Higher Education Reform in India : Issues and Challenges

Dr. Dnyanoba Jotiram Kande

Assistant Professor and HOD, Jijamata Mahavidyalaya Buldhana, Dist- Buldhana-443001, Maharashtra, India

I. INTRODUCTION

Higher education system existing in India today was originally introduced by the British government in mid of 19th century to serve the colonial economic, political and administrative interests, and in particular, to consolidate and maintain their dominance in the country. After 1947, state managers has expanded and inherited this system during the last five decades. India comprises 214 (198 state and 16 central) universities, 38 'deemed-to-be universities,' 11 national institutes, 9,703 colleges, and 887 polytechnics. The system has given the employment to 321,000 teachers and caters to 6,755,000 students. India has produced professionals which are of great demand throughout the world. India is top ten countries in its industrial and technological capacity, due to its substantial share of work force and tools provided by higher education, especially, technical education. Higher education renders specified knowledge and skilled persons for the development of nation. The Education Commission 1964-66 described the role of education in social and economic transformation through a statement the density of a nation is shaped in its class rooms. Education creates human capital which is the core of economic progress and assumes that the externalities generated by human capital are the source of self sustaining economic process.

II. EMERGING ISSUES

The role of higher education in the emerging scenario of knowledge economy is very crucial for any nation like India. The basic problems faced by higher education system in India are Lower level of teaching quality, Financing of higher education, More concentrated on theories and rather than practical knowledge, Traditional methods of teaching, Privatization, Inadequate facilities and infrastructure Quota system.

1. **Quality Universities and Colleges**: Recognizing the problems which are currently prevailing in the higher education system in India, which inter alia include poor employability of educated workforce, severely fragmented higher educational ecosystem, poor learning outcome and development of cognitive skills of students, rigid separation of disciplines with too much early specialization and streaming of students into narrow areas, NEP 2020 intends to completely overhaul and re-energize the higher education system in India. NEP 2020 envisions to introduce certain key changes to the higher education system, which inter alia include:

a. moving towards a higher educational system consisting of large, multi-disciplinary universities and colleges, with at least one in or near every district;

b. moving towards a more multidisciplinary undergraduate education;

c. moving towards faculty and institutional autonomy;

d. re-vamping curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and student support for enhanced student experiences;

e. establishment of a National Research Foundation to fund outstanding peer-reviewed research and to actively seed research in universities and colleges;

f. governance of higher education institutions by highly qualified independent boards having academic and administrative autonomy; and

g. increased access, equity, and inclusion through a range of measures, including open schooling, online education and Open Distance Learning, keeping in view the needs of learners with disabilities and substantial increases in scholarships at private/philanthropic universities for disadvantaged and underprivileged students.

2. **Institutional Restructuring and Consolidation**: NEP 2020 intends to end the fragmentation of higher education by transforming higher education institutions into large multidisciplinary universities and colleges, each of which will aim to have 3,000 or more students. The idea is to build vibrant communities of scholars and peers, break down harmful silos, enable students to become well-rounded across disciplines (including artistic, creative and analytic subjects as well as sports), develop active research communities across disciplines (including cross-disciplinary approach) and increase resource efficiency, both material and human across higher education. The higher education system is thus proposed to have multidisciplinary institutions of higher learning that offer undergraduate and graduate programmes, with high quality teaching, research, and community engagement. All higher education institutions will move towards becoming large multidisciplinary institutions with programmes across disciplines and fields, offered either in their institutions or through higher education institutions clusters. The vision is to have all higher education institutions (existing as well as new) to evolve into research-intensive universities, teaching universities and autonomous degree granting colleges. In addition to teaching and research, all higher education institutions shall also have other crucial responsibilities which they will discharge through appropriate resourcing and structures. These include supporting other higher education institutes in their development, community engagement and service, contribution to various fields of practice, faculty development for the higher education system and support to school education system.

3. **Shift Towards Holistic Education with less Rote Learning**: NEP 2020 advocates for promotion of holistic arts education to ensure well rounded development of students. It is thus proposed that multidisciplinary universities and colleges will facilitate the move towards high-quality arts education with flexibility in curriculum and engaging course options being developed and offered to the students. Pedagogy for these courses will strive for significantly less rote learning and an increased emphasis on communication, discussion, debate, research, and opportunities for cross-disciplinary and interdisciplinary thinking. Departments in Languages, Literature, Music, Philosophy, Ideology, Art, Dance, Theatre, Education, Mathematics, Statistics, Pure and Applied Sciences, Sociology, Economics, Sports and other such subjects needed for a multidisciplinary, stimulating Indian education and environment will be established and strengthened at higher education institutions across the country. Furthermore, to ensure that students

actively engage with the practical side of their learning and improve their employability options, as part of holistic education, students will also be provided with opportunities for internships with local industry, businesses, artists, crafts persons, villages and local communities, etc., as well as research internships with faculty and researchers at their own or other higher education institutions or research-institutions.

4. **Internationalization**: NEP 2020 focuses on promoting India as a global study destination providing premium education at affordable costs. It is thus intended that high performing Indian universities will be encouraged to set up campuses in other countries and similarly select universities will be permitted to operate in India. A legislative framework shall be formulated and introduced facilitating the entry of foreign universities in India, and such universities will be given special dispensation regarding regulatory, governance and content norms on par with other autonomous institutions within India. Additionally, research collaboration and students exchange programmes between the Indian institutions and global institutions will be promoted and the credits acquired in foreign universities will also be permitted to be counted for award of degree.

5. **Teacher Education**: Recognizing the importance of creating a team of teachers that will shape the next generation, NEP 2020 lays equal emphasis on revamping teacher education as well. To reach the levels of integrity and credibility required to restore the prestige of teaching profession, the regulatory system is empowered to phase out substandard and dysfunctional teacher education institutions that do not meet basic educational criteria. The teacher education needs to be conducted within composite multidisciplinary institutions having departments of psychology, philosophy, sociology, neuroscience, Indian languages, arts, history, and literature as well as various other specialized subjects such as science, mathematics, etc. Furthermore, by 2030, the 4-year integrated B. Ed offered by multi-disciplinary higher education institutions is proposed to be made as the minimal degree qualification for school teachers. The said 4-year integrated B. Ed. will be a dual major holistic Bachelor's degree, in education as well as a specialized subject (such as a language, history, music, mathematics, computer science, chemistry, economics, etc.). For the purposes of maintaining uniform acceptable standards of education, the admission to pre-service teacher programmes shall be through a single nation-wide entrance examination to be conducted by the National Testing Agency, which test may contain both subject and aptitude tests.

6. **Professional Education**: NEP 2020 envisages that professional education will become an integral part of the overall higher education and thus it must also significantly involve critical and interdisciplinary thinking and research. Thus, the practice of setting up stand-alone technical universities, health science universities, legal and agricultural universities or institutions in these fields shall be discouraged and all existing stand-alone professional education institutions will have to become multi-disciplinary institutions by 2030, either by opening new departments or by operating in clusters. The professional education standards, viz. technical, health and legal education are also proposed to be restructured to ensure that the education standards are globally competitive and adapt to the challenges evolving with time.

7. **Promoting High Quality Research**: Recognizing the importance of knowledge creation and research in growing and sustaining a large and vibrant economy and uplifting the society, NEP 2020 focuses on a

comprehensive approach for transforming the quality and quantity of research in India. Thus, to focus on research and promote research culture in all higher education institutions in an interrelated and coordinated fashion, NEP 2020 provides for setting up of a National Research Foundation (**NRF**) which would bring a quantum jump in funding and support for research. The overarching goal of NRF shall be to enable a culture of research to permeate through universities and higher education institutions across India. In this regard, NRF shall inter alia provide a reliable base of merit-based peer-reviewed research funding, helping to develop a culture of research in the country through suitable incentives for and recognition of outstanding research. NRF shall also competitively fund research in all disciplines across the academic landscape viz. science, technology, social sciences, arts, and humanities.

8. **Transforming Regulatory System of Higher Education**: Presently, the mechanistic and disempowering nature of the regulatory system has been rife with very basic problems, such as heavy concentrations of power within a few bodies, conflicts of interest among these bodies and a resulting lack of accountability. Furthermore, India also has some of the toughest requirements in the world for setting up higher education institutions, which requirements are largely input-centric, focusing on land and space norms, endowment funds and their sources, etc. To address the currently prevailing issues in the higher education system within India, NEP 2020 mandates for setting-up of a common regulatory regime for the entire educations sector, eliminating duplication and disjunction of regulatory efforts. A single regulator, the National Higher Education Regulatory Authority (**NHERA**) will be set up to regulate in a 'light but tight' and facilitative manner. Few importance matters viz. financial probity, good governance and full online and offline public disclosure of all finances, procedures, faculty/staff, courses, educational outcomes will be very effectively regulated. Separately, a new General Education Council (**GEC**) shall also be set up to frame expected learning outcomes for higher education programmes, also referred to a 'graduate attributes'. A National Higher Education Qualification Framework (**NHEQF**) will be formulated by the GEC and it shall be in sync with the National Skills Qualifications Framework. Higher Education Grants Commission (**HEGC**) will be created which will take care of funding and financing of higher education based on transparent criteria including the IDPs prepared by the institutions and the progress made in the implementation of the IDPs. HEGC will be entrusted with disbursement of scholarships and on developmental funds for starting new focus areas and expanding quality programme offerings in HEIs across disciplines and fields.In terms of NEP 2020, the fundamental design principles of an effective regulatory system will thus be:
   a.   a clear separation of functions to enable adequate focus on each essential role while eliminating conflicts of interest;
   b.   a single, empowered, responsive, but minimalistic regulatory authority to ensure basic regulatory requirements, such as financial probity and full public disclosure of finances, procedures, course and programme offerings, and educational outcomes, while otherwise empowering institutions to make their own decisions for the pursuit of excellence;
   c.   accreditation through the establishment of independent high-quality accrediting bodies, overseen by a meta-accreditor, as the basis of regulation; and
   d.   each body in the regulatory system run by Independent Boards consisting of persons having high expertise in the relevant areas along with integrity, commitment, and a demonstrated track record of public service.

III. EMERGING CHALLENGES

Higher education system of India is the second largest in the world which caters the education to lakhs of students of various sections of the society. Today our country faces many problems concerning to poverty unemployment and reducing moral and spiritual values. Countrywide problems and challenges emerged in Higher Education system which has been faced by the India in the last few decades are talked over as below: A. Our heterogeneous education system Different geographical, economic and living conditions impose big challenge to the educational institutions. Varieties of institutions, colleges and universities produce different type and quality of education. A few are doing good and provide qualitative education but a few others are just killing on the time and quality of education. B. Interference of political factors Political system play a key role in the governing bodies of the Institutions/universities imparting education. They interfere by establishing youth cells and motivates the students politically. This exploits the energy of students and deviates them from their main objectives. Moreover students try to develop their career in politics. C. Economic Difficulties Most of the students are related to the ordinary classes; who are unable to arrange minimum requisites of life for themselves. They cannot afford educational expenses. They do part time work to pay the fee and therefore their efforts are divided between job and studies. Almost seventy five percent of the student community is facing the financial troubles today. D. Lack of Moral values Younger generation's dissatisfaction, eagerness to adopt shortcuts to achieve more in lesser time are the consequence of a decaying system of values. Moreover, the industrialization, and speedy emergence of science and technology is causing a great risk to our traditional moral and values

IV. CONCLUSIONS

- Higher education in India is facing big challenges, which need to faced by effective policy making and its execution.
- Reforms in Higher education are in general seen as substantial threats to specific, social powerful groups.
- Politics is the outcome and changes are not enforced frequently. The government attempted to work out difficult social and political problems through policy relating to higher education.
- Higher education for any country is a most important component and it is looped in the socio-political systems of the society. It is the demand of an hour and is most important. Realistic perceptions needed to be understood and considered for effectively plan for reforms and improvements.

V. REFERENCES

[1]. Mishra Sharda, (2006). UGC and Higher Education System in India. Book Enclare, Jaipur.302006.
[2]. Padhi, S.K. (2011), 'Issues, Challenges and Reforms in Higher Education for a Knowledge Society,
[3]. Higher Education in India: Issues, Concerns and New Directions http://www.ugc.ac.in/pub/heindia.pdf
[4]. All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) (2019). Report of the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), Department of Higher Education, Government of India, New Delhi.
[5]. Agarwal R et al. Higher Education and Quality Improvement: A challenge for India. Indian Journal of Applied Research 2014; 4(10).