



Multidisciplinary Approach of NEP-2020: Transforming Higher Education in India

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Abstract

The present paper analyses India's National Educational Policy 2020 and its promotion of a multidisciplinary approach in higher education. The NEP-2020 of India is to mesh the new learning outcomes with a changing world on the verge of globalization and technological advancement. The 21st century has witnessed a sea change in education, especially the promotion of a multidisciplinary educational approach in higher education after the implementation of NEP-2020. Exploring a multidisciplinary approach in higher education creates golden opportunities for students to develop and enhance all human capacities. With the help of a multidisciplinary educational approach, Indian students should be able to develop their creative abilities, vocational skills, professional capabilities and soft skills.

Keywords

NEP-2020, Multidisciplinary Approach, Higher Education, Integrated Knowledge

IMPLEMENTATION OF NEP-2020

The Government of India introduced the new National Education Policy - 2020 (NEP-2020) in July 2020 after the gap of 34 years of the last National Policy on Education 1986 (revised in 1992). Introducing the NEP-2020 in India is a paradigm shift in the entire education system in India. It provides a comprehensive, sustainable and reformative roadmap for the entire education system. It proves to be helpful for the new learning outcomes with changing world on the verge of globalization and technological advancement. The NEP-2020 proposes to develop all capacities of human beings with the help of fundamental principles of NEP-2020 like all round development of students' natural capabilities, holistic and multidisciplinary education, conceptual understanding, ethics and human values, critical thinking, creativity, multilingualism, flexibility of choosing subjects, technology enhanced learning, unity in diversity, outstanding research and love for motherland. "In 2022, when India will be celebrating the completion of the 75th year of Independence, all Indian students should be learning according to the direction and provision of the new education policy. It's our collective responsibility", said Prime Minister Narendra Modi (qtd. Kumar, 2022, p. 281).

MULTIDISCIPLINARY APPROACH IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Education is fundamental tool of all round development of personality. It helps human beings to develop his/her physical, emotional, moral, mental, spiritual and social areas. Education is fundamental for developing good human beings with rational thinking, creativity, scientific temper, compassion and empathy for others, and ethics and constitutional values. As Mahatma Gandhi said, "By education I mean an all-round drawing out of the best in man – body, mind and spirit". Education is not only an essential tool for individual development but also for sustainable development of society as well as building of developed nation. The discipline wise education was the basis of 19th and 20th century education system of India. Multidisciplinary approach becomes a need of the 21st century because of globalization, technological advancement and growing pandemic emergencies like covid-19 situation. Taking into consideration the need of time, the Government of India approved the National Education Policy on July 28th of 2020. The target of India's National Educational Policy-2020 is to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" (MHRD, 2020, p. 3).

In order to comprehend the promotion of multidisciplinary approach of NEP-2020 and its effect on higher education, it needs to understand the term, multidisciplinary approach. According to International Bureau of Education, there are three major kinds of teaching-learning approaches i.e. interdisciplinary approach, transdisciplinary approach and multidisciplinary approach. Interdisciplinary approach offers the integration of two or more diverse subjects or areas of knowledge and solves problems. Such kind of integration of different subjects helps students to tackle problems and get solutions which are beyond the scope of a single subject. The core principles of interdisciplinarity can be called the three “C’s”: Collaboration, Cooperation and Communication among disciplines in addressing a particular issue (Klein, 1993). Transdisciplinary approach dissolves the boundaries of diverse subjects and integrates them to form a new set of knowledge. Such integration of different subjects from disciplines helps learners to connect new arena of knowledge. Multidisciplinary approach is age old concept of teaching-learning process since ancient gurukul system of India. It becomes a need of an hour. It offers integration of diverse disciplines and perspectives to covers an idea, topic or theme. In it, the same topic is studied from different disciplines.

“Multidisciplinary approach is a whole or comprehensive method that covers an idea, topic or content by integrating divergent knowledge domains. It is a very strong and relevant way of teaching that crosses the boundaries of a discipline or curriculum in order to enhance or develop the area and depth of learning experience. It is an approach of curriculum integration which focuses primarily on the different disciplines and the diverse perspectives while illustrate a topic, theme or issue” (Roy, 2022, p. 647). This kind of approach offers the integration of basic arts, scientific subjects, vocational subjects, professional subjects and soft skills in harmonious way. It also offers flexibility of choosing subjects, multiple entries and exits, and overcomes rigid boundaries of traditional education. Such multidisciplinary education will help learners to develop physical, intellectual, moral, social, emotional, and spiritual capacities in inclusive manner.

PROMOTING MULTIDISCIPLINARY APPROACH IN HIGHER EDUCATION BY NEP-2020

The multidisciplinary approach in higher education is a significant step of NEP-2020 which offers student the flexibility of choosing subjects from any stream or discipline according to their choice. This liberal approach will cultivate among students creativity, critical thinking, curiosity for new knowledge, leadership skills, teamwork spirit, self-reflection, professionalism, a sense of commitment, and social responsibility spirit. With the help of this kind of approach, students can choose areas of their interest with multiple options of subject and entry and exit options during the undergraduate course. The main purpose of multidisciplinary approach in higher education by NEP-2020 is “to ensure the unity and integrity of all knowledge” (MHRD, 2020, p. 3).

Yash Pal Committee (2009) underlines the importance of multidisciplinary education. The report of committee remarks that “there is a need to expose students, especially at the undergraduate level, to various disciplines” (Yash Pal, 2009, p. 21). The National Educational Policy-2020 makes the following recommendations to achieve multidisciplinary approach in higher education:

A) Restructuring of Higher Education Institutions

The NEP-2020 recommends restructuring of higher education institutions in order to adopt multidisciplinary education. The present system of higher education especially in affiliated colleges discourages multidisciplinary approach. At present, universities of our country impart postgraduate education and maximum affiliated colleges in India are limited to single discipline and impart only degree education. A few affiliated colleges impart master degree (PG) education. Such kind of education approach is not favored by various committees of the government of India like Yash Pal Committee (2009). So NEP-2020 rejects the affiliating system of higher education and suggests ‘College Clusters’ or ‘Knowledge Hubs’ system. The policy recommends multidisciplinary colleges of 3,000 or more students’ capacity. In this regard, I would like to quote exact lines from NEP-2020 draft, “Moving to large multidisciplinary universities and HEI clusters is thus the highest recommendation of this policy regarding the structure of higher education” (MHRD, 2020, p. 34). This multidisciplinary college clusters creates ample opportunities for Indian students to become a part and parcel of vibrant community. In addition to it, NEP-2020 suggests three broad types of institutions in order to achieve multidisciplinary approach in higher education i.e. a) Research-intensive Universities, b) Teaching-intensive Universities and c) Autonomous degree-granting College (AC). In short, NEP-2020 abolishes affiliating culture of higher education and recommends multidisciplinary approach in education. “By 2040, all higher education institutions (HEIs) shall aim to become multidisciplinary institutions and shall aim to have larger student enrolments preferably in the thousands, for optimal use of infrastructure and resources, and for the creation of vibrant multidisciplinary communities” (MHRD, 2020, p. 34).

B) Revamping of Curriculum, Pedagogy and Assessment

The NEP-2020 also recommends restructuring of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment of students in order to reenergize the vibrant multidisciplinary education system of ancient India. Our country has a legacy of multidisciplinary environment in universities like Nalanda and Takshashila. The policy suggests the fusion of diverse subjects from various streams like arts, humanities, sciences and vocational skills in order to achieve holistic development of students. Online courses should be integrated into the curricula of higher education institutions. The policy offers student flexibility of

choosing subjects according to their interest as the Choice Based Credit System (CBCS) suggested Gnanam Committee (2009). In concern of pedagogy, NEP-2020 emphasizes the development of learners' professional skills, vocational skills and soft skills. Here I would like to quote, "pedagogy must evolve to make education more experiential, holistic, integrated, inquiry-driven, discovery-oriented, learner-centred, discussion-based, flexible, and, of course, enjoyable" (MHRD, 2020, p. 3). The policy also recommends the regular formative assessment to develop analysis skills, critical thinking and to enhance comprehension skill of students.

C) High Quality Teaching and Research

The NEP-2020 expects that multidisciplinary HEIs should offer "high quality teaching, research and community engagement" (MHRD, 2020, p. 34). The role of teacher is not limited to content delivery in teaching-learning process. He should be facilitator, mentor and guide of students. The NEP-2020 discontinues M.Phil. research degree but it promotes multidisciplinary HEIs to offer research at UG as well as PG level. One who completes 4 year UG degree with research or PG degree is promoted by NEP-2020 to pursue his/her Ph.D. In order to offer high quality education, each institution shall prepare its Institutional Development Plan (IDP).

CONCLUSION

To sum up, Multidisciplinary is age old concept of education successfully employed by the gurus in ancient time. The gurus set the best example of multidisciplinary approach through the gurukul system. The disciples gathered all kinds of knowledge from diverse disciplines like yoga, meditation, health, medicine, music, sports, science, history and other skills. So, multidisciplinary approach becomes the need of an hour. The multidisciplinary approach by NEP-2020 will surely play a significant role in the determining future of higher education in India. This kind of liberal and multidisciplinary approach of Indian education will contribute the entire education system of the world. Multidisciplinary approach will surely bridge diverse disciplines and pursue different ways of thinking to solve problems in society.

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