



Short Review Paper

Reforms in the Education System to Achieve the Atmanirbhar Bharat Mission

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Abstract

Atmanirbhar Bharat is not a new concept. Indian freedom fighters under British rule used this concept to fight against British policies, and they used the term Swadeshi instead of Atmanirbhar Bharat. Both concepts are almost similar, and the main objective behind it is to prepare India to become self-reliant in the future. Therefore, the Government of India is initiating several policies and programmes for self-reliance in all dimensions of functioning, such as economic, social, environmental, political, cultural, and educational. The educational sector is very basic and important sector because education plays a vital role in the development of the country. Therefore, to achieve the Atmanirbhar Mission through education, India has made several reformative changes and introduced the New Education Policy 2020. The National Education Policy 2020 (NEP) has different views as compared to the old education policies and aims to enhance learning beyond extended. It is Encouraging students to leverage their real-world experiences, excellence in higher education, experiential learning through the development of professional skills, quantitative thinking, and promoting research and innovation. This paper is based on secondary data, and its main objective is to shed light on the major reforms in the education system undertaken to achieve the Atmanirbhar Bharat Mission.

Keywords: Indian Education System, Reforms, and Atmanirbhar Bharat.

Introduction

The slogan "Vocal for Local" symbolizes the concept of self-reliance and self-sufficiency; for this purpose, India is giving great importance to domestic products, so that self-reliance can be built in the future, and this concept is making India a global brand in the world economy. In this way, National Education Policy 2020 has also been included, NEP, 2020 aims to create a self-reliant nation by promoting an education system rooted in Indian ethics so that students can choose courses and programmes that suit their interest, passion, and expertise and transform India into an equitable and vibrant knowledge society, thereby becoming a global knowledge superpower¹. This policy covers humanistic, ethical, constitutional, and universal values such as truth, righteous behavior, peace, love, nonviolence, scientific temper, citizenship values, and life skills. It also includes lessons on seva/service, and participation in community service programmes.

The Union Cabinet approved the policy in July 2020 to enhance quality, affordability, equity, access, and accountability in education. The drafting committee undertook extensive efforts to develop a policy that takes into account state and local governments, professional opinions, international best practices in education, practical knowledge, and stakeholder participation. The goal is high, but how it is carried out will indicate whether

it really encourages an inclusive education that prepares students for the profession.

A Glimpse of Indian Education Systems

The Gurukul system of Indian education involved students living at the Guru's place, learning and acquiring skills and practices that were later applied to real-life problems²⁻⁴. Knowledge acquisition was dynamic, involving interaction with real-world events and the natural world. The Guru spread knowledge across various fields, including religion, literature, spirituality, medicine, astrology, warfare, statecraft, history, and public affairs. The quality of education was unparalleled, and students from around the world visited India to acquire knowledge. Indian history shares a rich heritage with the world, such as Nalanda, Taxila, and Vikramshila, each of which stood out in their era as world-class universities.

In the 18th century, the British and colonialism systematically dismantled this ancient Indian education system, aiming to create a subservient native class and promote British education in India. This led to the introduction of English education in 1835, which intervened in the Indian education system. Since its independence, India has had three different education policies: The National Education Policy was introduced in 1968 with objectives such as employability, national growth, integration, universalization, and moral values.

The second policy, implemented in 1986, aimed to reduce inequalities in education opportunities, promote continuous learning, specialization, and standardization in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), and the third policy is the New Education Policy 2020⁴⁻⁶.

Highlights of the New Education Policy 2020

The National Education Policy 2020 transforms the educational system, from schools to higher institutions, by emphasizing skilling with theory and expanding the educational structure with the goal of a more specialized and multidisciplinary 5+3+3+4 structure, focusing on foundational, preparatory, middle, and secondary stages⁷. One Nation, One Education addresses social and economic equality in the educational system. On this view, Mr. Atwal's statement highlights the importance of addressing discrimination at an early stage and the need for a unified education system, If we really need to battle and root out discrimination, then it ought to begin in schools. We have such a lot of forums, why ought we to have so many forums in the first place, "Let this country have a single board, which will monitor education from a very early stage"⁸.

It is also addressing the expansion of online education. NEP-2020 emphasizes the importance of interdisciplinary education and experiential learning, which can help students develop a holistic understanding of real-world problems and prepare them for the future workforce. With its focus on innovation, research, and entrepreneurship, it helps students improve their skills and build a perfect-professional personality to make India a developed, digital, and self-reliant country⁹ and has the potential to transform India's education system and contribute to its overall socio-economic development.

An important modification made is that the introduction of HECI is expected to bring about significant changes in the regulation and accreditation of higher education institutions in India, modifications excluding medical and legal education and the amendment also allows foreign universities and colleges to enter India. The inclusion of foreign universities and colleges is likely to lead to increased competition and collaboration, ultimately benefiting students with a wider range of educational opportunities. This move will not only attract foreign students but also encourage Indian students to stay in the country for their higher education, contributing to the growth of the domestic economy.

Moreover, collaborations between Indian and foreign universities can lead to research and innovation that can benefit both countries. The NEP 2020 proposes the National Testing Agency as a premier, expert, single testing board for entrance exams like JEE, NEET, and NET. The move aims to bring transparency and standardization to the selection process and reduce the burden on students who have to appear for multiple exams¹⁰.

Atmanirbhar Bharat through the New Education Policy 2020

The 'Make in India' programme in India focuses on sectors like aeronautics, automobiles, and biotechnology and generates employment through foreign direct investment and research and development. The National Education Policy 2020 and National Research Foundation are trying to make Indian education institutions centers of excellence, provide skills, integrate technology, and develop research curricula. The policy includes inclusion of socially and economically disadvantaged groups, the Gender Inclusion Fund, special education zones, innovation, access, equality, quality, affordability, universal access, registration, and accountability. These holistic, flexible, and multidisciplinary policies align with UNESCO's "21st Century Skills" and "Knowledge Society" declarations¹¹. This policy will also encourage international collaboration and partnerships in education, leading to a more diverse and globally competitive workforce. The demographic dividend is believed to be utilized through instilling skills and creating employability through education, which is the need of the hour¹².

India is one of the youngest nations in the world. It is also considered the next big economic power, as 62 percent of the population falls between the age group of 18-35 years. With the implementation of the New Education Policy 2020, India can create a self-reliant education system that will cater to the needs of its youth and equip them with the skills and knowledge required for the future job market. Though the Central Government has envisioned transforming India into a 5-trillion-dollar economy and a Global Economic powerhouse by 2024-25, in order to make this vision a reality, educational institutes must become vibrant and implement contemporary approaches to academics and research. Also in terms of market size, as India is fast emerging as a market with a large scale of expansion and even more potential globally.

Various reports by the International Monetary Fund and other agencies have stated that India is emerging as the World's third-largest consumer market. Hence, the educational institutes need to produce job creators instead of job seekers, as mandated by the NEP-2020. If it is to realise all these potentials, the education sector must unlock and expand. There must be equitable growth, and emphasis must be placed on inclusive growth and employability skills for the future workforce. Promotion of excellence in higher educational institutes and creating benchmarks in research and innovation need to be taken up on a priority basis, as suggested by the NEP-2020. Educational institutes need to impart the best possible skills and offer training to students so as to create future leaders in their respective fields. In higher education, internationalizing quality assessment policies can create knowledge-based economies, citizens, and countries, providing sustainable employment opportunities and world-class living standards¹³.

In the Global Innovation Index 2020 and report realized by The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), India ranks 48th under Lower Middle Income Economies on the GII's most innovative countries. India's rank in the GII was 81 six years ago, and NRF can improve the status of the Indian Institute of Technology Bombay, IIT Delhi, the Indian Institute of Science Bengaluru, and other institutions in terms of innovation¹⁴. According to another global study, Indian e-Commerce businesses are estimated to reach a massive size of 120 Billion Dollars by 2025. This is the most happening sector in Commerce.

The e-commerce area is throwing open employment opportunities in good numbers in our country. E-commerce is witnessing massive expansion, and people are buying food, groceries, medicines, electronic gadgets, clothes, even vegetables, and everything else through e-Commerce. This is set to witness even greater mass growth in the days to come. In order to revive the country's glory as the hub of international education, the NEP-2020 proposes greater autonomy and flexibility and emphasizes vocational, skill-based, and practical-oriented learning. As our country is witnessing unprecedented all-round development in many sectors, the world is looking at India for its talent pool of youth.

The development of every country is dependent on research, innovation, and the expertise it offers in various fields. Now is the time for universities to leverage NEP-2020 to encourage young researchers to invent patents that offer greater opportunities at the global level. In academia, professional bodies and research need to work together to promote research, development, and innovation that will benefit society as a whole.

By fostering a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship, the government established the National Research Foundation (NRF) as an independent body under the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. The NRF will fund, mentor, and improve research standards in India¹⁵. It can take care of funding, mentoring, and building the standard of research in India. It is essential that Atmanirbhar Bharat is based on how the country promotes science, technology, meets its own requirements in various sectors, reduces dependence on other countries, and thereby saves huge import bills. For that reason, the NEP-2020 has laid a greater focus on research and innovation to encourage indigenous technologies and come up with indigenous solutions to our needs¹⁶. Now its Universities turn to play a crucial role in shaping the future of their countries and contributing to the global knowledge economy and innovation.

Conclusion

The NEP 2020 policy is a progressive document that addresses socio-economic topography and future uncertainty. It aims to continuously improve the educational system by focusing on

developing professionals in various fields, from agriculture to Artificial Intelligence. India needs to be prepared for the future, fostering Atmanirbharta, where students discover their passions, overcome weaknesses, tap into their full potential, and contribute positively to society, focusing on equity and inclusion. This forward-looking and futuristic move may prepare students for new challenges in the future.

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