

A study of challenges in front of Open and Distance Learning Education System for implementation of NEP (2020)

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Abstract:

Open and Distance Learning Education System is well known to us since the year 1962. The New Education Policy announced by Government of India in 2020. The implementation of this policy is essential for the society for many reasons like current requirements of industries, their expectations from the youth, practical application of student knowledge, etc. This NEP–2020 policy has the potential to fulfill the gaps between the education system and industry requirements. This will definitely be going to provide new aspect of education for the society as whole. The success of this policy however depends on its efficient implementation. As far as Open and Distance Learning Education is concerned it is more challenging for implementation. Therefore, the researcher has selected this topic for the study. In this research paper the researcher has covered various aspects and challenges which will may occur in front of Open and Distance Learning Education System in this era.

Keywords: Open and Distance Learning (ODL), New Education Policy (NEP)

1. Introduction of Study

Higher Education in India has faced various challenges and several gaps due to which it is not able to meet the requirements and current demands of the industries and university youth as well. To fulfill these gaps and provide state of the art education, the National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020), which was approved by the Union Cabinet of India on 29 July 2020. This outlines the vision of India's new education system. This new policy replaces the previous National Policy on Education, 1986.

The National Policy on Education (NPE) formulates to promote education amongst India's people. The policy covers elementary education to colleges in all areas of the country. The first NPE was promulgated by the Government of India by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1968, the second by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1986 and the third by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2020. This new policy envisions transforming higher education institutions into large multidisciplinary universities with more than 3,000 or more students each. The few key highlights of this policy are mentioned below:

- The policy aims to transform India's education system.
- The policy is a comprehensive framework for elementary education to higher education as well as vocational training in both rural and urban India.
- The language policy in NEP is a broad guideline and advisory in nature; and it is up to the states, institutions and schools to decide on the implementation.

- It has the holistic aim of transforming the nation to a “more vibrant, socially engaged, cooperative community and a happier, cohesive, cultured, productive, innovative, progressive and prosperous nation”
- It covers the targets of Sustainable Development Goals as well.
- The policy recommends institutional restructuring while overhauling the whole Higher Education System.

National Education Policy 2020 envisions an India-centric education system that contributes directly to transforming our nation sustainably into an equitable and vibrant knowledge society by providing high-quality education to all. This research paper focuses on the policy’s vision in the purview of the higher education system and aims to provide solutions for realising the same through intervention with Open and Distance Learning Education.

1. Objectives of the study

The primary objective of this research is to study the challenges of New Education Policy implementation for Open and Distance Learning Education System. The study also outlines the important key points of NEP and analyses how they are going affect the existing education system.

2. Research Methodology

This research is a descriptive study. The necessary secondary data was collected from various websites including those of Government of India, magazines, journals, other publications, etc. This data was then analysed and reviewed to arrive at the inferences and conclusions.

3. Challenges in front of Open and Distance Learning Education System for implementation of NEP Policy -2020

The implementation and transformation into the education system requires a huge investment in terms of infrastructure and human resource. The structure and system of Open and Distance Learning Institutions with study centers across the country can play a great role in meeting these requirements cost effectively. They will not only be limited to offering regular graduate and postgraduate programmes, but also be the facilitators in research activities and teaching multidisciplinary and skill-oriented courses to the students. So, here there is huge requirement of skill based mentors who can guide to the youth, understand their issues and try to fill up the gap and make the students capable to perform their task efficiently.

India has received its holistic and visionary National Education Policy after a gap of 34 years. India is currently facing several grass-root level issues such as high-level dropout rate, meagre 26.3 % Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER), acute crisis of quality, access, equity, etc., particularly in higher education. As per the review of different research paper, with the fast developments in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and the policies of Liberalisation, Globalisation and Privatisation, there is an urgent need to create global citizens

who can work towards the development at local, regional, national and global levels. So here one more challenge comes that the new India requires new approaches to shape the higher education system and the policy's vision, mission and aims must find a ground for its successful implementation through new approaches. On the basis of this background the researcher found that Open and Distance Learning approaches may lead to improve the system both qualitatively as well as quantitatively.

Quality higher education must aim to develop individuals who are excellent, thoughtful, well-rounded, and creative. It must enable a person to study one or more specialized areas of interest at an in-depth level and develop character, ethical and constitutional values, intellectual curiosity, scientific temper, creativity, service spirit, etc. As far as skills are concerned in this 21st century across a range of all fields, including sciences, social sciences, the arts, humanities, languages, personal, technological the vocational subjects are essential. The new education policy brings some fundamental changes to the current system, and the key highlights are multidisciplinary universities and colleges, with at least one in or near every district, revamping student curricula, pedagogy, evaluation, and support for enhanced student experience, establishing a National Research Foundation to support excellent peer-reviewed work and effectively seed study at open and distance learning universities or study centers.

The main challenge faced by the Indian higher education system includes enforced separation of qualifications, early specialization and student streaming into restricted research areas, less focus on research at most universities and schools, and lack of competitive peer-reviewed academic research funding and large affiliated universities leading to low levels of undergraduate education as well. With the help of open and distance education it is possible to overcome from situation and give best courses to the students for their betterment.

This policy also aims to increase the Gross Enrolment Ratio in higher education from Per cent 2018 to 50 per cent by 2035. This Ratio is one of the major challenges that our nation is striving to meet. In this field also, open and distance universities reach out to the underserved regions, where conventional universities have comparatively lesser scope. Growth, development and strengthening of open universities can efficiently attract a larger student enrolment. Open and distance education providing universities have the pedagogy which can cater to a number of students by engaging them with self-learning material, academic counselling, extra-curricular and co-curricular activities, training and raising awareness, and many more activities.

It says, "More HEIs shall be established and developed in underserved regions to ensure full access, equity, and inclusion. There shall, by 2030, be at least one large multidisciplinary HEI in or near every district" (NEP2020). The policy mentions establishing a large multidisciplinary HEI near every district. Open and distance learning universities already have their strong network through their study centers which were established in near about all geographical areas. So, this can make a note-worthy improvement in the Gross Enrolment Ratio of the state and eventually for the nation.

2. The Open and Distance Learning system has been integrating

technology to reach the students since the inception of technology. The efforts to integrate technology in the education sector have always been to bring about quality enhancements and outreach of education to learners at a distance. The Open and Distance Learning system in the context of India has grown from past six decades leading to the changing paradigms with the integration of technology with respect to pedagogy and the use of technology in it. The open and distance education system has to maintain blended learning approach too. Because the potential of blended learning in leveraging the teaching learning process; and the role of the new National Education Policy (NEP, 2020) of India has laid emphasis on the promotion and implementation of blended learning in the Indian higher education institutions. So this is also one the major challenge for the open and distance learning education system. Conclusion

It is concluded that the due to technological advancements and the great effect of COVID-19 pandemic have a large impact on implementation of NEP (2020). Therefore, blended learning in the Indian education institutions has flourished. The NEP (2020) thrust to offer various courses in blended mode. This type of learning though blended learning can help in leveraging teaching-learning process that can meet the learning needs of a learner, requirements of an instructor as well as the pedagogical factors. Conventional face-to-face programmes can be modified to fit a blended format. Open and distance education programmes may be helpful to achieve 50% GER by 2035 but sustainability of the promised “High quality higher education” may be uncertain. Since every programme is unique and so, it will require different attributes in varying proportions therefore open and distance learning courses will surely helpful here. Proper utilization of all resources and appropriate strategies will be helpful to the respective study centers of affiliated open and distance learning education universities.

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