

Hurdles in Transforming HEIs into Multidisciplinary Institutions

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ABSTRACT

The NEP 2020 is set to bring about bold reforms in India's traditional system of education. Present era is the digital era. A student to be adept at his area of education must be aware of and be able to use all relevant technology in the field as well as possess knowledge of other fields as well. They must possess multiple skills not only technical but human and social skills to excel.

I. INTRODUCTION

Our current education system is flawed. There is a huge gap between what is taught in colleges as against what is required for working in the world. The NEP 2020 aims at bringing an entirely new approach to both teaching and learning. The aim of education is creating an individual who can take a holistic of the situation, think logically and take informed decisions in dynamic environment.

NEP 2020 – What is proposed

The NEP202 will transform the nation educationally and economically. The curriculum will be designed so as to meet global standards, Skill imparting through adequate training thus enhancing employability, Use technology for teaching and learning and Capacity building of faculty will be its agenda.

According to the guidelines issued by the UGC to enable transformation of HEIs into multidisciplinary institutions, higher education in India, India consists of domain specific stand alone colleges and universities with rigid disciplinary boundaries. Hence the chance to explore interdisciplinary line of studies is left unexplored.

The proposed way to remove fragmentation and enable HEIs to take advantage of economies of scale and optimum utilization of resources, is transform HEIs into multidisciplinary universities, colleges and clusters and knowledge hubs. HEIs henceforth will be either

1. Teaching-intensive Universities (TUs)
2. Research-intensive Universities (RUs) and
3. Degree-awarding multidisciplinary

The multidisciplinary TUs and RUs will be universities with more than 3000 students. It is expected that, by 2035, the affiliated colleges will become degree-awarding multidisciplinary ACs or units of universities.

Approach to achieve the objective - there will be

1. Academic collaboration between institutions through HEIs cluster leading to multidisciplinary education and research in different modes
2. Merger of single-stream institutions with multidisciplinary institutions under the same or different management.
3. Addition of new departments such as Languages, Literature, Music Philosophy, Indology, Art, Dance , Theatre, Education, Maths, Statistics, Pure and Applied Sciences, Sociology, Economics, Sports, Translation and Interpretation and so on is proposed.

II. REQUIREMENTS OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY HEIS

The HEIs are expected to create awareness among students about various paths to learning, career opportunities and register in ABC Academic Bank of Credits to adopt online courses and offer courses with strong interdisciplinary flavor.

For creating mobility between partnering institutions, the National e-Governance Division(NeGD)of the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has developed the ABC platform under a Digilocker framework.

Online and ODL mode of education- with the ambitious target of 50% GER by 2035 higher education needs to be imparted in multiple ways. Online learning is one of the way. Online courses recognized by UGC and those on the SWAYAM portal are ideal to enable multidisciplinary education. Initiatives such as Annual Refresher Programme in Teaching (ARPIT) and Leadership for Academicians Programme (LEAP) are proposed for additional capacity-building for teachers.

HEIs shall need appropriate educational infrastructure in terms of books and journals, study material, audio visual facilities, e resources, virtual classrooms, and studios and specifically high bandwidth internet connectivity to deliver courses through various modes such as Open and Distance Learning, Online education and face to face.

III. THE HURDLES

1. Flexible curriculum- Except for technical, agricultural and health science universities all our universities are multidisciplinary. But education is not multidisciplinary because programs are not multidisciplinary because the curriculum is not flexible.
2. Correct implementation of schemes- Even in the past schemes have been introduced with good intention, but we have failed in the implementation of these schemes, and ideal example would be the CBCS scheme where practical nothing changed except we are evaluating students in grades rather than marks
3. Problems of virtual learning- virtual learning can be very disruptive considering the fact that students have not been exposed to a virtual environment before, lack of discipline which comes with the presence of a teacher in the class, immediate problem solving , Lack of basic computer knowledge, lack of adequate hardware and software, lack of continuous internet connection, excess screen time, lack of motivation, lack of personal touch are problems most likely to be faced by students.
4. Infrastructure inadequacy- The HEIs are expected to have appropriate educational infrastructure in terms of books and journals, study material, audio visual facilities, e resources, virtual classrooms, and studios and

specifically high bandwidth internet connectivity to deliver courses through various modes lack of resources is a permanent problem of HEIs. Will they be in a position to provide all this given their shoe string budgets?

5. Lack of trained faculty- Providing programs through distance and online learning mode also requires appointing and training adequately skilled faculty who can deliver on the essentials of digital teaching and learning. The faculty needs to be trained at the use of technology, audio and video recording and learning. The HEI must give the faculty the required hardware and software. Hiring of such a faculty and providing him material aging requires resources. Even if HEIs collaborate and form a cluster who will provide the resources for interdisciplinary distance and online programs.
6. What will be the criteria for collaboration of colleges? Which colleges will collaborate. In India where we have a number of small colleges each with a private management, will collaboration of institutions with different management be a piece of cake?. The management wields control over the employees of the college, who will control after clusters? All questions loom large and things are easier said than done.
7. The number of colleges in India stood at 42,343 in FY20. As of August 23, 2022, the number of universities in India stood at 1,057. India had 38.5 million students enrolled in higher education in 2019-20, with Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in Indian higher education was 27.1%.
8. The huge size of the higher education sector makes the task of bringing transformation at the root level is a huge task. Stakeholders are involved right from the block, district, state and central level. Sharing responsibility is essential also considering the size and fund availability in plenty, partnership with private institutions must also be thought of.
9. People at senior places in the education system and the decision makers, stakeholders, and students all will need time and a different attitude to adopt a new system of teaching and learning. The younger generation will adapt but how are the older people who have been in the system for long periods react to the change
10. Emphasis on training and skill development as against only theory, emphasis on problem solving and critical thinking, online education, changes to curriculum to increase employability is on the agenda of NEP 2020 which is going to change completely the system of teaching and learning.
11. Statistics show that 70% of higher education institutions are run by the private sector. 65-70 percent students are enrolled in these institutions. Also the private sector has no dearth of funds therefore if they are recognized as equal partners their funds, infrastructure and manpower can be harnessed
12. Execution of NEP 2020 needs public spending on education at 6% of GDP which currently stands at not more than 3%. The education budget in 2021-22 was reduced by 6 percent from INR 99,311 crore in 2020-21 to INR 93,224 crore. While this is understandable given the government's priorities are divided in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic and economic distress that large sections of populations are facing, there is no clear roadmap yet how such enormous sums of financial resources can be augmented.

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