



HOLISTIC AND MULTIDISCIPLINARY EDUCATION: RESTRUCTURING OF HIGHER EDUCATION OF INDIA IN THE FRAME OF NEP 2020

Namita Behera

Lecturer in Education, Pattamundai College, Pattamundai
beheranami18@gmail.com

Subhrajyotshna Biswal

Ph. D. Scholar, P. G. Department of Education, Rama Devi women's University, Bhubaneswar
biswalsubhrajyotshna@gmail.com

Dr. Ashok Kumar Digal

Assistant Professor of Education, P.G.Department of Education, Rama Devi Women's University
Vidya Vihar Bhubaneswar Odisha India, ashokkumardigal2020@gmail.com

Abstract

In the realm of education, the concept of individual differences highlights the uniqueness of each student, emphasizing the need for holistic education that caters to the diverse talents, competencies, and aspirations of learners. This paper delves into the notion of multidisciplinary education as a means to nurture the holistic development of individuals, acknowledging their multiple intelligences and potentials. Drawing inspiration from the rich traditions of ancient educational institutions like Takshila and Nalanda, the paper explores the emergence of multidisciplinary education in the 21st century, driven by the demand for diverse skill sets in an ever-evolving global landscape. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 in India serves as a catalyst for restructuring higher education towards a multidisciplinary approach, aiming to foster critical thinking, adaptability, and problem-solving skills essential for navigating complex societal challenges. Key provisions of the NEP, such as the implementation of Multiple Entry and Multiple Exit (MEME) systems and emphasis on lifelong learning, are discussed as transformative measures to enhance access, flexibility, and inclusivity in higher education. It also discusses about the Internationalization of higher education and the Common entrance examination for making education more globalization and making the assessment process biased free. Through an examination of multidisciplinary education and its implications for the future, this paper advocates for a paradigm shift towards an education system that nurtures the holistic development of individuals and equips them with the multifaceted skills needed to thrive in the 21st century.

Introduction

India as the land of culture and literature, with its ancient heritage - Nalanda, Takshashila, Vikramshila, Vallabhi like world-class Institute had set the aim of education is not just the acquisition of knowledge as preparation for life in this world, or life beyond schooling; but for the complete realisation and liberalisation of the self. These higher education center had been knowing for the legacies i.e., holistic and multidisciplinary approach to education. Gradually with the

passage of time, the opportunity in higher education institute became narrow and pointed to specialization in particular subject only. But in this 21st century, the world with a traffic of scientific and technological advancements, called for a resource person with multiple capacities. By doing 34 years of rigorous research and analysis, the government realised that our future generations can meet the 21st century Sustainable skills if we reboot our higher education with our ancient legacy ' holistic and multidisciplinary approach'.

With the foundation pillars of Access, Equity, Quality, Affordability and Accountabilit; this draft form new policy aims to transfer India into a vibrant knowledge society and Global knowledge superpower by making education more holistic, flexible and multidisciplinary.

Important Features of NEP 2020:

Keeping an eye on the alarm for higher education, for the first time this new policy has introduced few structures which was or may be a imaginative theme for the generation X to Gen-Z. But with this new policy students in higher education are going to experience a holistic, flexible and pragmatic educational environment. Few of these features are,

- The NEP 2020 will promote holistic education that covers a wide range of subjects, academic, non-academic and vocational.
- Emphasis on promoting multilingualism, Indian Knowledge system and value education.
- The NEP 2020 aims to integrate vocational and technical education into the school curriculum starting from class-6.
- Increasing GER in higher education to 50% by 2035.
- Holistic and multidisciplinary education with multiple entry and exit options.
- The NEP 2020 emphasis on regular teacher training placing quality assurance mechanism to ensure the quality of teaching.
- The NEP 2020 promotes the use of modern technology to faciliy learning, such as Virtual classroom, online collaboration tools and interactive digital learning platform.
- The NEP 2020 encourages the use of experiential learning methods such as field trips, project-based.

Important highlights of NEP-2020 for higher education:

- ★ A singular regulatory body, the Higher Education Commission of India (HECI), will oversee and regulate higher education institutions (HEIs).
- ★ The current accreditation bodies, such as NAAC and NAB, will be replaced by a robust National Accreditation Council (NAC).
- ★ The establishment of a National Research Foundation (NRF) to provide funding for research in universities and colleges.
- ★ Fragmented HEIs will be consolidated into two types: Multidisciplinary Universities (MU) and Multidisciplinary Autonomous Colleges (AC), with campuses having over 3,000

students. The transition to multidisciplinary status must occur by 2030, with campuses growing to over 3,000 students by 2040.

- ★ Multidisciplinary Universities will be categorized as either Research-intensive or Teaching-intensive.
- ★ Existing colleges will either become degree-granting autonomous colleges or be integrated as Constituent Colleges of Universities.
- ★ The Gross Enrolment Ratio in HE, including Vocational education, will be increased to 50% by 2035.
- ★ HEIs delivering high-quality education will receive incentives from the government.
- ★ Affiliated colleges will evolve into autonomous degree-granting institutions with mentoring support from affiliated universities, meeting prescribed accreditation standards.
- ★ The nomenclature of HEIs will be simplified to 'University' upon meeting specified criteria.
- ★ Research will be integrated into undergraduate and postgraduate education, emphasizing multidisciplinary approaches.
- ★ Pedagogy will prioritize communication, discussion, debate, research, and interdisciplinary thinking.
- ★ An Academic Bank of Credit (ABC) will digitally store academic credits earned from recognized HEIs, facilitating degree awards based on accumulated credits.
- ★ Degree programs will include a four-year Bachelor's degree with multiple exit options, one to two-year Master's degrees, and Ph.D. opportunities for four-year Bachelor's degree holders.
- ★ Postgraduate education will offer two-year Master's degrees with full research, one-year Master's degrees for four-year Bachelor's degree holders, and five-year integrated Bachelor's/Master's degrees.
- ★ HEIs will establish start-up incubation centers, technology development centers, interdisciplinary research centers, and industry-academic linkage centers to promote research and innovation.
- ★ Student-centered teaching and learning approaches will replace teacher-centered models.
- ★ A Competency Based Credit System will replace the Choice Based Credit System.
- ★ The examination system will transition from high-stakes examinations to continuous and comprehensive evaluation.
- ★ HEIs will provide professional academic and career counseling services to support students' well-being.
- ★ HEIs will encourage and support student-led clubs and activities in various areas, including science, mathematics, poetry, language, literature, debate, music, and sports.
- ★ Online Distance Learning courses will be integrated into degree programs with a 40:30:30 ratio model.
- ★ HE quality will be enhanced to attract more international students, with credits earned abroad counting towards degree awards.

- ★ The National Scholarship Portal will be expanded to assist merit-based students, and private HEIs will be encouraged to offer scholarships to their students.

Holistic approach of NEP 2020:

In educational Psychology, a well-known term is ' Individual Difference' with a concept of each child is unique. Giving respect to this concept holistic education also focus on ' Whole child Education', means each student has potentialities to discover their unique pathway. Holistic education, according to the Holistic Education Network 2003, is a comprehensive journey where students and teachers learn and evolve together, aiming for intellectual, creative, emotional, and physical growth. It fosters an environment where learning extends across various disciplines, allowing for open discussions on cultural, political, social, and moral aspects of life. Miller (2000, 2012) further defines it as a philosophy rooted in the belief that individuals find purpose and connection through community, nature, and humanitarian values like compassion and peace. While the concept gained prominence in North America by the philosophers like Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Rudolf Steiner during the 1960s or 1970s, its origins can be traced back to ancient Indian centers of learning such as Takshila, Nalanda, and Vikramshila, where students were exposed to a wide range of knowledge. However, over time, education became more specialized, neglecting the holistic approach. Recognizing the need for individuals with diverse skills, the NEP 2020 seeks to revive holistic education in higher education by promoting multidisciplinary learning and nurturing life skills such as critical thinking, adaptability, problem-solving, and effective communication.

Multidisciplinary Education:

★ Soul behind Multidisciplinary Education-

After making entry in to the higher education the students have also the opportunity to nurture their natural nature. This Multidisciplinary education is come from the fact that human beings are created with multiple intelligence, competencies, talents and aspirations. So, it is not just the intelligence that matters but there could be multiple talents that children are blessed with and where the education system Should act as an enabler for them to actualise those potentialities. So, the Multidisciplinary undergraduate program is the key reform towards the holistic development of the individual. This content is not new one. Because if we see in past the aim of education was not just to acquisition of knowledge but for complete realisation and liberalisation of the self. World class Institutions of ancient India such as, Takshila, Nalanda, Vikramshila are the examples. They have set the highest in standards of multidisciplinary education, teaching, research and hosted scholars from diverse backgrounds and countries.

★ Emergence of Multidisciplinary Education in 21st century -

This Multidisciplinary is also a demand of to meet the 21st century skill. The growing emergence of epidemics and Pandemics will also call for collaborative research in infectious disease management and development of vaccine invite multidisciplinary

knowledge. Multidisciplinary is a way of learning which gives focus on diverse perspective of different disciplines. The world is undergoing rapid changes in the knowledge landscape. With various scientific and technological advances such as the rise of big data, Machine learning, Artificial Intelligence and Robotics, it is expected that many unskilled jobs may be taken over by the machine. On the other hand, the need of skilled workforce, particularly having knowledge of mathematics, computer science and data science blended with multidisciplinary abilities across the discipline such as science, social science and humanities will be increasingly in great demand. With climate change, increasing pollution and reducing natural resources, there will be a huge shift in how we meet the world's energy, water, food and sanitation needs. This will result in the need of new skilled resources particularly in biology, chemistry, physics, agriculture, climate science and social science.

★ **Provisions for Multidisciplinary Education in NEP 2020-**

After a depth analysis upon past history and present scenario, this new policy has made a target of restructuring at least one major multidisciplinary Institute in every district by 2030 or thereafter. Under this theme all the technical institute across the country including IITs will adopt holistic approach. Around 80 units of its subjects will be taught in this technical institute. Basically, there will be no division like Arts, Science or Commerce. Students will be able to choose any subject of their choice. Higher education commission of India will be formed for all higher education except Medical, which will replace UGC and will create multidisciplinary education and research universities of the status of IIT and IIM. These institutions will be of world class.

★ **An Example of how provisions can be implemented in Institutions -**

This is the structure develop by AICTE to revise the model curriculum of engineering courses which have 160 credits for 4 years degree program. The 160 credits have been divided in to 7 baskets. Apart from core courses the basket give freedom to the students to select courses from the diverse disciplines.

Professional core courses	59%
Professional elective courses relevant to chosen specialisation/Branch	
Engineering science courses including workshop and drawing	
Humanities and social sciences including Management course, Arts crafts, music, dance etc.	41%
Open subjects- Elective from other technical and /or emerging subjects	
Project works, Seminar and internship in industry or elsewhere.	

Universities and colleges have flexibility to change it as per their expertise and the local needs. But such type of structure gives flexibility to offer course from diverse backgrounds.

Incase if the faculty or course of interest of students are not available in the Institution, then Institution may be allowed to do it online. Also, provision of minor degree can be started. Suppose

a student of undergraduate in Mechanical engineering is doing 18 to 20 extra credits in Music or in robotics, he or she may be awarded undergraduate degree in mechanical with minor in music or robotics. Another example is like this, if a student is doing undergraduate in Physics as core courses and have an interest in Philosophy or Psychology then he can get the minor degree in Philosophy or Psychology. So multidisciplinary education gives an opportunity to students to explore experiment and apply his or her interest.

Internationalization of higher education:

The Indian government's objective is to establish world-class educational institutions and attract a significant number of international students. A new law is set to facilitate the operation of the top 100 foreign universities in India. These universities will receive special dispensation regarding regulatory, governance, and content norms, aligning them with other autonomous institutions in India. Additionally, courses completed in foreign universities will be recognized and considered equivalent in India. Collaboration between Indian and foreign universities for educational and research purposes will be allowed without constraints.

MEME (Multiple Entry and Multiple Exit) and Lifelong learning:

According to the All-India Survey on higher education 2018-19, the GER is only 26.3. New policy has set a target to reach the gross enrollment ratio of 50% in higher education by 2035. Actually, the gross enrollment ratio is the total number of students at any educational level who have enrolled in educational institution. For example, if the population of alumni in the age group eligible to enroll in higher education is 100; but only 7 students have enrolled. If one student has taken admission then this ratio will be called as percentage. So, to increase this ratio in higher education, it has been said to add 3.5 crore new seats. Through multidisciplinary education, NEP 2020 has offers multiple entry and exit point for creating a possibility of lifelong learning and also to increase this GER.

This multiple entry and exit have lots of options and will be very beneficial for those students who leave their studies midway due to some reason. So, let's know the exact concept of MEME in details.

The first one is certificate per cost of the year. For example, in a four-year undergraduate course if a student wants to leave in the middle, then her one year will not be wasted. If it is a four-year undergraduate course then one year is the cost to get a leaving certificate, after two years a diploma, an intermediate certificate after three years and a complete degree after four years. This will provide great relief to the engineering students as she/he will be awarded a diploma if they leave the engineering course within two years. So, their labour and duration will not be wasted.

Now the second facility under MEME is that, the student can join in another course in the midway of her course. The scenario is like this, if they want to leave a course midway and take admission in another course then they can take a break from the first course for a specific period of time and the second post will be made.

The third concept is the ABC (Academic Bank Credit). Here if you leave the study/course in midway due to above two any reason and after a few years if you take admission in the previous one, then the certificate or diploma of previous course will be given importance in snake house. This is called Credit transfer. There will be an Academic Bank of Credit to keep the marks or credits obtained from different higher educational institutions in digital form. So, degree can be awarded to students on the basis of their performance in different Institutions. So, there will be no need to fail the students.

Lastly, there is also provision for three years degree course. This will be for those students who do not want to take higher education and do not want to go in to research. Those students who wants to do research will have to do four years degree. After this they will be able to do PhD by doing only one year master degree. A National Research Foundation will be setup as apex body to promote a strong research culture and capacity. It aims to enable research culture through universities.

Common entrance examination:

According to the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), there are 65 different education boards empowered to deliver high-quality education nationally and within states. Each of these Indian school boards possesses autonomous decision-making authority concerning education within their respective geographical jurisdictions. The list as below,

School Board	Abbreviation	Description
Central Board of Secondary Education	CBSE	National board under the Union Government of India; follows a common curriculum, enabling students to move across states easily.
Indian Certificate of Secondary Education or Council for Indian School Certificate Examinations (CISCE)	ICSE	Non-governmental board that conducts exams for Grade 10 (ICSE) and Grade 12 (ISC); known for its comprehensive curriculum.
State Boards	Vary by State	Each Indian state has its own board of education (e.g., Maharashtra State Board, Tamil Nadu State Board), responsible for regulating education within that state.
Open School Boards	Vary by State	Provide flexible and open education to students up to pre-degree level; an alternative for

		those who cannot attend regular schools.
International Baccalaureate	IB	Globally recognised curriculum with an international perspective; offers programs for students aged 3 to 19.

In India, there are primarily three national boards overseeing education: the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), the Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations (CISCE), and the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS). Additionally, various international boards like Cambridge Assessment International Education (CAIE) and the International Baccalaureate (IB) are integrated into the Indian education system. Each of these boards holds autonomous authority to regulate education within their respective regions. However, the varying curriculum and assessment methods of these boards often pose challenges for students transitioning to higher education. For example, Delhi University (DU) used to admit students based on their Class 12 marks, where the Jamia Millia Islamia (JMI) and the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) used to have separate entrance tests for admissions to undergraduate courses. So, if the career mark is the ticket to get entry in to the course, then no doubt the high scores one will be selected. So, in this example we can see that one is providing admission by trusting the career marks without even realising that all of the candidates are not coming from same school board and same evaluation pattern. But the two other universities providing an equal chance of getting entry by providing the career mark as secondary option. The same case is also observed during the admission in to the post-graduation as the evaluation pattern is not same for autonomous and normal degree colleges. So,realising all of these factors the National Education Policy (NEP 2020) propose a national level entrance examination in all national level general higher education institutions, and it has also been envisioned that in future all state level and private institutions will adopt it. Though this exam will not be compulsory and will be similar to the Standardised Aptitude Test of USA for admissions to universities. The establishment of the NTA signifies its role as a leading, proficient, independent testing body responsible for administering entrance exams for both undergraduate and graduate admissions, as well as fellowships in higher education institutions. Through the implementation of a unified aptitude test and subject-specific assessments, the NTA aims to provide scores utilized by various universities and colleges for admission into their undergraduate and postgraduate programs. This initiative benefits students, universities, and colleges alike by streamlining the application process and alleviating the burden of multiple entrance exams for students, as well as the logistical challenges for institutions. Conducted biannually, these exams prioritize higher scores for admission consideration and may be utilized by all state-level public and private institutions. This standardized entrance exam approach mirrors existing practices in technical and professional courses such as NEET, JEE, CAT, CLAT, and GEAT, offering equal opportunities for entry based on test performance rather than

solely on academic marks. Consequently, it aims to diminish the significance of board exams and reduce reliance on coaching classes.

Single regulatory body for uniformity standard in higher education:

As per the views of numerous education experts, establishing a single overarching body has always been seen as necessary to ensure consistent educational standards. The NEP 2020 proposes the creation of the Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) to fulfill this need, focusing on higher education while excluding medical and legal education. HECI is envisioned to consist of four distinct entities: the National Higher Education Regulatory Council (NHERC) for regulation, the General Education Council (GEC) for standard-setting, the Higher Education Grants Council (HEGC) for funding, and the National Accreditation Council (NAC) for accreditation. However, it's important to note that HECI won't possess any financial authority. Instead, funding responsibilities, previously managed by the University Grants Commission (UGC), will now fall under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education (MoE), formerly known as the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD).

Conclusion

The reformation in education system of any country is done with the goal to make sure its youth is future ready. This National Education Policy 2020 is the first education policy of the 21st century and aims to address the many growing developmental imperatives of our country. Building upon India's traditions and value systems, this policy proposes the revision and revamping of all aspects of the education structure, including its regulation and governance, to create a new system that is aligned with the aspirational goals of 21st century education. With Special reference to higher education this policy basically focus on holistic and multidisciplinary approach to provide a experiential and lifelong learning platform. So, everyone's eyes are fixed on how the new picture will be as compared to the previous one. Where Experts are pointing towards many flaws, criticism has also started on many points. Still all of us have lots of positive hope with these changes.

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Web Resources

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