



Issues and challenges in effective implementation of NEP, 2020 with special reference to Tinsukia District, Assam, India

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Abstract

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has been approved by the Union Cabinet of India on 29th July, 2020 with an aim to universalization of education from pre-school to secondary level with 100% gross enrolment ratio in school education by 2030. The objective of NEP is to make India a global knowledge super power and to make all colleges and universities multidisciplinary by 2040. This paper makes a modest attempt to find out whether these objectives be implemented equally throughout the country specially a state like Assam or the district like Tinsukia that is situated in extreme north east part of India and lack of some basic facilities. Though the Govt. of Assam proposed for establishing a medical college in the district or a sports university in nearby district but the population diversity and the number of Govt. schools and higher educational institution is not up to the mark. Hence the study will find out the challenges to be faced while implementing the NEP in this district and how to overcome these or whether the NEP will meet the expectations of the people in near future. The basic information will be gathered from National Information centre and various articles to write this paper. The conclusion of the paper will be drawn with the help of descriptive and analytical method.

Keywords: National Education Policy, multidisciplinary, higher education, National Information centre

1. Introduction

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has been approved by the Union Cabinet of India on 29th July, 2020 with the aim of universalization of education from pre-school to secondary level with 100% Gross Enrolment Ratio in school education by 2030. Through the open schooling system, the NEP 2020 will bring 2 crores out of school children back into the mainstream. The objective of NEP is to make India a knowledge global superpower and proposes that all universities and colleges aim to be multidisciplinary by 2040. The basic purpose is to boost the employment in the country and to change the basic educational scenario of India. The vision of NEP is to transforming our nation sustainably into an equitable and vibrant knowledge society by providing high-quality education to all. The provisions of NEP aim to bring certain changes in the areas like language policy, school education, higher education and technical education. But there lies a vast difference between formulation a policy and its proper implementation.

Since independence, a number of programmes have been launched in education sector with the aim

to universalize basic education. In 1993-94, the district primary education programme was launched with an aim of achieving the objective of universal primary education. This programme covered 272 districts in 18 states of the country in a several phases which was funded jointly by central and state Govt. in 85% and 15% respectively along with support from UNICEF, WORLD BANK etc. This programme had an impact in spreading education among minority children but very little among girls child. Thus, in 2001, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan was launched to educate all children of age group 6-14 years. SSA (Education for all) is an Indian Government programme aimed at the universalization of Elementary education "in a time bound manner", the 86th Amendment to the Constitution of India making free and compulsory education to children between the ages of 6 to 14 (estimated to be 206 million children in 2001) a fundamental right (Article- 21A). The programme was pioneered by former Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee. It aims to educate all children between the ages 6 to 14 by 2010. This programme is also an attempt to provide an opportunity for improving human capabilities

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to all children through provision of community -owned quality education in a mission mode. It is a response to the demand for quality basic education all over the country. SSA acquired the necessary legal force to implement with the passage of passing The Right to Education Act in 2010. The Govt. of Assam along with other states initiated a number of programmes under SSA. As a result, majority children in tribal areas and backward areas started to attend primary schools. The school education in Assam got more benefits by the system of 'Gunotsav' introduced by the Govt. of Assam since 2016. During implementation of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, the total enrolment in elementary schools has risen from 18.79 crore children in 2009-10 to 19.67 crore children in 2015-16. As per UDISE 2015-16, Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) is 99.21% for primary and 92.81% for upper primary level. The surveys conducted in various levels observed that there is gradual improvement of standard of education and knowledge among the children in primary and elementary level is better in Assam in comparing to National average. Even though the system is not equally accessible to all and hence SSA has not yet achieved the target it fixed at the time of implementation. At this juncture, the NEP, 2020 has been passed with a view to universalize the whole education system from pre-primary to higher education with an objective to 100% gross enrolment by 2030. The possible challenges of NEP, 2020 for implementation are as follow:

First, the size and diversity of India's education sector makes implementation a challenging task. India is the second largest education system in the world. According to a report of AISHE, 2019, India's higher education sector consists of 3.74 crore students in nearly 1,000 universities, 39,931 colleges, and 10,725 stand-alone institutions. Thus, a countrywide implementation of this mega education policy is a difficult task. It is much more difficult for the interior parts of the country.

In case of Tinsukia District of Assam as per 2011 census report, the total population of children upto 6 years of age is 1,81,826 and the number of schools 1600 (approx.). In Tinsukia urban area, there are 93 educational institutions including private schools and the population of urban area (0-6 yrs) is 13,333. The average ratio of school and children is 1:130. But practically some schools are overcrowded and some are lacking students. In private schools, change of faculties every now and then is a great problem for smooth education for the children. On the other hand, the infrastructure

of many Govt. schools is not up to the mark. In rural areas, children go to schools mainly for midday meal and learn little. In urban area, the caste, culture and language of children vary. This scenario becomes a challenge for implementation of NEP. In case of higher education, the district has only 12 degree college out of that 9 are provincialized and from 2020, two model colleges have been established. There is no engineering or medical college in this area. The number of high/higher secondary school is also not sufficient.

Secondly, to introduce experimental learning and critical thinking in school education is a difficult task as the teachers need to be trained in this system. To change the traditional teaching-learning system, a huge fund is required to arrange training for the staff of the institutions but Indian education sector is underfunded. The 50 hours of mandatory training of each teacher (as proposed by state education minister) is impracticable. This means that thousands of schools and colleges would need capacity building and reorientation with regards to the operational aspects of implementing a mega programme with many experiential goals. In short, the existing organisational structure of the ministry and its ecosystems will have to undergo a massive redecoration. While it is heartening that the NEP document has laid out a comprehensive roadmap for reorienting the existing regulatory system, and the education ministry is in the process of bringing out a legislation that would facilitate the setting up of a Higher Education Commission of India (in the place of existing regulatory bodies, mainly the UGC, AICTE, and National Council for Teachers Education), one has to wait for the new institutional architecture emerging out of legislative initiatives.

Third challenge for implementing NEP by 2023 in this region is the shortage of teachers. In many rural areas, there is only one teacher and one head master who are running five classes simultaneously. The proper teacher –student ratio is needed for perfect education to be imparted to children. The NEP states 1:25 for socio-economic disadvantaged children. In Tinsukia, more than half population is socio-economically backward and a large number of students are first generation learners.

Fourthly, the role of the private institutions, particularly in dealing with the higher education system, is extremely critical for interpreting the inclusionary vision of the NEP. It may be noted that as much as 70% of higher education institutions

(colleges and universities) are run by the private sector. Significantly, roughly 65%-70% students are currently enrolled in private higher education institutions. This apart, the private sector brings much needed financial resources and innovation. Therefore, it is imperative for the government and regulatory bodies to create workable institutional mechanisms that would harness the contribution of the private sector and recognise them as equal partner in the NEP process. But the scenario of Tinsukia is quite different from rest of India. This area has few private higher educational institutions and no technical institute neither any medical college. Thus, the aspirant students are deprived of getting admitted in engineering or medical colleges.

Finally, the successful execution of key initiatives requires availability of adequate financial resources for decades. In this regard, the NEP has stated that to realise the goals of the new policy, the country has to raise public spending on education to 6% of GDP. As per the Economic survey presented by the Finance Minister in parliament, the expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP was 2.8% in 2019-20, 3.1% in 2020-2021, and 3.1% in 2021-22. To meet the 6% of the GDP criteria, the education budget for 2022-23 should have been almost double that of the last year but the Govt. has failed to increase the GDP expenditure in education.

The Govt. of Assam has announced the implementation of NEP from April, 2022 and according to this policy, the high schools of Assam will be upgraded to senior secondary schools from the 1st of April, 2022. But in my knowledge, no school in this area is working for up gradation. At the same time, along with infrastructure, the schools must have faculties to teach the students in 5+3+3 pattern.

There would be an overall reformation of the curriculum and pedagogy for all levels to make sure that students undergo cognitive development and also are inculcated with all relevant skills. In Assam, a committee has been constituted to suggest a roadmap for the implementation of NEP, 2020. The committee consists of Vice chancellors of some universities and academicians who have suggested few recommendations for implementation of NEP. The restructuring in administrative level has started and it has been decided to constitute four departments and two directorates to look after school education.

2. Conclusion

NEP, 2020 has lot of new avenues. It aims to address pedagogical issues, structural inequities, widening of access apart from making the learners future ready while meeting the demands of a 21st century India. Simultaneously, the NEP has the most challenging task of addressing multiple crises in the education system. The NEP is well-suited to bolstering our education system and transforming India into a global education hub. NEP 2020 has as its main tenets: flexibility, so that learners can choose their learning paths; equal promotion of arts, sciences, physical education and other extra-curricular activities so that learners can pick whatever tempers their interests; multi-disciplinary approach across the sciences, social sciences. The successful implementation of any new scheme depends on cooperation from each section and stakeholders. It is also necessary to have cooperation between centre and states irrespective of political differences to adjust ourselves with international education scenario. Lastly, the willingness of mass people, parents, teachers and students may enable its successful implementation.

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