



NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY 2020: POLICY WITH A REASON, MISSION AND A VISION

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INTRODUCTION:

By a very broad definition, 'education' indicates the basic social relationship that exists in all forms of human life.¹

Education is the pivot around which the development of any/every society revolves. As a student of History, one understands that across generations, education has been the focal point of any/every turning point of human history. The question that arises in the minds of historians is as to why does education become omnipresent in the development of every society. Perhaps, the answer lies in the role of education not only to generate employability, but also to arouse popular consciousness.

"We owe the concept of an educational ideal as a means of historical inquiry to Mannheim.....He was able to demonstrate that educational aims have a historical character, that they change as much as the guiding ideals of other cultural activities change over time."² Be it, the transition from feudalism to pre-capitalism in Western Europe, Renaissance, Reformation, Scientific Revolution, Enlightenment, Industrial Revolution, Capitalism, Imperialism, World Wars, Economic Depression, Globalization in the European society, the centrality of education cannot be negated. In the Indian context, the conflict of ideas between the Orientalists and the Anglicists or the socio-religious reform movements and anti-colonial struggle against British imperialism in the nineteenth and twentieth century India, or even the colonial educational policy-making in India are some of the milestone developments worth mentioning in this regard. As the present article is focusing on higher education it would not be wrong to say that "modern universities in India began in 1858, as institutional transplants from Great Britain. Since then, they have undergone a steady process of adaptation to their indigenous environment"³

It is worth emphasizing that education was high on the colonial agenda right from the eighteenth century. Some milestones contained therein were Orientalism and Anglicanism as a colonial ideology, establishment and closure of the **Fort William College, Charter Act of 1813, Sir Charles Wood's Despatch of 1854, Hunter Commission 1882-83, Indian Universities Act 1904,**

¹Fuchs, Antje Linkenbach, Education and the Process of Nation Building in Pre-Independence India: Some Theoretical Reflections in Kumar, Krishna and Joachim Oesterheld, Education and Social Change in South Asia (Orient Longman, 2007), pg.130.

²Kumar, Krishna, Political Agenda of Education: A study of colonialist and nationalist ideas (Sage first ed 1991, second ed 2005), pg.25

³ Rudolph, Susanne Hoeber and Lloyd. I. Rudolph eds, Education and Politics in India : Studies in Organization, Society and Policy (OUP, 1972), pg.3

Government Resolution on Education Policy (1913), Sadler University Commission (1917-19), Hartog Committee (1929) Sargeant Plan of Education (1944) , just to name a few. In all of these overtures, the focus was using education to develop a pool of resource for the good of the British government.

In post independent India, under the chairmanship of **S. Radhakrishnan**, the Government of India appointed **University Education Commission** in 1948. “Interestingly the Directive Principles of State Policy incorporated in the constitution included “providing free and compulsory education for all children upto 14 years of age.”⁴A **Secondary Education Commission** was appointed in 1952 under the chairmanship of A. L. Mudaliar, which submitted its report in 1953. Development of July 1968 is another milestone when the **First National Policy on Education** emerged in July 1968, under the leadership of D.S.Kothari. The **New National Education Policy** of May 1968 emphasized the feature of inclusivity in the Indian educational framework. The revised **Programme of Action 1992**, emphasized the commitment to the universalization of elementary education. August 2005 is an important year for the field of higher education as a **National Knowledge Commission** was appointed with Sam Pitroda as the chairman. The focus of this commission was expansion of higher education. The **Yashpal Committee** was chaired by Prof. Yashpal and its report was submitted in 2009. The **National Policy on Education** was framed in 1986 and reworked in 1992 and it demanded a review in the policies present as times had changed drastically. The next milestone worth talking about was the **Subramanian Committee’s** report which was submitted in 2016, and talked about the need for a good and high performing education system. In June 2017, an eight-member committee, under the headship of K.Kasturirangan drafted a new education policy. It wanted to draft an education policy which could pass the test of the ever and fast-changing times. The Kasturirangan Committee submitted the ‘**Draft Education Policy, 2019.**’ Finally, on 29th July, 2020, was rolled out the **New Education Policy 2020**. Higher education was high on the priority list of these commissions. According to the NEP, 2020, the vision that was carried forward was to say that the “ Policy on Higher Education would have to be driven by four E’s- Expansion, Equity, Excellence and Employability ”⁵

What this detailed discussion around the milestone developments that have happened in the purview of education shows is the simple fact that education has been high on the agenda of the government and the state, as education is a domain which can hardly be ignored by any government. It is in this background that we would start a detailed discussion of the **Undergraduate Curriculum Framework 2022** based on the National Education Policy 2020, to understand the nitty-gritties of the policy, as also what it means as a reflection of the state vis-à-vis the domain of undergraduate education.

The National Education Policy 2020 has been visualized as a tool to harness human potential in the best possible ways in order to develop a human resource which is adept to face the fast changing dynamic times. What this education aims at is lifelong learning, awareness of the new areas of knowledge, multidisciplinary, holistic approach to education, strengthening of the moral values of the students, comprehensive understanding of our cultural ethos, amalgamation of the moral, cultural and the scientific temperament of the stakeholders.

This article intends to discuss the Undergraduate Curriculum Framework 2022 of the University of Delhi, in order to understand what National Education Policy 2020 intends to visualize as higher education and the vision of the Government to impart holistic education at the level of the undergraduate. This framework tries to chart out the road ahead for the state of higher education, keeping the historical perspective in mind. Keeping in mind the diversity as contained in the Indian society, the policy intends to restructure and refine its undergraduate curriculum considering the

⁴Basu, D.D, The constitution of India 11th edition, 1985, pp. 137-46 in Narendra Jadhav : Future of the Indian education system : How relevant is the National Education Policy 2020 (Conark, New Delhi 2020), pg.4

⁵Jadhav, Narendra : Future of the Indian education system : How relevant is the National Education Policy 2020 (Conark, New Delhi 2020), pg. 16

contemporary realities of India's demographic backdrop at one level, and the demands of contemporary world at the other.

The basis of the Undergraduate Curriculum Framework is introducing an array of courses which fall under three categories – Discipline Specific Core Courses (DSCs), Discipline Specific Electives (DSEs) and General Electives (GEs). In case a student opts for DSEs beyond his/her discipline specific courses of study, such DSEs shall be treated as GEs for that student. Discipline Specific courses are courses which need to be studied as a mandatory requirement of a student's programme of study. Discipline specific electives are a pool of credit courses of that particular discipline, which the student chooses from his/her particular discipline (s). General Electives are a pool of courses which are introduced in the curriculum to provide multidisciplinary or interdisciplinarity to students. This is a pool of courses offered by various disciplines of study (excluding the GEs offered by the parent discipline) in groups in odd and even semesters, from which a student can choose.

Apart from these, the curriculum also includes teaching of Ability Enhancement Course (AEC), Skill Enhancement Course (SEC) and Value Addition Course (VAC). AEC courses are the courses based upon the content that leads to knowledge enhancement through various areas of study. They are Language and Literature and Environmental Science and Sustainable Development which will be mandatory for all disciplines. In an age where skills are pivotal in imparting people a place under the sun, Skill Enhancement Courses are skill - based courses in all disciplines aimed at providing hands-on approach and competencies to students. Every discipline would offer skill- based courses which may be offered to students of its discipline as also for students of all other disciplines. Value education has been an intrinsic part of our education system from times immemorial. VAC are common pool of courses offered by different disciplines and the aim of such courses is to build personalities, embedding ethical, cultural and constitutional values, encouraging critical thinking, balancing Indian knowledge systems with scientific temperament, as also giving impetus to sports and physical education.

Some other points which need to be emphasized are that students have been granted unprecedented flexibility to determine their focus of study, as also multiple entry re-entry and exit points, a choice they would exercise from time to time. The earning and accumulation of credits in the Academic Bank of Credit make them eligible to acquire appropriate Certificate/ Diploma/ Degree as per norms laid down by the University. This, in some senses, is an attempt to make learning a lifelong process. Multilingualism is one of the high points of the programme. A mandatory programme on research methodologies as one of the DSE courses at the VI and VII semester has been introduced for students who opt for writing dissertation on major/minor at VII and VIII semesters. This clause has been kept in mind because research is a specialized skill which goes a long way to reach national development. Inter as well as intra university mobility of students is another element of central importance which has been ingrained in the NEP, 2020. Students are evaluated around two parameters, throughout the year. He/she has to write an external examination at the end of every semester, but also has internal as well as continuous evaluation.

As a concept which rehauls the educational structure of higher education in India, the NEP 2020 has tried to offer multiple options to the stake holders. But if we analyze the system in absolute details, one realizes that there are practical bottlenecks in the implementation of the policy. Catering to thousands of students of various economic strata, multiplicity of options offer innumerable challenges, both for the students as well as the university administration. Also, there are challenges faced in the opening up of multiple options for the student, e.g, for some papers it is said that if a particular option is not offered in his/her specific college, the student can attend classes for that paper in any other college. But the issue which comes up in this is that in a place like Delhi, where distance is a tangible issue, how can the student reach another college and not miss adjacent classes in his/her own college. Add to this, the issue of continuous assessment which entails not missing classes unless absolutely imperative, and one would very well realize the handicaps of offering options, at the practical level.

All in all, one can say that the spirit associated with NEP 2020 is that of holistic development of the student. Maybe there are practical constraints which is a struggle at the time of actual implementation, but that should not obliterate the remarkable vision attached to the NEP 2020. At a

time and age when the literary and vocational need to develop side by side, National Education Policy 2020 comes as an answer to many unsaid questions. It is rightly said that “education, or acquisition of worthwhile knowledge, lies at the heart of the social reproductive process as well as the material productive process, and as such is one of the most precious and contested terrains of social life.”⁶

⁶Kumar, Nita, Lessons from Schools- The History of Education in Banaras (Sage, 2000), pg 30
