



National Education Policy 2020 and Privatisation of Higher Education in India

Srishri Mittal

Researcher, India

Research Question

How does the National Education Policy 2020 promotes a model of Privatisation in Higher Education?

Literature Review

Saumen Chattopadhyay's "An Uncertain Future for Indian Higher Education" examines the issues and probable future of the Indian higher education system. Inadequate money, poor facilities, and a scarcity of qualified teachers are among the challenges highlighted in the research. It also analyses the influence of higher education privatization and commercialization, which has resulted in inequities in accessibility and affordability. To solve these difficulties, the author suggests that the Indian government raise money and invest in upgrading infrastructure and faculty development. The study concludes that resolving these concerns is critical to ensuring that the Indian higher education system can satisfy the demands of an expanding economy while providing excellent education to all students.

Introduction

The key to economic progress is a rise in educational opportunities and an improvement in the quality of education provided to the labour force. An evaluation of education's role in economic development must evaluate not just its impact on output growth but also its impact on the structure and pattern of economic development, as well as income distribution and poverty reduction. (Cooray, Role of Education in Economic Growth , 2008).The state has the constitutional duty to guarantee equitable access to education for all its citizens. As a result, the government may provide affordable education for all its residents through its policies and the execution of pro-people legislation. It is critical to assess India's spending capacity on higher education reforms as a study of the original mix of public subsidies and non-government funds for education in a society that represents the government's economic policies, traditions, and social policies. Throughout the years, the Indian higher education system has been subjected to various changes and obstacles. The phenomenal increase in student enrolment in the millions has been due to a rise in the number of institutions of higher learning, both public and private. Privatization has expanded exponentially with the expanding needs of a growing middle class and India's move towards a more neoliberal form of governance and economy. This was witnessed after India embraced LPG policies, opening up the economy and eroding the state's control over the whole education sector. The government enacted rules that permitted private universities to be formed and international institutions to establish campuses in India, even though many pro-privatization researchers say that the presence of private institutions alongside public institutions improves its effectiveness.

Nonetheless, the privatization dilemma worsens as the country's debt economy develops.

Most of the institutions were developed by the private sector to fulfill the needs of the young population by providing suitable employment opportunities. Government-supported institutions still need to rise to the new challenges the private sector poses. Education has become a commodity that can be bought and sold for money due to the privatization of higher education in India.

National Education Policy 2020

Education policy is any systematic action to improve educational practice at all levels. Systematic refers to a procedure in which methods and resources are employed to attain specified goals. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is a comprehensive framework for educational development in India that intends to alter the current educational system to suit the changing demands of the 21st century "The National Education Policy 2020 was released on July 30, 2020. The Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) constituted a Committee to draft the National Education Policy (Chair: Dr. K. Kasturirangan) in June 2017. The Committee submitted a draft NEP for public consultation in May 2019. The NEP will replace the National Policy on Education, 1986." (Research P. L., 2020). The National Education Policy 2020 announces far-reaching reforms to restructure, reorient, and re-energise India's higher education system by 2040. It mainly focuses on the holistic development of students by ensuring access, relevance, equity, quality, and

robust foundational learning. The policy provides several benefits to stakeholders in the education system. It intends to create curricular synergies from early childhood care and education to school and higher education. The policy's primary focus is on improving the quality of learning outcomes. Another priority area is implementing assessment changes, a long-awaited shift. Above all, NEP 2020 is projected to put India on track to meet the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development goals by increasing lifelong learning opportunities for all during the next decade. The emphasis is on providing a flexible curriculum through an interdisciplinary approach, enabling various departure points in a four-year undergraduate degree, catalyzing research, boosting faculty support, and promoting internationalization. However, the 65-page study advises actions that may have irrevocable implications in the education sector and our country's more comprehensive socio-political reality. The policy advocated foreign direct investment in higher education and initiated the idea of a private universities bill. It heralds the new era that eventually saw the emergence and prevalence of capitalism in education. Former HRD minister and senior Congress leader Shashi Tharoor welcomed it. However, they feared it might make education unaffordable for the poor as it showcases a tendency towards "centralization, high aspiration, and low feasibility." The policy aims to convert public universities into departments of government. This might foster a market-oriented, privatized educational system in which education stays out of reach for marginalized segments of society. We are witnessing a significant shift from the educational structure that emerged under governments from Nehru to Manmohan Singh.

Aspects of the NEP 2020 that will promote the privatization of India's education sector

Public-Private Partnership Model (PPP) - Several private institutions have created processes and infrastructure to provide high-quality education. Nevertheless, private education is unaffordable for the underprivileged. This void opens the door for public-private partnerships (PPPs) emphasizing execution, cost-effectiveness, innovation, and accountability. However, critics argue that this paradigm might lead to school privatization and the exclusion of economically disadvantaged segments of society from a decent education. Private players may be given a more significant role in school and college administration, and the establishment of privately owned and government-funded schools and universities may be encouraged. These institutions may have greater control over their fees, entrance procedures, and curriculum, leading to increased privatization. The PPP model may lead to the formation of elite educational institutions that cater to a specific demographic or socioeconomic class, excluding students from underprivileged backgrounds. Private education system participants may prioritize profit over quality education, resulting in an enormous disparity between high-quality, expensive private education and low-quality, underfunded public education.

Choice-Based Credit System: There is a need to allow flexibility in the education system so that students depending upon their interests, can choose interdisciplinary,

intra-disciplinary, and skill-based courses. The choice-based credit system not only offers opportunities and avenues to learn core subjects but also explores additional

avenues of learning beyond the core subjects for the holistic development of an individual. While the CBCS gives universities and colleges more flexibility and autonomy in establishing their curriculum, it is up to the individual institutions to determine whether to incorporate private players in the process. If universities collaborate with private actors to develop and deliver elective courses, private firms may have more control over the curriculum and educational results. This might lead to school privatization, as private players may be more interested in generating profits than assuring excellent education for all pupils. It ignores the extreme lack of facilities and professors at publicly funded universities and compels students to move to encourage their movement to private institutions.

Autonomy of Higher Education Institutions: The ability of higher education institutions to make choices freely without influence from other bodies, such as the government, is referred to as their autonomy. Autonomous institutions may have greater control over their finances and financing sources and prefer to rely on private funding rather than government assistance. This might lead to privatizing higher education, as private funding typically comes with stipulations outside the public's best interests. It might prioritize market-oriented courses and research, diminishing the emphasis on conventional liberal arts education and subjects deemed unprofitable. This might lead to higher education privatization since institutions may become more focused on delivering economically viable education rather than education that serves society as a whole. The Autonomy Regulation grants excessive financial and management rights to managing trusts and university administrations to reduce expenses, raise student fees, and begin self-financing courses. This strategy, inspired by the NITI Aayog, is a crucial step toward the privatization of higher education, and it will result in the exclusion of economically and socially underprivileged groups.

Higher Education Commission of India: The higher education regulatory system will guarantee that the separate duties of regulation, accreditation, funding, and academic norm setting are undertaken by different, independent, and empowered authorities. Ensure the four institutional entities carrying out these essential duties perform independently while collaborating to achieve common aims. These four entities will be established as four distinct verticals inside the Higher Education Commission of India (HECI).

However, by handing over financial powers to the central government and giving the HECI unilateral and absolute powers to authorize, monitor, shut down, and recommend disinvestment from Higher Educational Institutions, the policy exposes higher education in the country to political manipulation, loss of much-needed diversity, fee hikes, and price fixing. It will also lead to the marginalization and disadvantage of millions of students, primarily from socially oppressed and economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

The NEP 2020 subtly ignores the necessity of protecting the Constitution, secularism, equality, social justice, and plurality that our social fabric necessitates.

It ignores the realities of our society, which include providing primary education to all segments of the people. Our society's fundamental demands are access, equity, and inclusion. The NEP's educational aims solely benefit the wealthy few who have had education for decades. Although increased internationalism and world-class education are desired, it is critical and vital to guarantee that education reaches everyone to pave the way for a better life. The liberal and diversified education envisioned by the NEP would be limited in its reach to all segments of society. Such learning centers need significant land, infrastructure, and administration investments. The action is intended to increase privatization in the education sector. Only large-scale investors can establish such massive interdisciplinary institutes. This policy's "paradigm shift" is nothing more than a direct transfer of power to multinational businesses or large private investors. (Thomas D. R., 2022)

However, the center can establish an effective quality assurance system for higher education. This would ensure that all institutions, whether public or private, fulfill the required standards of quality and accountability. The National Education Policy 2020 envisions the establishment of a National Higher Education Qualification Framework and a National Accreditation Council. However, these entities must be autonomous and have the requisite resources and authority to carry out their responsibilities efficiently.

Conclusion

The demand for higher education in India and the scale of anticipated reforms over the next ten years will give the world's most incredible opportunity for foreign higher education institutions and education firms. National Education Policy 2020 is a visual strategy that fails to include the lowest strata of society and gives little to no assistance to the poor, women, caste, and religious minorities since it glosses over essential problems about access to education that have long existed.

As a result of NEP 2020, education has become a commodity that can be purchased and sold for money. Higher education has become a profitable commercial well in the market economy. Privatization has the potential to raise inequality, reduce educational quality and restrict educational innovation. The government must ensure that education remains a public benefit and is not exploited for profit. This can result in a scenario where all students have access to high-quality education, boosting economic growth. A policy approach to holistic and interdisciplinary education should try to strengthen all human capacities—mental, cultural, social, physical, emotional, and moral in an integrated manner. In the long run, such an all-encompassing education will be the standard for all undergraduate programs, including those in medical, technical, and vocational fields. As a result, if higher education allows for more excellent absorption of individuals into the labor market and is privatized, education is reduced to a mere commercial or profit-making venture.

References

- 1) Cooray, A. (2014, May 31). *The role of education in economic growth*. Jamescookuniversity. https://www.academia.edu/861873/The_role_of_education_in_economic_growth
- 2) GeeksforGeeks. (2022, July 21). *Role of Education in Economic Development*. <https://www.geeksforgeeks.org/role-of-education-in-economic-development/>
- 3) Gupta, P. (n.d.). *Transformation of Indian Education System from Ancient Period till now*. <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/transformation-indian-education-system-from-ancient-period-gupta>
- 4) P. (2020, July 30). *National Education Policy 2020: Congress, Left parties accuse Centre of "bypassing" Parliament; TDP welcomes policy*. Deccan Herald. <https://www.deccanherald.com/national/national-education-policy-2020-congress-left-parties-accuse-centre-of-bypassing-parliament-tdp-welcomes-policy-867664.html>
- 5) Pandey, S. K. (n.d.). *NEP – 2020: Private-Public Partnership & Stakeholders Engagement is key to its Success*. <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/nep-2020-private-public-partnership-stakeholders-key-its-pandey>
- 6) Today, T. (2021, July 30). *Credit system under National Education Policy 2020*. Telangana Today. <https://telanganatoday.com/credit-system-under-national-education-policy-2020>
- 7) Saluja, A. (2022). Education for social justice: A critique of national education policies of India. *Policy Futures in Education*, 21(2), 136–144. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14782103221089474>