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NEP 2020 and Higher Education Gates: Opportunity and Challenges

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Abstract: NEP 2020 comes with a very flexible mode of learning with making it possible for students coming to Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) with options of multiple exits with different certificates with each year. With the structural changes in National Education Policy as compared to that of 1986, but the vocational vision remains the same. Employment being the primary focus, because a mass of educated youth coming out of colleges with degrees in hand need employment. In a country where the foundational education is still in its initial phase trying to uplift its quality and mark its presence in this competitive system, allowing students to choose whether to leave in one year with certificate, two years with advance diploma, three years with Bachelor's Degree or finally four years with Bachelor's Degree with Research. Also giving students that decision-making opportunity to decide the combos of subjects as per his or her interest. We need to investigate the process systematically if this system comes out fruitful equally to mass students. This paper has tried to explore this multiple exit option and choice of subject systematically. In this paper various government reports, national and international as well were used to come to effective conclusions towards implementing the fruits of NEP 2020 to its fullest. The vision of NEPs is an education system balancing both India and its value system at one hand and competing world in terms of knowledge, employability and sustainable development on the other hand. Taking into account the soul and need of Rural India in its curriculum.

Key Words: Higher education, exit gates, Employment, Sustainability, Contextuality, structural changes.

Education plays a vital role in life of a person without considering any class, caste, gender, race etc. differences. But all these social indicators do play in attaining and maintaining different educational level among different social groups. While discussing about education of a person, social background contributes significantly. This the reason behind both under performances and excellent performances of a person. Focus of NEP 2020 is to increase higher education GER to 50 per cent by 2035, with the provision of spending 6 per cent of GDP on education, highest so far. But merely focusing on quantitative side will not solve issues with higher education in long run. We need to address qualitative side too. There are two categories of courses majorly available in India - General courses and Technical/Professional courses. NEP 2020 has made the learning process very flexible by providing multiple entry and multiple exit gates. This process tried to provide international standards to Indian Education System after 1986. Now the focus of this paper is on multiple entry and exit gates provided by new education policy.

Entry to higher education starts from primary education one has acquired over a period of 12 years from class 1st to 12th. In NEP 2020 this structure has been expanded and included formally kids from kindergarten from the age of 3 years to 18 years. Now comparing the education imparted between government schools at one hand and taking public and convent schools at other hand, we can clearly see the divisions in terms of result, personality development, reading writing numeracy skills etc. this develops hierarchy of education at pedestal and continues towards higher education. Now this same inequality, stratification and hierarchy perpetuates in higher education Institutes too.

NEP 2020 moves education towards diversity, flexibility. In book named "Adult Education and the Post-Modern Challenge" (1997), Robin Usher, Ian Bryant, Rennie Johnston said about Decentering of Knowledge. To develop human potential values and workforce simultaneously. So, the basic premise was enjoying and making money together.

Multiple exit gates- one year exit with certificate, two-year exit with diploma, three-year exit with Bachelor's degree and four-year with Bachelor's with research. One can exit and join anytime towards next level without the earlier conventional three year under graduate degree compulsory program. And after successfully completing four-year program one can directly take admission to Ph.D. program.

Also, provision of numerous vocational courses right from the very first year graduation will contribute towards adding employability skills among students and giving them time to polish those skills during the entire period of higher education.

Third and the most important thing is more emphasis on research aptitude from the very first year of under graduation



course of students. And for this purpose, dedicated National Research Foundation is being established. Adding to this is converting all institutes in multidisciplinary education hubs. Because there remained no hard and fast division among three streams existed earlier like: - Science, Commerce, Arts no longer exist. Students are given free choices to make their own combinations of subjects and pursue higher education as per their interest. Giving Indian education system a new cover adhering to international standards.

In following section, I will try to address one important factor that will affect all the above-mentioned opportunities in a very significant way.

HERBERT SIMON AND DECISION MAKING- Decision making was at the core of theory given by Herbert Simon in an organization run by administrators who are continuously engaged in decision making. To take an effective decision one should be well informed and well trained. In routine activities one take decisions in pre-defined manner. But it requires proper planning, design and intelligence to finally come up with best choice for oneself in non-routine activities. Choosing one best possible option among available alternatives.

Now here arises a very important question, seeing the condition of education in government schools up to class 12th, where children are far behind their counterparts in similar classes but different private, convent and public schools in terms of various factors which includes, reading, writing, numeracy, skills, co-curricular activities, personality development, sports etc. NEP 2020 leaves a lot of space on shoulders of students coming out of those schools to choose. Choose subject, choose entry gates, choose exit gates, choose vocational programs, colleges, faculties etc.

Herbert Simon differentiates between extremely rational decision and extremely irrational decision. Also, he distinguishes between decision makers - Economic man, administrative man and social man. First one is fully rational and knows all possible consequences of his decision, whereas last one is least rational in taking decisions, and in between lies administrator taking least risk and good enough kind of decision most of the time.

PIERRE BOURDIEU AND CULTURE OF EXCELLENCE- A French sociologist and public intellectual give the concept of Cultural Capital, Social Capital and Economic Capital. Outcome performance of a student despite the government schemes and effort, the differentiation of class hierarchy is clearly reproduced and maintained in all sphere of life and definitely in education performances too. for a very short comparison let us assume two students A and B. student A comes from well educated family, good financial background and have access to all required sources to excel in class performance, along with it good social networks to guide towards various higher end opportunities in any subject, field etc. On the other hand, Student B comes from under-privileged section of society, living on subsistence earning, due to which B has to work for additional income, compromising study hours, devoid of any educational aided assistance, and social network can easily be guessed consist of deviant group. For student A its easy-to-understand educational pre-requisites of the class and have good behavior towards teacher as A understand cultural norms easily, whereas the case B is exactly opposite. This example sets a very contrast picture of extreme realities present at school level and perpetuates to higher level of studies too. And this process is carried by educational institutions. Dominant ideologies are floating everywhere, off course there can be exceptions, but those falling in categories of exceptions met their bad fortune at every crossroads of life.

STUDENT ENROLLMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION: MOTIVES and OPPORTUNITIES- Sustainable Development Goal 4 aims at quality education. It should be analyzed further whether student going for high4r education out of interest, or out of compulsion, in absence of other employment opportunities. Because it is clearly evident from the number of applications received every time a government vacancy comes into picture. And qualification of applicants can easily be found starting from the minimum demand to highest level, even if the job doesn't justify with the degree of the applicant. Is government funded higher education institutes are just "passing time place" for mass students. With increasing number of student absenteeism in colleges, this can be concluded. There is sharp contrast between students demand for job and curriculum designed earlier. With NEP 2020 many such challenges at the level of curriculum already addressed, but its practical implication will take time.

Admission to various universities differ accordingly. Central universities with common entrance exam by NTA, few other prestigious universities with their own merit criteria of taking students admission. But mass of the colleges today facing admission shortage even after giving first cum first basis of admission opportunity. In Humanities, Science and Commerce cut off doesn't seem justifying higher education goals of government. Students today opting for online education at one hand training themselves in selected skills on other hands. Increase in enrollment in online courses hiked 200 per cent after pandemic.

Even society in India, defines success in terms of government job and associated perks. Our entire educational



orientation among students from diverse academic fields, is towards securing a government job at different levels. From clerical to bureaucratic we have found students from STEM background also fighting high and visible in government exam results instead of government's mass investment in central universities, technical institutes, medical institutes heavily funded by government schemes with world class facilities.

Entering higher education seems more out of compulsion as of minimum qualification to some entrance exam. Also, minimum eligibility to some post, but not exactly higher education and research is the major motive among majority of students entering into it.

INFRASTRUCTURE: CHALLENGES- Contemporary scenario of mass higher education institutes (HEIs) needs serious consideration. NAAC has aimed to rank colleges, universities based on several indicators. But lack of infrastructure and finances with them, create strain in contemporary situation. Meeting global standards are possible only to few institutes with massive government funding on infrastructure, research projects, faculties etc. of some colleges, still they were not able to mark their presence in Times Higher Education ranking among top 100 colleges of the world.

Infrastructure is not adequately present, student to faculty ratio in higher education institutes is far from ideal. In NAAC 'A' institutes it follows to maximum of 1:60, whereas in 'C' accredited institutes it reaches as high as 1:150 and above. Then how it is maintained. Definitely there is no regular classes, no extracurricular activities reaching all students of institutes.

CONCLUSION and DISCUSSION- NEP 2020 though has given a lot of opportunities to students to follow their dream and interest, but limitations mentioned above also need careful assistance simultaneously.

Considering all the above-mentioned limitations, how we can expect student coming from average educational, socio-economic background will be able to take best decision about the choices of subjects, faculties, colleges, and finally career opportunities. In a country where occupations are allotted hierarchy, that this job is menial and this is excellent, government job given excess priority over private sector, lack of proper wages and securities in otherly termed jobs, where securing government job is end in itself and later it goes unproductive over the years. We need restructuring regulations related to government job and making them outcome based instead of life time and beyond insurance policy.

Ways forward would be learning how developed countries are enhancing their higher education with high GER simultaneously. And most importantly appointing academic counselors right from class 6 onwards, this will help students in uniform way and help those in need with right approach towards higher classes and finally in higher education too. Today colleges are confronting human resource, capital issues, infrastructure to implement all kind of vocational courses suggested by NEP 2020. So, there can be an alternate way by locating proper workplaces in private sector, similarly like in internship with proper monitoring, stipend and valid certificate.

Awareness of family is the key point around which life of person revolves throughout his life. At school level we have regular PTM (Parent-Teacher meetings), though it differs from school to school. But we need some similar programs at the level of higher education too. and let parents know diverse range of earning opportunities apart from conventional streams and jobs. Also, a national level test at very young age will help to decide young minds whether actually go for higher studies and research work or to engage in vocational services.

Most importantly stigmatization of diverse occupations needs to be looked up equally. With equal respect and equal opportunity towards all occupations sanctioned both socially and legally. Income inequality largely dispersed among the lowest strata of society need direction, with all social assistance, minimum work schemes.

Government of India working towards start-up-ups, but it requires to bring that aptitude start from the early education, which will mature in higher education and cut across all the diversities and provide equal opportunities to all students coming out of education system, ready for market earning in any sector. We need to work upon several dimensions of education including society with it to get desired results.

Robert K. Merton has given 4 ways an individual can respond to goals and means given by society and consequently can become: conformist, innovator, ritualist, retreatism, reformist and rebellion. These all reaction are because of the dream young mind see in their constructivist period and what if they don't find legitimate means to achieve it. everyone in a democratic nation has equal opportunity of freedom of choices, but every choice comes with consequences, that one has to bear. Then one should be prepared well in advance.

NEP 2020 is the need of the hour. Educators, teachers, faculties, administrators, students and finally parents have a large role to play. Not as a separate identity like we find in students from different universities define themselves separate identity and instead of collaboration and cooperation among differences, they widen the gap and perpetuates this in other spheres of life. Good things should percolate not been kept in boundaries, and especially education which act as a medium of



liberation for many. And when policy changes, society does change as was evident by how social legislations helped changing Indian society with long history. Upcoming five to ten years will be period of transition, but the ideology presented in NEP 2020 will definitely bridge the educational gap, and come up with a country with not just highest population but highest human resource too.

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