

NEP 2020, 1 Year Later: Match Vision to Reality

Education policy now needs political monitoring at highest levels

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It is a year since GoI launched the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which has the potential to reinvent the future of education. Because it has laid the foundations for building a knowledge society that will ultimately empower higher education institutions (HEIs) all across our diverse country.

NEP seeks to promote 10 transformative ideas in the higher education sector. These include promotion of world-class education; multidisciplinary and liberal education; regulatory reforms for institutional empowerment; expansion of the higher education system while ensuring equity and access; and creating a research ecosystem that will have increased funding with stronger emphasis on publications.

Invest in leadership, research

Further focus areas are recruitment of outstanding faculty for promoting high quality teaching and research; improved governance and the development of enlightened leadership for institutional transformation; academic freedom and institutional autonomy for HEIs; increased public funding; performance-based incentives and private philanthropy; and impetus for internationalisation, accreditation and digitisation.

Since the launch of the NEP in July 2020, there have been concerted efforts by GoI, HEIs and various regulatory bodies to create awareness about the policy and the steps that ought to be taken towards its implementation. The federal structure of the Indian polity has its own complexities of governance and, therefore, the importance of creating awareness and building consensus around the NEP.

The Academic Bank of Credit (ABC), which will be a central repository of the academic credits obtained by all students, and the new regulations focusing on online education are some of the major initiatives that have



Do dreams come true?

been promoted in the last year by UGC and GoI.

Bring stakeholders together

One of the major challenges facing democracies is the effective implementation of public policy. It gets even more complicated when the stakeholders are diverse, fragmented and at times having divergent interests. Research by Michael Fullan shows that education policy implementation is a multidimensional process.

He identifies nine factors affecting it under three characteristics. Characteristics of change include need, clarity, complexity, quality/practicality. Local characteristics are district, community, principal, teacher. Finally external factors are identified as government and other agencies. As we work towards implementing NEP, we need to be mindful of Fullan's nine factors that are equally relevant in the Indian context.

Implementing to schedule

The first anniversary of NEP 2020 should herald our focused attention on implementation. I believe that existing mechanisms are inadequate for building a

collective and unified approach towards implementation. We need a new and imaginative institutional design that will help in implementation of NEP within an agreed schedule.

The new institutional design for effective policy implementation in education should have the following five components: monitoring by political leadership at the highest level of government; leadership at the level of education ministry to focus on the implementation; leadership at the level of regulatory bodies with UGC taking the lead and bringing them together; and subject-based councils on implementation; activating the state higher education councils and the state governments' higher education departments for the purpose; empowering the Association of Indian Universities (AIU) to work closely with the vice-chancellors of all universities towards implementation.

Institution-building, nation-building

The vision of NEP 2020 is to build the foundations of a new India that is a knowledge society. Every aspect of it has a symbiotic relationship with the cause of institution-building for nation-building. However, its vision awaits implementation to become a reality. And especially in education, multi-stakeholder participation and active involvement are the essential conditions for the successful implementation of public policy.

This also needs capacity-building. The new institutional design for effective implementation of NEP will ensure that we create a robust institutional architecture to support its vision.

The entire higher education ecosystem, especially government agencies and regulatory bodies should commit themselves to build trust, promote transparent decision-making, recognise institutional autonomy, ensure active and participative consultation, and empower HEIs. This will form the bedrock for a time-bound implementation of NEP, effective and impactful.

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