seamless academic progression in the Indian higher education system. By introducing a multi-exit, multi-entry framework, NEP 2020 moves away from the rigid academic structure of the past and adopts a learner-centric approach that allows students to progress according to their needs, interests, and life circumstances. The progression begins at Level 4.5 with a Foundational Certificate Program, designed for students completing their first year in higher education. This is followed by Level 5, a Specialized Diploma Program, which reflects skill-based or discipline-specific training after two years of study. At Level 5.5, students who continue for a third year are awarded a Bachelor’s Degree, while Level 6 represents the Bachelor’s Degree with Honors, typically achieved after four years of comprehensive study, research, or internship integration. Moving beyond undergraduate education, Level 6.5 corresponds to Postgraduate Certificates or Master’s Degrees, allowing students to either specialize further or prepare for research-intensive paths. Level 7 introduces the M.Voc (Master of Vocation) Degree, aimed at promoting skill-based and industry-oriented education for employment-readiness. Finally, Level 8 signifies a Research-based Master’s Program, which acts as a precursor to doctoral studies and advanced academic research. This structured pathway promotes academic depth while preserving exit flexibility. This framework supports lifelong learning, upskilling, and re-entry opportunities, enabling students from diverse socio-economic backgrounds to pursue education without fear of loss or rigidity. It aligns Indian education with international credit systems and reinforces NEP 2020’s commitment to inclusivity, mobility, and global competitiveness in higher education.

Flexibility and Progression: NEP-2020 in the Indian Education System





Source: <https://www.eklavya.com/blog/nep-transform-higher-education/>

Figure 2: NEP 2020 in the Indian Education System

8. Conclusion:

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is a powerful roadmap of transforming the Indian higher education system, in line with the international benchmarks of accessibility, quality, equity, and innovation. This policy's ambition extends beyond structural changes it seeks to redefine the very philosophy of education in India. This study helps us to understand that NEP 2020 is not a document of intent but it is a blueprint of transformational change to help the youth of India that will equip young generation in facing the changing challenges of the 21st century. With the development of academic flexibility expressed by the system of multi-entry and multi-exit points, the Academic Bank of Credits, and even through modular paths to attaining a degree, one of the richest results of NEP 2020 is the creation of flexibility in the academic world. Even students can find their way towards academic careers and they have nothing to fear of drop-outs making dead ends. It makes access democratic and gives possibilities of re-entry and life-long learning. The credit portability of prior education and recognition is a radical change towards the appreciation of skills in addition to the formal learning. Moreover, focus on multidisciplinary education and research encourages de-siloing of academic activities, and guided the growth of rounded individuals. The projected change between the conventional subject-based curriculums to the flexible course, skill integrated and innovation-based course will not only equip students with an ability to work but also be contributive global citizens. The proposed creation of National Research Foundation will enhance the research culture in Indian institutions by accruing funds and offering mentorship to promote generation of knowledge particularly in state institutions and regional universities. The policy of going digital in the context of virtual labs, open educational resources, and hybrid learning addresses those aspects of the digital divide that have been revealed by the COVID-19 pandemic. But what matters most is the fact that this digital leap needs to close the infrastructure gaps particularly in rural regions so that this movement can actually be a success. The development of digital capacity among both students and faculty will be a key determinant of NEP's success. Another issue emphasized by the study is the role of institution independence and empowerment of the faculty. Through facilitated decentralised decision-making and enhanced faculty development processes, NEP 2020 will revitalise academic leadership and innovation. Nevertheless, the challenge of resisting change in the spheres of administration, overlap of regulations, and insufficient financial independence still



remains a difficulty. The second important lesson learned is the geographical diversity of the implementation preparedness. Whereas central institutions and private universities have started to adopt reforms in line with NEP, most state institutions and rural institutions lack resources, awareness, as well as effective translation mechanisms of policies. The lack of localized approaches, adequate financing, training of stakeholders may lead to uneven performance unless the situation is remedied. Finally, the NEP 2020 is strongly connected with the vision of Viksit Bharat @ 2047 and its dream of creating globally competitive, equitable and inclusive knowledge society. The policy represents the desire to change an examination-based system to that which develops creativity, curiosity, ethical thinking, and employability. NEP 2020 can actually become an innovative instrument of change in the Indian process of educational and economic revival by the support of academic invention, scientific excellence, proficiency building, and digital inclusion. Answering this potential, however, implies more than policy statements. It requires joint governance, inter ministry coordination, stakeholder sensitization and a constant feedback mechanism to take into account on-ground realities. To make sure that NEP 2020 becomes a driving force for long-lasting, fair reform rather than just a policy on paper, the Indian government, state authorities, academic institutions, and civil society must collaborate. To sum up, the NEP 2020 has established a strong framework for rethinking Indian higher education. In the ensuing decades, its effective execution might establish India as a global center of knowledge, creativity, and human capital that promotes sustainable growth and patriotism.

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