



NEP 2020: A PARADIGM SHIFT IN SKILL BASED HIGHER EDUCATION: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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Abstract

On the horizon of the Indian education system, the Government of India has come up with a New Education Policy 2020. The New Indian Education Policy envisages massive educational changes. Effective implementation of this policy is expected to be a challenging task for every component of the education system. Understanding the spirit of NEP 2020 is crucial for effective implementation. This paper focuses on understanding the spirit of NEP and actions to be initiated for its effective implementation. Major outcomes of the education system envisioned by NEP 2020 are knowledge, skills and attitude. Exposure and knowledge of recent technologies, various skills to implement and apply the gained knowledge for the benefit of the society and urge to apply gained knowledge for the benefit of the society are the core values of education system as per NEP. In view of this, paper highlights changes required in the curriculum designing, teaching – learning process, examination and evaluation system with the incorporation of curricular activities. This paper is expected to help teachers in initiating various actions for effective implementation of NEP 2020. Role of external stakeholders in skill development and in providing real life exposure to students is also highlighted.

Introduction

NEP 2020 provides guidelines for promoting quality of education system in India at a very larger scale, from school education to higher education involving every aspect of society.

Three major aspects to be focussed as an outcome of education system are knowledge, skills and attitude of learner.

Of course all these outcomes are to be envisioned with reference to Indian ethos and requirements of nation. It is highly expected that with these learning outcomes focussed education system will make India, a global knowledge superpower in next decade.

❖ **Knowledge**

Education system should cope up with rapid changes taking place in knowledge landscape. Rapid technological changes such as use of artificial intelligence, big data, machine learning and many more advanced technologies are coming into picture.

Implementation of newer technologies always required skilled workforce with the deep knowledge of technology with the better understanding. For effective implementation of particular technology, skills are important for the applied use of mathematics, computer science, basic sciences including humanities and social sciences.

Global concerns such as sustainable development, climate change, increasing pollution, and depleting natural resources, food security, waste water treatment will also require skilled persons with required knowledge.

Disaster management, emergence of epidemics and pandemics also requires skilled man power with multidisciplinary knowledge. In COVID pandemic, world has witnessed use of smart technologies in fight with virus.

Thus, newer technologies will be the platform of solution to the problems faced by society at national and global level and skilled manpower with required knowledge and holistic approach will be the solution providers.

❖ **Skills**

Gained knowledge is always required to be shared with the society or to be used for the benefit of the society. This is possible only if certain skills are acquired along with knowledge. knowledge without required skills may not be sufficient to serve the society.

Few important skills to be gained by learner are

- **Communication:** verbal and written
For sharing of gained knowledge without misinterpretation or misleading, oral and written communication is important.
- **Ability to apply gained knowledge to solve real life problems**
- **Ability to use modern IT tools**
Use of latest software tools, instrumentation, etc.
- **Ability to work as an individual and as a member of team**
- **Lifelong learning:** It is very important to learn “how to learn”. With continuous technological changes, learner must develop ability to learn any new concept at his/ her own. He/she should develop own learning methodology. At least, should understand,

with which learning methodology he is comfortable. This life leaning skill will help throughout life to cope with changes taking place in the profession he / she is working. NEP expects that the education to move towards less content, and more towards learning about how to think critically and solve problems, how to be creative and multidisciplinary, and how to innovate, adapt, and absorb new material in novel and changing fields.

❖ **Attitude and approach**

Gained knowledge and skills are of little use without sense of responsibility towards society and pride feeling about nation. Education must build character, enable learners to be ethical, rational, compassionate, and caring, while at the same time prepare them with knowledge and skills.

NEP 2020 focus on instilling among the learners a deep-rooted pride in being Indian, not only in thought, but also in spirit, intellect, and deeds, as well as to develop knowledge, skills, values that support responsible commitment to human rights, sustainable development and living, and global well-being, thereby reflecting a truly global citizen.

In overall, NEP expects to develop education system with proper integration of knowledge, skills and attitude as a learning outcome. Missing out of one learning outcome is also not going to serve the purpose. Learner with all the knowledge, skills and attitude with readiness to serve society will be the result of effective implementation of NEP.

For effective implementation of NEP, almost every aspect of education system is required to be addressed. Most important is that more focus on skill development of learner is expected to improve employability of students.

Skill Development

When we say the word skill development, our mind immediately goes to short-term, employability-friendly courses, skill development courses. Value added, add on courses, etc. Through implementation of NEP, we are expecting students with motor skills, technical skills as well as intellectual skills. This would be possible with appropriate changes in curriculum, teaching learning methods and examination system. A course of few hours or months will not of serve the purpose. Every aspect of education system need to be addressed for focus on skill development. With this approach only, students will be able to understand and solve real life problems of new era.

Effective implementation of NEP is possible with focus on few aspects of curriculum, pedagogy and examination system.

Curriculum

- Revamping of curriculum on regular basis
- Incorporation of real life problems in curriculum
- Incorporation of project based learning, Seminar / project presentations, audit courses, major and minor courses in curriculum
- Open elective subject with the support of industry
- Audit courses and honor courses
- Involvement of experts from industry, research organisations, professional bodies in curriculum framing and syllabus setting
- Study visits to industry
- Induction programs for first year and other classes (AICTE guidelines)
- Industrial Internship and internship policy of the institute
- More focus continuous summative assessment than formative assessment

The curriculum should include basic arts, crafts, humanities, games, sports and fitness, languages, literature, culture, and values, in addition to science and mathematics, to develop all aspects and capabilities of learners; and make education more well-rounded, useful, and fulfilling to the learner.

Education must build character, enable learners to be ethical, rational, compassionate, and caring, while at the same time prepare them for gainful, fulfilling employment.

Following are the few fundamental principles of NEP guiding changes expected in

Curriculum framing

1. Flexibility, so that learners have the ability to choose their learning programmes, and choose their own paths in life according to their talents and interests.
2. Creativity and critical thinking to encourage logical decision-making and innovation
3. Promoting multilingualism and the power of language in teaching and learning
4. Focus on regular formative assessment for learning rather than the summative assessment that encourages today's 'coaching culture'
5. Respect for diversity and respect for the local context in all curriculum, pedagogy, and policy, always keeping in mind that education is a concurrent subject
6. Synergy in curriculum across all levels of education from early childhood care and education to school education to higher education

Teaching learning (Pedagogy)

- Focus should be on Conceptual teaching
- Use of modern tools in teaching - learning
- Learning through activities (for every subject, student may be asked to work on real life mini projects)
- Experiential learning, peer learning, pair learning
- Self-learning (few topics from the subject may be assigned to students for self learning)
- Use and motivation to students for joining MOOC courses, other online courses available at national and international level (Coursera/ Edux, etc.)
- Use of library as a learning resource center
- Exposure to free software available, initiatives taken by UGC, AICTE, reputed organisations such as IITs, research organisations for improving teaching learning at national level (Spoken tutorial, E – yantra, etc.)

NEP expects, Pedagogy followed must evolve to make education more experiential, holistic, integrated, inquiry-driven, discovery-oriented, learner-centred, discussion-based, flexible, and, of course, enjoyable.

Following is the fundamental principle of NEP guiding changes expected in **Teaching learning (Pedagogy)**

1. Extensive use of technology in teaching and learning, removing language barriers, increasing access for Divyang students, and educational planning and management.

Assessment and evaluation

- More focus on continuous assessment (Formative assessment)
- Setting of question papers to check the competency level of student using different level as defined by Bloom's taxonomy.
- Examination system should discourage memorisation and should promote for innovative / creative thinking of students.
- Emphasis on conceptual understanding rather than rote learning and learning-for-exams
- Implementation of Outcome based education and assessment through CO/PO/PSO attainment and continuous improvement

Student Centered Activities (Curricular, extracurricular activities)

Following are the few fundamental principles of NEP guiding changes expected in Student Centered Activities (Curricular, extracurricular activities)

1. Recognizing and fostering the unique capabilities of each student to promote each student's holistic development in both academic and non-academic spheres
2. No hard separations between arts and sciences, between curricular and extra-curricular activities, between vocational and academic streams, etc. in order to eliminate harmful hierarchies among, and silos between different areas of learning.
3. Multi-disciplinarity and a holistic education across the sciences, social sciences, arts, humanities, and sports for a multidisciplinary world in order to ensure the unity and integrity of all knowledge.
4. Life skills such as communication, cooperation, teamwork, and resilience
5. A rootedness and pride in India, and its rich, diverse, ancient and modern culture and knowledge systems and traditions

Sports, arts, cultural activities and social activities also plays very important role in skill development. Participation of students in the organisation and management of these activities helps students to learn many more life skills such as team management and leadership, etc.

Extension and outreach activities, celebration of birth anniversaries of national leaders, celebration of days of social importance, various social activities such as tree plantation, visit to orphanages, old age homes, development activities in adopted villages under different government initiatives such as Unnat Bharat Abhiyan, etc.

Few other important aspects for skill development are

1. Research and Innovation ecosystem

- Motivation to faculty and students for research work
- Incubation center development
- Sessions on IPR and Start Up awareness
- Sessions on Research funding

2. Participation of external stakeholders (Parents, alumina, employers, etc.) in education system

- Continued interaction with alumni and parents for internship and other activities providing real life exposure to students

3. Linkages with industry and professional organisations

- Industry visits, expert talks, internships, project based learning, case studies, participation in curriculum development, participation in syllabus framing

4. Academic collaborations

- Collaborations by signing MoU with reputed institutes at national and international level, with research organisations for student exchange, faculty exchange, for research and other academic activities.

5. Indian Knowledge System

- One of the important aspect highlighted in NEP is Indian Ethos. Various courses may be designed to incorporate Indian Knowledge system in Curriculum. Different initiatives in education system are expected to transform today's India into Bharat.

Education system should develop among the students a deep sense of respect towards the Fundamental Duties and Constitutional values, bonding with one's country. The aim of education in India should not be just the acquisition of knowledge as preparation for life in this world but for the complete realization and liberation of the self.

As per all the guidelines provided by NEP, initiatives for skill development of students definitely will make students more employable. One can say this is the opportunity for higher education institutions.

With all these initiatives and with effective implementation of NEP, it is expected that by 2050, India will have education system imparting the highest-quality education for all learners regardless of social or economic background.

Conclusion:

Creating productivity among every individual is the ultimate goal of Indian Education system. Employability is the greatest challenge in India in 21 century. Whereas knowledgeable, skilled, updated employee with appropriate approach towards nation is the demand of market and society and responsibility of education system. In this context skill development is significant aspect proclaimed by NEP2020.

Coming up with innovative ideas and doing research will contribute greatly in skill development. Along with research parents, alumina and employer can also provide real life exposure to students through continuous interaction. For effective skill development educational institution can create linkage with industries and other professional institutions in the form of internship, projects case studies and many more. Academic collaboration receives equal significance.

There are several challenges found in the way of achieving the aim of skill development. There is wide skill gap among newer employee (passed students) observed in India and the major reason for this gap is rapidly changing technology in the field of Industry. Education

institutions find it difficult to match with rapidly upcoming technological changes, if Industry will initiate in this context then this gap can be bridge. Along with this there are number of other challenges found such as lack of innovative curriculum, lack of innovative ways to implement the curriculum, too much theoretical approach than practical, little exposure of industry environment to faculty, changing values and ethics and many more, these reasons highlights the need for giving priority to association, interaction of educational institutions with the industry.

The paper recommended number of remedies to overcome the above stated challenges and could reach to the aim of skill development which includes increasing number of industry visit of students and faculty, more and more MoU can be signed among education institution and Industries, NGO's and government agencies, expert guidance should organise in the form of expert talk of industry personae for student-faculty. Trainings programmes of 30-60 hrs can be organise for students and faculty, encouragement for internship in industry, mini projects, assignments should be given to students, involvement of experts from industry in curriculum development should be taken, different value added courses should introduce.

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