



National Education Policy (NEP) 2020: Towards the Holistic and Multidisciplinary Education

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Abstract:

The National Education Policy 2020 of India emphasizes a holistic and multidisciplinary approach to education, aiming to transform the Indian educational landscape. Holistic education encompasses a wide range of philosophical orientations and pedagogical practices. Its focus is on wholeness, and it attempts to avoid excluding any significant aspects of the human experience. This policy advocates for a learning environment that integrates various academic disciplines, thereby providing students with a broad-based education that spans sciences, arts, humanities, languages, and vocational studies. The NEP 2020 is the main education policy of the 21st century. The chief pillars of NEP 2020 are Access, Equity, Quality, Affordability, and Accountability. It aims to reconstruct India into a universal knowledge giant by making both school and higher education more holistic, flexible, and multidisciplinary. It focuses on bringing out the individualistic and excellent capabilities of each child. A cursory glimpse of the policy causes apprehension with its attractive headlines and phrases. There is no doubt that this is An outstanding document with astonishing educational ideas, presented with a range of recommendations; some unique, some reiterated, and others reclaimed from earlier policy declarations. Terminologies and matter-of-fact imagination in the policy document seem to divert the attention of people and institutions away from the actual education world. The present study has been undertaken keeping the following research questions in mind: Do we find any strong theories related to the multidisciplinary approach? What are the challenges of NEP 2020 with respect to



holistic and multidisciplinary education? This paper presents the highlights of NEP 2020 and contents regarding holistic education and multidisciplinary views of this policy.

Key Words: Multidisciplinary Approach, Holistic Education, The NEP 2020, Higher Education. NEP 2020, Holistic Education, Multidisciplinary Education, Technology in Education.

Introduction:

National Education Policy 2020 is an exhaustive document that aims at providing a holistic and multidisciplinary approach to education thus improving the education sector making it more fruitful and inclusive. The post-modern 21st century demands multidisciplinary approach to Education. NEP 2020 places a lot of emphasis on holistic and multidisciplinary Education. The document says, "Pedagogy must evolve to make education more experiential, holistic, integrated, inquiry-driven, discovery oriented, learner-centered, discussion-based, flexible, and, of course, enjoyable." The National Education Policy 2020 states clearly the prevalent culture of rote learning present in education system till today. This one fact hinders in achieving all other pedagogical goals leading to problems faced by learners in their holistic development.

In this chapter, we will discuss the NEP 2020's emphasis on more holistic and multidisciplinary education. We will explore the meaning of holistic and multidisciplinary education, its importance and its implementation in the Indian education system. We will also examine the challenges and opportunities that come with implementing a more holistic and multidisciplinary education.

Multidisciplinary and holistic learning is an ancient method used in Indian education system as well as the other parts of the world. This is the reason that such type of education system was advocated by scholars like Kautilya, Banabhatta, Plato, and Aristotle among many others. One can trace the evidence of such an education system in ancient Indian literature and practices. The students of Vedic times had to study Mathematics, Science and Geometry and lessons on morality, ethics, soft skills and value education, to develop their vocational skills along with professional skills. The introduction of Multidisciplinary Education is a welcome change in the NEP 2020. The approach to integrate Arts and Humanities with STEM had large vistas opening up for



discussions and deliberations. It is envisaged that Mastery of curricula across fields, increases awareness and engagement and the very Joy of learning with the introduction of Multi-Disciplinary Education. A holistic education paves way for entry into the student's choice of professional, vocational and technical disciplines. The choice based subjects in the school curriculum provide for in-depth learning for the students and also develop a well-rounded personality. With the introduction of this approach, the students get an opportunity to hone their skills in the areas of their interest and pursue them further to mastery and perfection. The subjects chosen would provide more avenues for the students to opt-in higher education and make use of the multiple exit options with appropriate certification. Multidisciplinary education helps the students deepen their skills as they understand to systematically select subjects as one interrelated whole rather than unrelated subjects that were offered in traditional education as part of the curriculum. As a part of the holistic approach and its philosophy, a student is educated beyond core academics providing him wholesome and holistic education. This helps the students to discover their identity and understand the meaning of life through holistic methods of teaching. A positive school environment and wraparound support to the students along with an offer of a choice based subject selection would help in developing a happiness curriculum which is the way forward in the years to come. The policy mainly focuses on the holistic development of students by ensuring access, relevance, equity, quality, and strong foundational learning. The mechanistic education gets counter acted with the introduction of holistic and multidisciplinary education. The 20th century saw the introduction of the self-motivated growth philosophy of Maria Montessori, Emil Molt, and Rudolf Steiner wherein the whole person education gained momentum. Community School, Experiential Learning, interdisciplinary subjects are methods of holistic education that helped in developing a student's attitudes and attributes. The flexibility of subjects would also bring about a transformational change in the teaching-learning and evaluation process. Pathak, (2020) in his article on Holistic Education, Critical Thinking and Multidisciplinary Approach has raised some critical questions, looked at the social dynamics of education, and evolved a set of possibilities from the social context of learning. He puts forward how the academic machinery works



and has elaborated the meaning attached to the concept from multiple perspectives, that is, of the students, teachers, parents, and the larger society. Quoting NEP 2020, Pathak has explained the need for integral education that would promote critical thinking. He further advocated that pedagogy needed to evolve to make education more holistic, inquiry-driven, learner- centered, flexible, experiential, discovery-oriented and enjoyable. The researcher shuns the idea of making students exam warriors and not to limit a student's educational experience to merely the prescribed textbooks and guidebooks with "success mantra". Reflecting upon the obstacles and challenges to make education holistic, multidisciplinary, experiential and enjoyable which are the so called cherished ideals, the author suggests an environment brimming with dialogue, reciprocity and trust.

Key aspects of NEP 2020 include:

Flexibility: Allowing students to choose subjects across streams, encouraging a blend of curricular and extracurricular activities.

Integration: Combining traditional arts, social sciences, and sciences with professional, technical, and vocational fields.

Inclusivity: Making education accessible and equitable, including provisions for marginalized and disadvantaged groups.

Skill Development: Focusing on vocational skills alongside academic subjects to prepare students for various career paths.

Research Emphasis: Encouraging a research culture across all fields, including social sciences and humanities.

The policy also introduces the concept of Multidisciplinary Education and Research Universities (MERUs), which are envisioned as institutions that offer students the opportunity to engage in multidisciplinary studies and research.

NEP 2020 represents a significant shift towards an education system that is more fluid, interconnected, and aligned with global educational practices, aiming for an all-encompassing development of students.

The term "Holistic" refers to the idea that education should address the whole person, including their physical, emotional, social, and cognitive development. Holistic



education is based on the belief that students learn best when they are engaged in meaningful experiences that connect them to their community and the world around them. Holistic education also emphasizes the importance of values such as empathy, compassion, and social responsibility. It recognizes that learning is not just about acquiring knowledge, but also about developing skills, values, and attitudes that prepare individuals for life. The NEP 2020 emphasizes the importance of holistic education and seeks to promote it through several initiatives. It also encourages creativity, problem-solving, and teamwork, which are important skills for the 21st century.

The term “Multidisciplinary” refers to the integration of different disciplines or subjects into a single program or course. Multidisciplinary education emphasizes the importance of combining knowledge from different fields to solve real-world problems. Multidisciplinary education also promotes the development of critical thinking skills and encourages students to question assumptions and examine issues from multiple perspectives. Multidisciplinary education is an approach that seeks to integrate different fields of knowledge and disciplines to provide a more comprehensive understanding of a topic. This will allow them to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the world, and to make connections between different fields of knowledge.

Conclusion

Holistic and Multidisciplinary education is a disruptive ideology that gives more autonomy to the students. The role of teachers in the design and execution of curriculum is of the highest importance and the efficacy of any educational reform vests largely with the teachers. Adoption of diverse streams to fulfill the interest of the students providing them opportunities to choose from a variety of courses suiting their interest puts in place the major recommendation of NEP 2020, i.e., Multidisciplinary education. The freedom to choose courses from a basket of courses paves way for a holistic development of the students thereby developing their mental, emotional, physical, and social skills. This helps the students to identify their uniqueness and align it with the world outside. The fact that the learning process is a continual one under NEP 2020 gives teaching professionals hope. At both the Central and State levels, subject-specific implementation committees of experts will be established in



collaboration and consultation with other pertinent Ministries in order to develop detailed implementation plans for each aspect of this Policy in accordance with the aforementioned guidelines and to accomplish the Policy's objectives in a transparent and staged manner. In a nut shell, NEP 2020 will certainly be bridging the deep-rooted loopholes in the traditional system of education.

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