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Certificate

This is to certify that Ms/Mr./Dr. Sharada G, Assistant Professor
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Dr. Chaitanya Kumar M V

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Higher education in India: challenges and opportunities

Track 1

Governance and leadership

An overview of the Higher Education system in India and the relevance of Higher Education Commission of India bill, 2019

**PRESENTED BY: MRS G SHARADA
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR
PES INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED MANAGEMENT STUDIES
SHIVAMOGGA**

An overview of the Higher Education system in India and the relevance of Higher Education Commission of India bill, 2019

ABSTRACT

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world”, said Nelson Mandela.

Rabindranath Tagore opined “The highest education is that which does not merely give us information but makes our life in harmony with all existence’

This situation is an opportunity for us to reflect the way government controlled and how the global power of the Western academy shaped Indian higher education since the era of British colonial rule and the present status of higher education in modern India.

This paper discusses the main features and the relevance of the proposed **National Education Policy, 2019** and **Higher Education Commission of India bill, 2019** which is to be tabled in the winter session of parliament this year.

Key words: education, NEP 2019, draft HECI 2019

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Introduction

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world”, said Nelson Mandela.

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This situation is an opportunity for us to reflect the way government controlled and how the global power of the Western academy shaped Indian higher education since the era of British colonial rule and the present status of higher education in modern India and the relevance of the proposed **National Education Policy, 2019** and **Higher Education Commission of India bill, 2019** which is to be tabled in the winter session of parliament this year.

Higher education before independence

In 1835 Thomas Macaulay expressed in his *Minute on Indian Education* ‘that the goal of liberal imperialism **was to produce a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, opinions, in morals and in intellect.** He played a key role in the introduction of English and western concepts to education in India. In 1857 it was decided to establish English-language institutions of higher education to reform the Indian mind and produce a class of reliable Indian elites and in 1857 universities were established in the company’s presidencies in Madras, Calcutta, and Bombay.

One scholar summarises: “**The functions of universities under British rule were intellectual, cultural, and political: to connect Indian education to European knowledge; to transmit the cultural values specific to Britain and Europe; and to make available to the raj a class of clerks, bureaucrats, and political collaborators.**” The colonial universities were under full governmental oversight.

If the British wanted to make Indians into Englishmen, Indians were divided over whether and how to adapt to the reality of British colonial rule. Gandhi, Nehru, Jinnah, Ambedkar and other future nationalist leaders also studied abroad.

In 1919, the Montagu-Chelmsford Act was passed to appease nationalist pressure and education was among the departments devolved to provincial governments in Indian hands. India's institutions of higher education remain focused on reforming Indians.

Higher education after independence

Since 1947, Education Department in the Centre has developed in a full-fledged Ministry under the Central Government. The education at the State level is primarily the responsibility of the State Governments; the Union Government is concerned only with the coordination and determination of academic standards in respect of higher education, research and scientific and technical education. Higher education in India starts after passing the higher secondary education or the 12th standard. Depending on the stream, completing graduation in India can take three to five years. Postgraduate courses are generally of two to three years of duration. After completing post graduation, scope for doing research in various educational institutes also remains open. There are quite a good number of educational institutes in India that can compete with the best educational institutes.

One nationalist leader who did not study abroad was Maulana Abul Kalam Azad who was home-schooled and a master of many languages, religious scholarship, and Urdu literature. He became the first Education Minister of India who established the University Grants Commission (UGC) after India's independence on 28 December 1953. He was also responsible for establishment of IISc and School of Architecture and Planning. The modern-day IITs are the brainchild of Mulana Abul Kalam and two of them — IIT Delhi and IIT Bombay — are among the new Institutions of Eminence. Hence rightly National Education Day is celebrated every year on 11 November in memory of this pioneer and a visionary.

The problem of standards and co-ordination in the sphere of higher education is now the responsibility of the University Grants Commission and AICTE.

India's higher education system is the third largest in the world, next to the United States and China. The main governing body at the tertiary level is the University Grants Commission, which enforces its standards, advises the government, and helps coordinate between the centre and the state. While the UGC is the regulator for universities across the country, AICTE acts as a regulator for engineering, pharmacy, management and other technical education colleges.

About UGC

In 1957 almost all the universities came under the control of the UGC. It is the only grant giving institute in the country. It provides funds and it also arranges for the coordination and maintenance of the universities in India. The UGC controls the following in India:

1. Maintaining the standard of research, teaching and examination in the universities.
2. Promoting university education
3. Making regulations to maintain the minimum standard of education in the country
4. It is a link between the union government and the institutes of higher education
5. It also advises the government about the steps to be taken in order to
6. The UGC also conducts the NET, which is the name of a qualification that is essential for a person to teach in the graduation and post graduation colleges.
7. Accreditation for higher learning is overseen by 15 autonomous institutions established by the University Grants Commission (UGC).

About AICTE

The **All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE)** is the statutory body and a national-level council for technical education, under Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development. Established in November 1945 first as an advisory body and later on in 1987 given statutory status by an Act of Parliament, AICTE with head quarters at Delhi, is responsible for proper planning and coordinated development of the technical education and management education system in India. The AICTE accredits postgraduate and graduate programs under specific categories at Indian institutions as per its charter.

It is assisted by 10 Statutory Boards of Studies, namely, UG Studies in Eng. & Tech., PG and Research in Eng. and Tech., Management Studies, Vocational Education, Technical Education, Pharmaceutical Education, Architecture, Hotel Management and Catering Technology, Information Technology, Town and Country Planning.

According to the *All India Council for Technical Education, 1987*, the AICTE is vested with statutory authority for planning, formulation and maintenance of norms and standards, quality assurance through school accreditation, funding in priority areas, monitoring and evaluation, maintaining parity of certification and awards and ensuring coordinated and integrated development and management of technical education in the country

Objectives:

- To provide for establishment of an All India council for Technical Education with a view to the proper planning and co-ordinated development of the technical education system throughout the country
- the promotion of qualitative improvement of such education in relation to planned quantitative growth
- the regulation and proper maintenance of norms and standards in the technical education system and for matters connected therewith.

National Policies on Education

The country has seen vast changes in the education system through the ages because of the different National educational policies envisaged by different governments namely

- **National Policy on Education in 1968** based on the report and recommendations of the *Kothari Commission*,
- **National Policy on Education , 1986**
- **National Policy on Education, 1992**
- **Draft National Policy on Education, 2019** based on recommendation of **DR Kasturirangan committee**

The New National Education Policy (NEP) draft submitted by the nine-member committee of academics chaired by eminent space scientist K. Kasturirangan, former chairman of ISRO (Indian Space Research

Organisation), to the Union HRD (human resource development) ministry on December 15 last year, was released for public debate on May 30, 2019.

Some of the important recommendations of the policy are as follows:

- Restructuring, consolidation: reorganizing all of higher education into three types of higher education institutions – research universities, teaching universities and colleges. Colleges will eventually themselves become autonomous. Therefore, by 2040, all institutions will be slotted into one of these categories and “single-stream” institutions offering single courses will be phased out along with “affiliated colleges” that are linked to universities. Every institution will be multidisciplinary. The expansion required to achieve the target gross enrolment ratio (GER) of 50% will happen at existing institutions. They will “gradually move towards full autonomy – academic, administrative, and eventually financial”. All admission will be through tests conducted by the National Testing Agency.
- Liberal education: The final NEP continues to emphasise on “liberal education” and the integration of the arts and humanities with STEM – science, technology, engineering, mathematics – subjects. “Imaginative and flexible” course structures in large multidisciplinary universities are envisaged that will “offer multiple useful entry and exit points”. The Indian Institutes of Technology will also move toward liberal education “with more arts and humanities, while arts and humanities students will aim to learn more science”. But alongside, Multidisciplinary Education and Research Universities will be established to serve as “model public universities”.
- The undergraduate degree will last three or four years – four years of “the full range of liberal arts education” will lead to a Bachelor of Liberal Arts (BLA) or Bachelor of Liberal Education (BLE). Three years will lead to a regular Bachelor’s degree, two years to an advanced diploma and one year to a diploma.
- The PhD programme will require the four-year programme with research or a Master’s degree – “The MPhil programme shall be discontinued”.
- Learning environment “autonomy to innovate” on matters of curriculum and assessment, each institution to “integrate” its “academic plans” with the “institutional development plan” and fund student clubs and activities. Universities will also be required to set up “support centres” for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. The document further presents open and distance learning as a “natural path” to increasing enrollment.

- **Governance:** The policy proposes setting up Boards of Governors for every higher education institution whose members will be “a group of carefully selected individuals”. Existing statutory bodies that include elected members, such as the Academic and Executive Councils, or Senates and Syndicates, will presumably be replaced. The draft NEP says this part will require “relevant legislative actions” to achieve. The “leaders” of these institutions will be selected through committees as is standard practice.
- **Regulation:** The policy proposes deregulation of universities and colleges and using a single framework to assess all. The primary mechanism will be through accreditation which, in turn, relies almost entirely on voluntary disclosures. The process will be overseen by a “meta-accrediting” body and public as well as private institutions can be accreditors.
- **Faculty:** Apart from proposing a working environment more conducive to research, the policy proposes a “merit-based tenure-track, promotion, and salary structure”. There will be multiple levels within the same rank. Teachers will be reviewed by their peers and students and these will be factors in deciding their promotions and pay increases.
- **Equity, inclusion:** The issue of equity has to be addressed in the Institutional Development Plans. The policy also proposes more scholarships, outreach programmes, inclusive admission processes, development of bridge courses for students from disadvantaged backgrounds who may also suffer from a learning deficit and counseling and mentoring programmes.
- **Vocational education:** All educational institutions – schools, colleges and universities – will be required to run vocational courses along with regular academic ones such that all students passing through the system pick up at least one vocational skill. By 2030-'35, the policy document says, undergraduate vocational education ought to be widespread enough to claim around 50 percent of the total enrollment. “Lok Vidya”, or popular knowledge, will be part of the vocational courses.
- **Professional education:** The final draft NEP has little to say on professional education. Professional education must be part of the rest of higher education and that agricultural, legal, medical and nursing education all need restructuring and revisions. For agriculture, it suggests setting up “agricultural technology parks”, for law, it suggests “bilingual education”. For nursing, a national accreditation body will be created.
- **Research body:** The policy ‘envision’ a National Research Foundation to become a “reliable base of merit-based peer-reviewed research funding” except the Centre is already ahead. It announced such a foundation in its 2019-'20 budget.

Further, the Human resource development minister Ramesh Pokhriyal made an announcement that the New Education Policy proposes a single test of subject-specific aptitude for admission to colleges and universities across the country, to be conducted by the National Testing Agency (NTA) and NEP-2020 is likely to suggest an aptitude test and tests in specific subjects that can be taken multiple times in a year and the burden for students to prepare for several tests will be reduced. But the criticism against this remark is that this doesn't lessen the burden of the children as they would now be dependent on coaching centres for these entrance tests.

The draft Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) bill, 2019

The Ministry of Human Resource Development (HRD) announced in 2018 its decision to replace the University Grants Commission (UGC) with **Higher Education Commission of India (HECI)** by repealing the UGC Act, 1951 and AICTE Act, 1987. The draft bill was put in public domain and feedback and suggestions were sought from stakeholders. It was further declared that the Higher Education Commission of India will be a single regulator and replace UGC and AICTE.

- The Bill repeals the University Grants Commission Act, 1956 and establishes the Higher Education Commission of India (HECI).
- The HECI will maintain academic standards in higher education by specifying learning outcomes for courses, specifying eligibility criteria for Vice Chancellors, and ordering closure of higher educational institutions which fail to adhere to minimum standards.
- Every higher educational institution empowered to award degrees or diplomas will have to apply to the HECI to commence its first academic operations. The HECI also has the power to revoke permission on specified grounds.

- The Bill sets up an Advisory Council chaired by the Union Minister of Human Resource Development. The Council will advise on coordination and determination of standards in higher education between the centre and states.

Composition of the HECI

- The HECI will consist of 22 members. A Search Committee will recommend names to the central government for the post of Chairperson, and members of the HECI. The Search Committee will consist of five members including the Cabinet Secretary (Chairperson), Higher Education Secretary, and three eminent academicians. For the appointment of the Vice Chairperson and the members of the HECI, the Search Committee will include the Chairperson of the HECI as well.
- For the post of the Chairperson and the Vice Chairperson, the Search Committee will recommend names of persons who are citizens of India and those who have been: (i) professors for at least ten years, or (ii) eminent administrators with proven capacity for institution building.
- Members of the HECI include: (i) the Chairperson, (ii) the Vice Chairperson, (iii) three Secretaries of the central government, (iv) two chairpersons of All India Council of Technical Education and National Council of Teacher Education, (v) two chairpersons of accreditation bodies, (vi) two Vice Chancellors of universities of academic excellence, (vii) two serving professors of universities, and (viii) an experienced person from the industry.

The draft has received wide criticism and opposition from academicians, students and political parties who raised hue and cry and some of their suggestions and views have been taken into consideration and the draft bill with some modifications is likely to be tabled in this winter session of parliament.

Some of the major Issues raised are:

- The Bill aims to promote autonomy of higher educational institutions. However, certain provisions of the Bill do not meet this stated objective. It may be argued that instead of granting higher educational institutions increased autonomy, the Bill provides HECI with extensive regulatory control.
- Currently, institutions offering professional courses are regulated by 14 professional councils. Of these, the Bill seeks to bring legal and architecture education within the purview of HECI. It is unclear why only these two areas are included within the regulatory ambit of the HECI and not the other fields of professional education.
- At present, the UGC has the power to allocate and disburse grants to universities and colleges. While the Bill replaces the UGC, it does not include any provisions regarding disbursal of grants. This raises a question whether HECI will have any role in the disbursal of grants to higher educational institutions.
- Presently, the Central Advisory Board of Higher Education (CABE) co-ordinates and advises the centre and states on education related matters. The Bill creates an Advisory Council and requires HECI to implement its recommendations. This may restrict HECI from functioning as an independent regulator. The draft Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) is expected to be in tune with the proposed NEP as one should complement the other for smooth functioning; But the National Education Policy idea clashes with HECI's sole regulator plan. While the NEP advocates a decentralized regulatory model with four autonomous bodies, the proposed Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) runs counter to the idea by seeking a single, centralized regulator. The earlier draft bill had

proposed HECI to control academic matters while an advisory board under the HRD minister would have been in charge of issuing monetary grants to universities.

- The NEP envisages a National Higher Education Regulatory Authority (NHERA) as a sole regulator but also recommends a separate and independent General Education Council (GEC) to set academic standards and define learning outcomes; accreditation functions to be handled by the National Assessment & Accreditation Council (NAAC) and a Higher Education Grants Council is to allocate funds to universities and colleges. In pursuit of the dissolution and separation of these functions, the KR Committee recommends the establishment of a National Higher Education Regulatory Authority (NHERA) as the sole regulator for all higher education institutions, including professional education institutes and empowerment of NAAC (National Assessment & Accreditation Council, estb.1994) to develop an ecosystem of multiple autonomous institutions and oversee the accreditation process with the UGC (to be renamed the Higher Education Grants Commission) restricted to disbursement of grants and scholarships. All other regulatory organizations such as NCTE, MCI, BCI and AICTE should transform into professional standard setting bodies (PSSBs). The KR Committee acknowledges that “these transformative changes may take time and effort” and allows a period of five-seven years. The HRD ministry’s HECI Bill, on the other hand, recommends a single regulator of higher education to set standards and norms for maintenance of academic standards and an overarching control over accreditation agencies. Only the funding powers are to be kept out of the HECI and vested separately in a Special Purpose Vehicle to ensure funding and regulation does not get mixed up., the draft NEP goes on to prescribe a set of humanities and social science courses to students enrolled in all scientific, technological and professional disciplines.
- Moreover the draft believes that a compulsory liberal arts training will help India double the number of entrants in higher education — also called gross enrolment ratio — from the current 25.8 to 50 per cent, in the next one-and-a-half decades.

Conclusion

It cannot be denied that the NEP 2019 as well as the draft Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) bill, 2019 have new and forward looking vision for India's Higher Education System and contain several valuable recommendations for the comprehensive reform of 21st century India's obsolete education system across the board from pre-primary to Ph D. These aim to phase out all single-stream HEIs and build a higher education system consisting of large, multidisciplinary universities and colleges on the lines of Nalanda and Takshila and thereby once again revive the glory of the past. Autonomy to faculty in terms of pedagogy and curriculum development is indeed an excellent thought which will give freedom to them. Moreover, its stress on Open and Distance Learning (ODL) to expand the reach of higher education and improving the quality of programmes is laudable.

More practically, rather than prioritizing defence spending (India is among the top-five armament buyers in the world), it might invest more liberally across institutions of higher education, including humanistic, vocational, craft, and polytechnical institutions and thereby improve the quality of life. If all our higher educational institutions were to become Institutes *of Eminence*, eagerly sought after by students across the globe, Tagore's vision of naming his university "Vishwa Bharati" to emphasise this idea of Indian communion with the world would become true with other institutes too.

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