



TRANSFORMATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN NORTH EAST INDIA IN THE LIGHT OF NEP 2020: A THEORETICAL ANALYSIS OF PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

Education

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ABSTRACT

The National Education Policy 2020 focuses on making Indian higher education more inclusive, multidisciplinary, skills-based, and research-oriented. The prospects and challenges of transforming higher education in Northeast India are particularly important in the context of this policy shift. The main objective of this research paper is to theoretically analyze the potential transformation, problems, and opportunities of higher education in Northeast India in the light of NEP 2020. The study is primarily based on qualitative, descriptive, and analytical methods and carried out with secondary data. Studies have shown that the inclusion of multidisciplinary education, digital education, research and innovation, skills development, vocational education and local knowledge can make higher education in the region more relevant. However, infrastructure limitations, digital disparities, lack of teacher human resources, and geographical challenges appear to be significant barriers to implementation. Coordinated planning, appropriate resources, and local needs-based strategies can facilitate the successful implementation of the National Education Policy 2020.

KEYWORDS

Nep 2020, Northeast India, Higher Education, Transformation Of Education, Problems And Possibilities.

INTRODUCTION

The National Education Policy 2020 is an important policy initiative to make India's education system more inclusive, flexible, skills-based, and knowledge-based. The policy focuses on multidisciplinary education, research and innovation, vocational education, use of digital technologies, skills development and recognition of local knowledge, especially in higher education. Geographical diversity, cultural pluralism, tribal societies, linguistic characteristics, and different socio-economic conditions characterize the higher education environment in North East India. Implementing NEP 2020 policies in this region can create new opportunities for quality in higher education, research, skills development, and the preservation of local knowledge. However, various challenges such as infrastructure limitations, digital disparities, shortage of teachers and human resources, economic problems, and geographical distance also exist. Therefore, this research paper attempts to theoretically analyze the problems and possibilities of the potential transformation of higher education in North East India in the light of the National Education Policy 2020.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objectives of this research paper are:

1. Analyze the objectives, policies and key features of NEP 2020 in the field of higher education in North East India.
2. Identify the major issues and challenges faced in higher education in North East India as a result of the implementation of NEP 2020.
3. Analyze the prospects of NEP 2020 in the fields of quality of higher education, multidisciplinary education, research, skills development, and digital education.
4. To theoretically assess potential strategies for building a more inclusive, quality, skills-based, research-oriented, and self-reliant higher education system in North East India.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- a. How can the objectives and features of NEP 2020 impact the transformation of higher education in North East India?
- b. What are the major issues and challenges faced by higher education institutions in implementing NEP 2020 in North East India?
- c. What are the prospects for improvement of quality, inclusion, research, skills development and digital education in higher education in North East India through NEP 2020?

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The literature of several researchers has been reviewed in line with the present research paper.

Gogoi (2021) highlights the potential for quality improvement and

inclusion in higher education in North East India in the context of NEP 2020.

Hazarika and Dutta (2021) analyze digital education, use of technology and infrastructure needs in higher education in the North East.

Barman (2022) discusses the aspects of NEP 2020 on multidisciplinary education, skills development and research-oriented higher education.

Deka (2023) reviews the prospects and challenges of implementing NEP 2020 in higher education institutions in Assam.

Relevance to the Present Study: The above mentioned literature strengthens the theoretical basis of the current research. *Gogoi's* discussion of quality improvement and inclusion, *Hazarika and Dutta's* digital education, *Barman's* multidisciplinary and skills development, and *Deka's* discussion of implementation issues and prospects have directly contributed to the analysis of the transformation of higher education in North East India.

METHODOLOGY

This research article is mainly qualitative and theoretical in nature. The study uses library methods and content analysis methods. Data are collected from NEP 2020, Government Reports on Higher Education in North East India, Policy Documents, Research Papers, Books, Journals, and other published sources. The data collected are analyzed, and the problems, challenges, prospects, inclusion, quality improvement, and future development aspects of higher education transformation in the light of the National Education Policy 2020 are theoretically explained.

DIMENSIONS OF ANALYSIS

In accordance with the objectives of this research paper, the principal analytical dimensions are delineated herein.

Objectives, Policies and Key Features of NEP 2020 for Higher Education in North East India:

The National Education Policy 2020 aims to make Indian higher education more qualitative, holistic, inclusive, flexible, skills-based and research-oriented. In the case of higher education in North East India, this policy creates opportunities to link local needs, languages, cultures, tribal knowledge, and regional diversity with education. One of the main goals of the policy is to increase access to higher education, ensure equity, improve quality and promote multidisciplinary education. NEP 2020 focuses on multidisciplinary education, academic flexibility, and multiple entry-exit systems, integration of skills and vocational education, digital education, research and innovation, development of teacher education, and autonomy of higher education institutions. Educational opportunities can be expanded in remote and underdeveloped areas of the North East through the use of digital technology, local resources, and knowledge.

NEP 2020 thus provides a potential framework for making higher education in the North East knowledge-based, skill-oriented, inclusive and regional development-oriented.

Major Issues and Challenges faced in Higher Education in North East India as a result of the Implementation of NEP 2020:

Higher education in North East India is facing various geographical, infrastructural, financial, and administrative issues and challenges in the implementation of the National Education Policy 2020.

Poor Infrastructure of Higher Educational Institutions: Many higher education institutions have inadequate modern classrooms, laboratories, libraries, dormitories, and research facilities. As a result, it is difficult to introduce new teaching methods effectively.

Digital Divide: Limited access to fast internet, computers, and other digital tools in rural, border and mountainous areas hampers the expansion of online, and technology-based learning.

Teacher shortage and Lack of Proper Training: Many institutions do not have enough subjectively qualified teachers. Also, regular teacher training is required for the use of new teaching methods and technologies in accordance with the NEP 2020.

Financial Resource Constraints: Multidisciplinary education, research, digital infrastructure, and skills development require substantial investment. Limited funding can slow the transformation process of small firms.

Multidisciplinary Education Challenges: Adequate teachers, curricula, laboratories and administrative systems are needed to create opportunities to study different subjects together; In many institutions, this facility is still limited.

Integration of local Languages, Cultures and Knowledge: Integrating tribal languages, folk cultures and traditional knowledge in a consistent manner with the national education framework is an important challenge.

Research and Innovation Limitations: Lack of research funding, modern laboratories, data-driven and inter-institutional collaboration may hinder local problem-focused high-quality research.

Administrative and Technological Readiness: Institutions need to enhance their administrative and technological capabilities for implementing the Academic Bank of Credits, credit transfers, flexible curriculum, and new assessment systems.

Regional Disparities and Inclusion Problems: There are disparities in educational opportunities and resources between urban and remote areas, developed and underdeveloped institutions, and different social groups.

Therefore, National Education Policy 2020 requires regional planning, adequate funding, teacher development, digital connectivity and policies sensitive to local needs to make it a success.

Indian higher education system is one of the largest in the world in terms of number of institutions, students and teachers. Any system with a huge network operating in a diverse social, economic and cultural setting is bound to face numerous issues and challenges; the same is the case with Indian higher education.' (Hazarika, R.C. 2016, p.67).

Prospects of NEP 2020 in the fields of Quality of Higher Education:

The National Education Policy 2020 provides a transformative framework for improving the quality of higher education in India by promoting multidisciplinary, learner-centred, research-oriented, skill-based, and innovation-driven learning. Flexible subject choices, qualified teachers, professional development, and improved teacher training can enhance teaching quality. The policy's emphasis on research and innovation, including the National Research Foundation, can strengthen institutional research. Digital education, online learning and technology can expand access and flexibility, while vocational education, value-based learning, interdisciplinary studies and local knowledge can increase educational relevance. Thus, effective and equitable implementation of NEP 2020 can promote quality, equity, research, innovation, and skill development in higher education.

Potential Strategies for building a more Inclusive, Quality, Skills-based, Research-oriented and Self-reliant Higher Education System in North East India:

The social, cultural, economic, and geographical diversity of the region needs to be integrated into education policy to build a more inclusive and quality higher education system in North East India.

First, local knowledge, culture and language should be incorporated into the curriculum by introducing multidisciplinary and learner-centred education in higher education institutions.

Secondly, more emphasis should be placed on vocational education, technical skills, entrepreneurship and digital skills to improve the employability of learners.

Third, collaboration between universities, colleges, industry and local communities should be enhanced to create practical learning opportunities.

Research-oriented higher education requires improved research infrastructure, digital libraries, research funding and strengthening of inter-university collaboration. Local problem-based research can be encouraged, focusing on biodiversity, traditional knowledge, agriculture, handicrafts, and natural resources of the North East.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The main findings of the current research paper are the potential for quality improvement, development of skills-based education, research and innovation opportunities, integration of local knowledge and culture, challenges in implementation, and potential for self-reliant higher education, etc.

- The National Education Policy 2020 has great potential to improve the quality of higher education in the North East with its emphasis on multidisciplinary education, learner-centered learning, teacher development and research.
- Emphasis on vocational education, skill development, entrepreneurship and practical education can enhance the employability and self-reliance of learners.
- The research-oriented approach of the National Education Policy 2020 can create new research and innovation opportunities focusing on local issues, natural resources, biodiversity and traditional knowledge of the North East.
- Integrating local languages, cultures, traditional knowledge and tribal knowledge with higher education can make education more relevant, inclusive and region-based.
- Poor infrastructure, digital divide, lack of adequate resources, teacher shortages, geographical inaccessibility and disparities among institutions may hamper the successful implementation of the National Education Policy 2020.
- There is potential to build a knowledge-based, innovation-oriented, and self-reliant higher education system in North East India by combining local resources, knowledge, skills, technology, and entrepreneurship with education.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, a theoretical analysis of the problems and prospects shows that the National Education Policy 2020 carries considerable potential to make higher education in the North East more qualitative, inclusive, multidisciplinary, skills-based and research-oriented. The right integration of local knowledge, culture, language, natural resources and digital technologies can make education more relevant. However, lack of infrastructure, digital inequality, teacher shortage, economic constraints, and geographical inaccessibility are major challenges to implementation. Therefore, it is essential to implement NEP 2020 effectively through local needs-based planning, adequate investment, teacher development, research, and institutional collaboration.

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