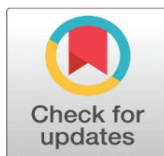
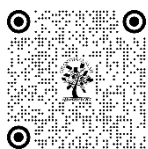


FROM POLICY TO PRACTICE: IMPLEMENTING NRP 2020 IN ASSAM'S HIGHER EDUCATION AND ROLE OF COLLEGE TEACHERS

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the role of NEP 2020 in transforming Assam's higher education sector, with an emphasis on Four year undergraduate college course (FYUGC). The discussion highlights the current challenges in Assam's higher education system, such as infrastructure limitations, socio-economic factors, and language barriers, while aligning these with NEP's provisions. It focuses on the implementation of key reforms such as interdisciplinary education, the introduction of the Academic Bank of Credits, and the emphasis on research and innovation. The role of college teachers in facilitating these transitions is crucial, and their professional development is explored. The article outlines strategies for effective policy implementation, such as infrastructure development, faculty training, and leveraging digital tools. Recommendations are made for policymakers to tailor NEP 2020 to Assam's unique needs, ensuring that the state's higher education system fosters inclusivity, research, and academic excellence.

Keywords: NEP 2020, Higher Education, Assam, College Teachers, Implementation Challenges

1. INTRODUCTION

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 marks a transformative shift in India's education system, and its implications for higher education, especially at the Four year undergraduate course (FYUGC), are profound. In Assam, where the higher education sector faces unique challenges, the successful implementation of NEP 2020 is crucial for addressing gaps in access, quality, and relevance of education. NEP 2020's emphasis on holistic, multidisciplinary education, research, and the use of technology aligns with the state's aspirations to modernize its educational framework [1]. However, given Assam's diverse socio-economic landscape and the state's infrastructure constraints, the transition to these reforms must be carefully designed to suit local realities. College principals and teachers play a vital role in implementing these changes, and the policy's success depends significantly on their active participation and professional development [2].

In Assam, a region known for its cultural diversity and rich intellectual heritage, the potential impact of NEP 2020 on higher education is profound. The state's higher education system, which caters to a diverse student population across

urban and rural areas, has long faced challenges such as limited infrastructure, inadequate faculty development programs, and resource disparities [3]. NEP 2020 provides an opportunity to address these issues by emphasizing multidisciplinary education, skill enhancement, and research-driven learning. However, translating these policy provisions into actionable practices presents unique challenges, particularly in Assam's socio-economic and geographic context [4].

College teachers, as the primary facilitators of education at the grassroots level, play a pivotal role in bridging the gap between policy and practice. They are tasked not only with delivering content but also with mentoring students, fostering an environment of innovation, and integrating the broader goals of NEP 2020 into classroom teaching [5]. By adapting to the policy's provisions, such as the Academic Bank of Credits, flexible curriculum design, and the use of technology, college teachers can redefine the learning experience and make it more dynamic and inclusive. Their role extends beyond academics, as they become agents of change, shaping the future of Assam's education system in line with national goals [6].

This article explores the challenges and opportunities of implementing NEP 2020 in Assam's higher education sector, emphasizing the crucial role of college teachers in this transformative journey. It delves into the current educational landscape, identifies barriers to effective implementation, and proposes actionable strategies for success. By examining the intersection of policy directives and grassroots realities, this discussion aims to highlight the importance of empowering educators and institutions to realize the vision of NEP 2020 and its transformative potential for Assam's socio-economic development.

2. HIGHER EDUCATION LANDSCAPE IN ASSAM

The higher education landscape in Assam reflects a complex interplay of progress and challenges, shaped by the state's unique socio-economic context and regional diversity. Assam, located in the northeastern part of India, has a growing number of colleges and universities, but significant disparities persist in terms of access, quality, and infrastructure. The state is home to several prominent institutions, including Gauhati University, Tezpur University, and Dibrugarh University, along with a wide array of private and government colleges. However, while the number of educational institutions has increased, the overall quality of higher education remains a pressing concern.

One of the key challenges in Assam's higher education system is its infrastructural limitations. Many colleges, particularly in rural and remote areas, suffer from inadequate facilities, outdated teaching resources, and poor connectivity. The lack of modern teaching tools and digital infrastructure hinders the adoption of innovative educational practices and restricts students' access to global knowledge. Additionally, Assam's higher education institutions face a shortage of qualified faculty members, particularly in specialized fields, further affecting the quality of education.

Economic disparities are also a significant factor. Assam is an economically diverse state with large sections of its population residing in rural and economically disadvantaged regions. Students from these areas often face financial constraints that limit their access to higher education. The state's higher education system, while expanding, struggles to ensure that students from all economic backgrounds have equal opportunities to pursue higher education. Moreover, gender inequality and a lack of inclusive education policies in some areas further exacerbate this challenge.

The higher education system in Assam is characterized by a mix of challenges and opportunities. As of now, the state's higher education sector, primarily consisting of undergraduate colleges, faces infrastructure limitations, especially in rural and semi-urban areas. While Assam has a rich tradition of education, many colleges still lack the necessary digital infrastructure, libraries, and modern classrooms to implement NEP 2020 effectively.

There are also socio-economic factors that influence higher education, such as the financial constraints of students and the prevalence of first-generation learners in many communities. The language barrier further complicates learning, with students often facing difficulties in accessing materials and engaging in subjects outside their regional language. Despite these challenges, there are numerous opportunities for growth, particularly in leveraging Assam's rich cultural diversity and the rising interest in interdisciplinary learning. The state can align NEP 2020's vision of inclusivity and quality education to address these issues, with a clear focus on college education up to the graduate level.

However, the diverse socio-cultural fabric of Assam also presents numerous opportunities. The state's rich ethnic and cultural diversity can be leveraged to create a more inclusive and context-specific educational experience. The introduction of flexible, interdisciplinary learning models, as envisioned in NEP 2020, can foster a more holistic approach to education. Assam's vast natural resources, along with its burgeoning tourism and agricultural sectors, provide an excellent platform for vocational education and skill development programs that can cater to the state's regional needs.

The role of regional diversity is integral to shaping Assam's educational policies. The varying linguistic, ethnic, and cultural identities within the state necessitate localized solutions to educational challenges. By embracing this diversity and tailoring curricula to address regional strengths, Assam can transform its higher education system into one that not only meets national standards but also caters to the aspirations and needs of its people.

3. KEY PROVISIONS OF NEP 2020 FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

NEP 2020 lays out several key provisions that are crucial for the transformation of higher education in Assam:

- **MULTIDISCIPLINARY AND HOLISTIC EDUCATION:** NEP 2020 advocates for a shift toward a multidisciplinary approach to education. At the undergraduate level, students will be encouraged to take courses across different disciplines, allowing them to tailor their education according to their interests and career aspirations.
- **ACADEMIC BANK OF CREDITS (ABC) AND MULTIPLE ENTRY-EXIT OPTIONS:** One of the most transformative features of NEP 2020 is the establishment of the ABC, which allows students to accumulate credits over time and provides flexibility for multiple entry and exit points in higher education. This ensures that students can continue their education as per their circumstances and abilities, without the constraints of rigid academic timelines.
- **FOCUS ON RESEARCH AND INNOVATION:** NEP 2020 emphasizes fostering a research culture at all levels of education, especially at the undergraduate level. The establishment of the National Research Foundation (NRF) is aimed at funding and encouraging research, which is crucial for academic institutions in Assam to contribute to innovation and national development.
- **USE OF TECHNOLOGY IN EDUCATION:** NEP 2020 recognizes the critical role of technology in education. In Assam, where digital literacy is still evolving, the policy pushes for the widespread use of digital tools and resources to enhance teaching, learning, and administration in colleges.
- **EMPHASIS ON FACULTY DEVELOPMENT:** The policy stresses the continuous professional development of teachers. For college teachers in Assam, this translates into opportunities for training in new teaching methodologies, interdisciplinary approaches, and technology integration.

4. IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES IN ASSAM

The implementation of NEP 2020 in Assam faces several challenges, primarily due to the state's unique socio-economic and geographical context.

INFRASTRUCTURE LIMITATIONS IN RURAL AND SEMI-URBAN AREAS:

A significant challenge is the inadequate infrastructure in rural and semi-urban educational institutions. Many colleges in these areas lack basic facilities such as modern classrooms, laboratories, and libraries, hindering the effective delivery of NEP provisions.

LANGUAGE BARRIERS AND CULTURAL ADAPTATION:

Assam is linguistically diverse, and the implementation of NEP's multilingual education policies faces resistance due to language barriers. Adapting NEP provisions to local languages and cultural contexts is essential to ensure inclusivity and effective learning outcomes.

FUNDING AND RESOURCE ALLOCATION ISSUES:

The financial constraints faced by many institutions in Assam limit their ability to invest in new technologies, faculty development, and research initiatives outlined in NEP 2020. Inadequate funding also affects the establishment of new programs and facilities.

RESISTANCE TO CHANGE FROM TRADITIONAL SYSTEMS:

The traditional, rigid structure of higher education in Assam poses resistance to the flexible and interdisciplinary approach proposed by NEP 2020. There is a reluctance to embrace changes in curriculum design and teaching methodologies.

BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE:

The digital divide remains a significant challenge, with many students in rural areas lacking access to high-speed internet and digital devices. This disparity impedes the widespread adoption of technology-driven education as envisioned by NEP 2020.

5. ROLE OF COLLEGE TEACHERS IN POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

College teachers play a pivotal role in translating the provisions of NEP 2020 into effective classroom practices. Their engagement is crucial for bridging the gap between policy and practice in higher education.

FACILITATING CURRICULUM TRANSITION AND INTERDISCIPLINARY TEACHING:

Teachers are central to implementing the curriculum transition envisaged by NEP 2020. They are responsible for integrating interdisciplinary approaches, which encourage students to explore subjects beyond traditional boundaries. By facilitating this shift, teachers can broaden students' perspectives and foster critical thinking, innovation, and problem-solving skills.

PROMOTING INCLUSIVE AND STUDENT-CENTERED TEACHING METHODOLOGIES:

NEP 2020 emphasizes inclusive education and personalized learning. College teachers are tasked with adopting student-centered teaching methodologies that accommodate diverse learning styles, abilities, and backgrounds. By fostering an inclusive classroom environment, teachers can ensure that all students, regardless of their socio-economic or cultural backgrounds, receive equal opportunities for growth.

INTEGRATING TECHNOLOGY INTO CLASSROOM PRACTICES:

Teachers must leverage technology to enhance teaching and learning. Integrating digital tools, online resources, and interactive platforms into everyday classroom practices can facilitate a more engaging and flexible learning experience. This helps to align with NEP 2020's push for technology-driven education, especially in remote areas.

ENCOURAGING RESEARCH AND MENTORSHIP FOR STUDENTS:

College educators are key to nurturing a research culture among students. By mentoring students in research projects and guiding them toward academic inquiry, teachers can contribute to the development of a knowledge-driven society, which is a core tenet of NEP 2020.

ADVOCATING FOR LOCAL KNOWLEDGE AND INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVES:

Teachers are also advocates for incorporating local knowledge and indigenous perspectives into the curriculum, ensuring that education is not only global but also culturally relevant and rooted in regional contexts.

6. STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION

To ensure the successful implementation of NEP 2020 in Assam's higher education sector, several strategies need to be adopted.

CAPACITY BUILDING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS FOR TEACHERS:

Ongoing professional development is essential for teachers to adapt to the evolving educational landscape. Regular capacity-building programs focused on new pedagogies, interdisciplinary teaching, and technology integration will enable educators to effectively implement NEP provisions.

COLLABORATION BETWEEN GOVERNMENT, ACADEMIA, AND STAKEHOLDERS:

A coordinated approach is vital for the successful execution of NEP 2020. Collaboration between the government, academic institutions, and local stakeholders can help align policy objectives with regional needs, ensuring a more inclusive and effective implementation.

LEVERAGING DIGITAL PLATFORMS FOR TRAINING AND UPSKILLING:

Digital platforms can play a crucial role in offering online courses and training modules for faculty development. By using e-learning tools, teachers can enhance their skills in modern teaching techniques, digital literacy, and research methodologies, thus supporting NEP's technology-driven education goals.

MONITORING AND EVALUATING THE IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS:

Regular monitoring and evaluation are necessary to assess the effectiveness of policy implementation. Feedback mechanisms should be established to track progress, identify challenges, and make necessary adjustments in real-time.

FOSTERING PARTNERSHIPS WITH INDUSTRIES AND RESEARCH BODIES:

Partnerships with industries and research organizations can provide real-world exposure, internships, and collaborative research opportunities for students. These partnerships will bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application, further enhancing the educational experience.

7. SUCCESS STORIES AND CASE STUDIES

Several successful examples of NEP 2020 implementation have emerged from across India, offering valuable insights for Assam's higher education system.

EXAMPLES OF SUCCESSFUL NEP 2020 IMPLEMENTATION:

In states like Karnataka and Maharashtra, institutions have effectively integrated the multidisciplinary approach of NEP 2020 by redesigning curricula to promote flexibility and interdisciplinary learning. For instance, the University of Mumbai has introduced programs allowing students to choose subjects from different disciplines, enabling a more holistic education. Similarly, in Assam, institutions like Gauhati University have begun offering flexible learning options and introducing short-term skill development programs, reflecting NEP's vision of making education more adaptable to student needs.

HIGHLIGHTING THE EFFORTS OF COLLEGE TEACHERS:

College teachers have played a key role in adapting to NEP 2020's provisions. In Assam, many faculty members have embraced new teaching methodologies, incorporating digital tools and multimedia resources to enhance student engagement. Teachers have also taken initiatives to integrate local knowledge into their lessons, reflecting the policy's emphasis on cultural relevance. Additionally, faculty development programs and online training have empowered educators to stay updated with the latest pedagogical practices, ensuring that they remain effective in meeting the diverse learning needs of students.

These efforts illustrate the potential of NEP 2020 to transform Assam's higher education system with active involvement from educators and institutions.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY MAKERS AND EDUCATORS

To ensure the successful implementation of NEP 2020 in Assam, it is essential to tailor the policy to the unique needs of the state's educational ecosystem.

TAILORING NEP 2020 TO THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF ASSAM'S EDUCATION ECOSYSTEM:

Assam's diverse cultural, linguistic, and socio-economic landscape requires a localized approach to NEP 2020. Policy makers should ensure that the curriculum is adaptable to regional languages, cultural contexts, and traditions. This will help students connect more effectively with the content while preserving local heritage.

PROVIDING FINANCIAL AND INFRASTRUCTURAL SUPPORT FOR HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS:

The state must prioritize funding for the infrastructural development of higher education institutions, especially in rural and semi-urban areas. This includes upgrading classrooms, laboratories, libraries, and digital facilities. Increased investment is necessary to equip institutions with the resources to implement NEP 2020's vision of technology-driven education and interdisciplinary learning.

RECOGNIZING AND INCENTIVIZING THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF COLLEGE TEACHERS:

Teachers are central to policy implementation, and their efforts should be recognized and incentivized. Providing financial incentives, professional development opportunities, and recognition for excellence in teaching and research will motivate educators to fully embrace NEP provisions. Moreover, teachers should be involved in the decision-making process, ensuring that their perspectives and challenges are considered.

DEVELOPING LOCALIZED CURRICULUM THAT ALIGNS WITH NEP PRINCIPLES:

The curriculum in Assam's higher education institutions should reflect the goals of NEP 2020 while catering to local needs. By integrating regional knowledge, vocational training, and sustainable development practices, policymakers can ensure that education is both globally relevant and contextually appropriate for Assam. This will help bridge the gap between national policy objectives and local realities.

9. CONCLUSION

The successful implementation of NEP 2020 in Assam's higher education sector, particularly at the Four year undergraduate course (FYUGC), requires concerted efforts from all stakeholders—policymakers, educators, and the community. By addressing the unique challenges faced by the state and tailoring the provisions of NEP 2020 to local needs, Assam can achieve a more inclusive, innovative, and globally competitive higher education system. The role of college teachers, particularly in adopting new teaching methodologies and promoting research, is pivotal. With adequate

support, collaboration, and monitoring, Assam's higher education institutions can rise to meet the challenges of NEP 2020 and contribute significantly to the state's socio-economic development.

The active involvement of college teachers is paramount in translating the policy's provisions into practice. Teachers not only play a critical role in adapting the curriculum and methodologies but also serve as catalysts for creating an inclusive and student-centered learning environment. By prioritizing their professional development and recognizing their contributions, the state can foster a motivated and skilled workforce capable of driving the reforms envisioned by NEP 2020.

In addition, adequate financial and infrastructural support from both the government and academic institutions is essential to provide the resources needed for the successful implementation of the policy. Bridging the digital divide, enhancing research facilities, and promoting interdisciplinary education will be key to achieving the holistic vision set out by NEP 2020.

Ultimately, a collaborative approach involving government bodies, educational institutions, and local communities, along with continuous monitoring and adaptation, will be vital in ensuring that Assam's higher education system meets the aspirations of its students and contributes to the state's socio-economic development.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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