



INTERNATIONALIZATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA: FROM THE LENS OF NEP 2020

Dr Mehjabeen S Rahman

Principal Secretary, University of Science & Technology, Meghalaya.

Abstract

The National Education Policy 2020 is seen as a harbinger of change in the educational system of the country. While several changes are proposed in this policy right from early childhood education, this paper specifically focuses on the higher education sector more specifically with respect to internationalization of higher education from the perspective of National Education Policy 2020. The basic objective of the paper is to understand the provisions in the National Education Policy 2020 regarding internationalization of higher education and to examine the implications of such provisions on quality of education in higher educational institutions. The paper has adopted a review of literature method to fulfill the objectives of the study. The findings of the study highlighted that several schemes, regulations and policies by UGC, AICTE etc. have been implemented in order to promote internationalization of education in higher educational institutions. These schemes and regulations aim to make Indian higher educational institutions centers of excellence and promote an ecosystem of quality academic and research activities. The plethora on a critical evaluation of the internationalization policies and programmes has been compiled and discussed the implications of such on the stakeholders.

Keywords: *Higher Education, National Education Policy, NEP 2020, International Collaboration, India.*

Introduction

The education system of a country plays a significant role in the growth and development of the society and the nation as well. This is particularly true for India where ancient knowledge has created Bharatiya Gyan Parampara leading to Indian way of life i.e. Indian Philosophy. It continuously plays an important role in socio-economic growth and development of the country. It is particularly important to note that the Indian higher education or tertiary education has a tremendous impact in the growth and development of the country. Higher education prepares human resources of the nation in terms of knowledge and skills in various emerging areas which leads to the growth and development of various sectors. The Indian higher education system is one of the largest in the world and also the fastest growing with the largest network of higher educational institutions under its fold (KPMG India and Google, 2017; Sharma and Sharma, 2015). Higher education or tertiary education has received tremendous currency in recent times with the emergence of India as a global economic player and with the realization of the ability of higher education in meeting the developmental needs of the country (Agarwal, 2006).

Foundations of higher education in India were laid in the pre-independence era with the introduction of Clause 43 of the Charter Act with the focus on promoting scientific knowledge and literature. After independence in 1947, Govt of India through various committees and commissions (Radha Krishnan-1949, Mudaliar-1952, Kothari Commission-1966, Yash Pal Committee-1986, Reddy Committee-1992) has been making changes in education policies relevant to the needs of the country. Focus on modernization of higher education, especially in terms of internationalization, took place in the earlier part of 1990s with the subsequent liberalization, privatization, and globalization of the economy. Now, with the advent of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, several changes have been proposed in



the education sector which is expected to revamp the entire education system (Kumar, 2021), especially in the context of internationalization of higher education as well.

With this background, this paper aims to explore internationalization of higher education with specific focus on international collaborations between high educational institutions in the light of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. The objective is highlighted by the description of the methodology adopted for the study followed by the review of literature on internationalization of higher education. A descriptive section on the evolution of educational policies over the years leading to the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is the outcome of changing needs of the country and provide autonomy to the academicians. The subsequent section focuses on internationalization of higher education and concluded with the impact of the new policy on outcome based education.

Objectives of the study

1. To analyze the provisions in NEP-2020 related to internationalization of higher education, specifically in terms of international collaboration in higher education; and
2. To critically examine the implications of the provisions of National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 related to internationalization in terms of identifying the opportunities and challenges in higher education.

Methodology

The present study has been conducted through an extensive review of literature consisting of peer reviewed journal articles, government publications and documents, and reports on higher education industry. Literature review method is an accepted way to review a phenomenon under study and understand the implications of the same (Chermack and Passmore, 2005). The study specifically focuses on and is limited to articles written in English. The keywords used in the search were ‘internationalization of higher education in India’ and ‘national education policy (NEP)’. These main keywords were combined with the operator ‘and’ to yield articles covering aspects of internationalization of higher education in terms of National Education Policy 2020. The article specifically focuses on internationalization of higher education in India facilitated by the National Education Policy 2020 in the context of other countries and nations.

Review of literature

Internationalization of higher education

Internationalization of higher education has been defined by several authors. Knight and de Wit (1995) defined internationalization as “the process of integrating an international or intercultural dimension into teaching, research, and service functions of higher education institutions”. Knight and de Wit’s definition of internationalization of higher education focuses on developing a global outlook in terms of teaching, research, and other service functions. According to Knight (2004, 2008), internationalization can be understood as “the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of postsecondary education”. This definition of internationalization of higher education presumes a policy decision at the level of the institution and also the government.

Internationalization of higher education has been defined by Altbach and Knight (2007) as “the complex of processes through which an institution becomes more involved in the international dimension of higher education, including its curricular, research, and service functions, as well as the range of activities it undertakes locally and internationally to fulfill its mission and meet its strategic



goals". This definition highlights internationalization as a way to achieve the strategic goals of an institution and also focuses on internationalization as a tool to achieve both local as well as international goals.

Marginson (2007) viewed internationalization as "the strategies and practices by which universities seek to shape their institutions and academic programs in order to attract and engage the diversity of students, scholars and ideas from around the world and ensure that their graduates can function effectively in the globalized economy". This definition views internationalization as a strategy to attract students to the institutes.

In the year 2010, the Government of India defined internationalization of higher education as "infusing global viewpoints, intercultural competencies, and international collaborations into higher education institutions' curriculum, research, and governance to improve education quality, stimulate innovation, and promote global involvement". This definition thrusts on internationalization as a way to improve quality of education and innovation through collaborations.

Additionally, Hudzik and McCarthy (2012) defined internationalization as "Internationalization is a deliberate process of incorporating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the ethos, curriculum, and organizational functioning of higher education institutions with the ultimate goal of improving the quality of education and research and preparing globally competent graduates". Deardorff (2006) also defined internationalization of higher education as "the deliberate process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions, and delivery of postsecondary education, to improve the quality of education and research for all students and staff, and to make a meaningful contribution to society". Both these definitions focus on the process of internationalization as a purposeful step taken by institutions to improve education as well as research. UNESCO (2020) defines internationalization as "'the internationalization of international, intercultural, and global dimensions in higher education institutions' policies, practices, and programs, with the goal of promoting inclusive and equitable quality education, intercultural understanding, and global citizenship".

Ministry of Education under Government of India (2021) defined internationalization in the context of higher education as "Internationalization of higher education in India involves the integration of international, intercultural, and global dimensions in the curriculum, research, and governance of higher education institutions, with the goal of fostering global citizenship, intercultural understanding, and preparing graduates for the challenges of the twenty-first century". This recent definition from the Ministry of Education lays emphasis on globalization of higher education to accomplish global citizenship.

From the definitions of internationalization presented above, we can understand that internationalization is a strategic tool for institutions as well as governments in order to attract students from other countries. The basic rationale behind internationalization is to improve quality of education, research and governance of higher educational institutions and to incorporate diverse and intercultural view on curriculum, research and education.

Internationalization of higher education in India

Internationalization of higher education has also been referred to as cross border higher education. Powar (2012) stated that cross border higher education helps in the blurring of external boundaries.



Internationalization of higher education has also been related to the labour market and a direct causal relationship between the two has been observed (Varghese, 2008). It has been observed that a foreign degree or foreign education places a premium on the student and thereby the student expects additional compensation as compared to another student who is not armed with such a degree (Varghese, 2008). However, when it comes to the Indian context, we have been rather slow in adopting the concept of internationalization of higher education as compared to South East Asian counterparts (Yeravdekar and Tiwari, 2014). Powar (2012) stated that globalization in 1991 and signing of the GATS in 1994 created a route for internationalization of higher education in India. However, due to limitations in terms of well designed policies the same opportunity could not be exploited. It is also observed that there is a striking contrast in the number of in-bound and out-bound students, where the proportion of out-bound students is way higher as compared to in-bound students (Agarwal, n.d.). Agarwal (n.d.) noted the un-planned nature of internationalization of higher education and remarked that India has not been proactive enough to attract foreign students.

Pritam (n.d.) felt that UGCs 10th plan to be a landmark step which espouses for internationalization of higher education. Evolution of education hubs can also be seen as a form of internationalization of higher education in the country which attempted to attract foreign students. Promotion of internationalization of higher education by the government of India comes from the larger picture of creating and positioning the country as a 'knowledge economy' (Dahlman and Utz, 2005). Mattoo (2009) focuses on the initiative of then Prime Minister of India Dr. Manmohan Singh of creating the economy based on and driven by knowledge. It is also important to note that in an attempt to internationalize the higher education system of the country, government founded the National Knowledge Commission in the year 2005; brought the Foreign Education Provider (Regulation) Bill, 2010 to facilitate the entry of transnational higher educational institutions in to India; signed the Obama-Singh Initiative in the year 2009; and also drafted the Higher Education and Research Bill, 2012.

The government of India in an attempt to attract global talent, in the eleventh five year plan (2007-2012) set up a goal of creating innovation universities through public-private partnerships. The idea was to develop centres of excellence focused on research, entrepreneurship, and inter-disciplinary education (Kasturi, 2008).

Thus, looking at the history of internationalization of higher education in India, it can be observed that the initial reluctance and hesitation on the part of the government has reduced to a great extent. However, the concept of internationalization to a great extent remains attached to attracting foreign students to the country. The current National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 takes a more holistic view of internationalization of higher education as compared to this narrow approach. The same is explained in the subsequent sections.

Evolution of international educational policy in India

The concept of internationalization of higher education in India has evolved over the years due to the constant and relentless efforts of the nation's educationist, policy makers and the leaders of this largest democracy of the world. India's constant effort in maintaining its status of the "Vishwaguru" as perceived by many Indian and world philosophers has helped the nation to internalize the need of making the Indian education system an inclusive education system. By making the education system inclusive to all section of the societies in the globe, India shall continue to carry its legacy of being the hub for creation of scholastic minds. The testament of India's contribution to an internationalized



education system dates back to 5 B.C. in Takshashila (Yeravdekar and Tiwari, 2014) and the University in Nalanda in 5 A.D. (Agarwal, 2009). The Takshashila University was pioneering in the field of politics, economics, military tactics/strategies, medicine and architecture. It opened its doors to scholars from ancient India, Central Asia and Persia. Similarly, Nalanda University of present-day Bihar in India was pioneer in the field of philosophy, astronomy, mathematics, medicine and language. The university mainly drew the scholars and students of Indian peninsula, China, Korea, Japan and other Asian countries. These institutes of higher education are regarded as the epitome of learning for the scholastic minds of their period. They are as prominent as the Ancient Mesopotamian centers of educational excellence like Sumerian city of Nippur (Between 4th to 3rd Millennia BCE) who is credited with the development of writing, legal and administrative institutions. Subsequent to that in 2nd century BCE till 14th century CE, the Silk Route countries of east and west created learning centers of Alexandria of Egypt and in China. But these centers of learning were not as institutionalized as it was done in modern internationalization of education centers. However, they are still considered early type of internationalization of higher education as these learning centers were able to bring students and scholars from across the globe to exchange knowledge, conduct research and engage in scholarly conversation. Compared to these centers, Nalanda and Takshashila were more institutionalized and regarded as the forerunners. However, with the rise of Medieval European Universities (between 11th-14th Centuries) and subsequent invasions of Indian peninsula by the Aryans (c. 1400 B.C.), Arabs and finally the colonial rulers, the progress of the Indian Higher Educational Institutions came to a standstill. These repeated invasions were detrimental to the advantageous progresses made in the ancient India. The medieval and modern Indian education system could not make much consolidated contribution to internationalization of higher education. However, this period saw changing demography, culture and the value system. Until the Britishers left the Indian subcontinent, the education system was just formalized in order to spread their language, culture and ideologies mostly dominated by the missionaries and colonial administrators. The degree of exchange of knowledge, movement of students across globe etc were however limited to the advantages of the colonial administration only.

The National Education Policy 2020 is the result of policy formulations and implementation over several years. Right after independence from British rule in the year 1947, several committees were constituted to review the problems in education and make specific recommendations in order to match the needs and aspirations of the citizens.

The Radhakrishnan Commission was constituted in the year 1948 which is also called the University Education Commission. The commission was appointed under the chairmanship of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan and the objective of the commission was to enunciate the goals and objectives of higher education. The Mudaliar Commission was constituted in the year 1952 with an objective to transform secondary education in India. The commission recommended the need for a comprehensive and integrated system of education. The commission recommended emphasis on postgraduate education and highlighted the importance of training and research to make way for advancement of knowledge in the country (Purohit, 2018).

After the Radhakrishnan Commission, several other commissions suggested recommendations over the years to bring changes in the higher education system. The government of India appointed an Education Commission in the year 1964. The committee was chaired by Dr. D. S. Kothari and is popularly known as the Kothari Commission. The Kothari Commission highlighted the importance of creation of new knowledge and also focused on promotion of social justice and equality through



diffusion of education. The Kothari Commission observed that: “While the fundamental values to which the universities owe their allegiance are largely unrelated to time and circumstances, their functions change from time to time. Their tasks are no longer confined to the two traditional functions of teaching and advancement of knowledge. They are assuming new functions and the older ones are increasing in range, depth, and complexity.” In light of this observation, the commission also suggested that universities in the modern world must provide leadership in order to develop their potential, develop competent individuals for the society, and universities also have the responsibility to extend the knowledge to the society (Purohit, 2018). After the Kothari Commission, in the year 1968 the first education policy of the country was introduced. The policy focused on higher education sector as well in terms of training, science education and scientific research, and reforms in the system of examination.

After the National Education Policy 1968, after about two decades later, the Government introduced the National Policy on Education 1986 chaired by Prof Yash Pal. This policy focused on higher education and development of Open Universities and Distance Education and Rural Universities and Institutions. The policy also called for development of innovation and research in universities and institutions of higher education. The National Policy on Education 1986 was reviewed and further updated in the year 1992 by Dr Reddy.

The latest National Education Policy 2020 of the 21st century was announced on the 29th July, 2020 came into being after almost three decades of the last educational policy introduced by the government in the year 1986. The objective of the current National Education Policy 2020 is to make education flexible multidisciplinary and outcome based with five main pillars i.e. Access, Equality, Quality, Affordability and Accountability. The focus of the National Education Policy 2020 is to make education relevant to the needs of current times. National Education Policy 2020 recommends a holistic approach to education to promote and develop creativity and analytical and critical thinking. The policy also focuses on integration of technology in the educational system.

International collaboration in higher education under NEP 2020 Policy

National Education Policy 2020 has created special provision with respect to internationalization and international collaboration. The National Education Policy 2020 recognizes the importance of internationalization and provides for collaborations in the international arena for teaching as well as research. The NEP 2020 aims to make education more holistic and multidisciplinary by making Indian universities and institutions of higher education globally more competitive.

In backdrop of these objectives of NEP 2020, provides for teaching and research collaboration with foreign institutions of high quality. The policy also allows for student and faculty exchanges with high quality foreign higher educational institutions (Several landmark initiatives taken up under NEP 2020 for the transformation of Education Sector, 2023). In addition to this, NEP 2020 also has the provision for foreign educational institutions, which are among the top 100 universities in the world, to set up campuses in India and also for Indian universities to set up campuses in foreign countries. In order to achieve this, the University Grants Commission (UGC) issued the “Academic Collaboration between Indian and Foreign Higher Education Institutions to offer Twinning Programme, Joint Degree, Dual Degree Programmes Regulations, 2022”. These regulations lay down the standards of academic collaboration between Foreign Higher Educational Institutions (FEIs) and Higher Educational Institutions in India (HEIs). The twinning programme according to the UGC regulation allows students enrolled with an HEI to undertake the course partly in India and partly in a FEI. In case of



joint degree programme, the curriculum is designed by FEIs and HEIs through a collaborative process. And a dual degree programme curriculum is jointly designed and offered by FEI and HEI; however, the student must meet the admission criteria in both the institutions and must get admitted to both the institutions separately. The guidelines also state the eligibility criteria for HEIs and FEIs to enter into such academic collaborations. For HEIs the institution must be accredited by NAAC (National Assessment and Accreditation Council) or any other such rating agency authorized to act on behalf of NAAC with a score of minimum 3.01, or the HEI must feature among the top 100 universities in NIRF (National Institutional Ranking Framework), or must feature among the top 1000 of Times Higher Education or QS World University ranking. For FEIs, institutions must feature amongst top 1000 of Times Higher Education or QS World University ranking (UGC's Academic Collaboration between Indian and Foreign Higher Education Institutions to offer Twinning Programme, Joint Degree, Dual Degree Programme of UGC Regulations, 2022).

Further to promote internationalization and international collaborations in higher education, the Union Cabinet has approved the Global Initiative for Academic Networks (GIAN) (Several landmark initiatives taken up under NEP 2020 for the transformation of Education Sector, 2023). GIAN specifically focuses on higher education sector and its aim is to tap the potential and talent of scientists as well as entrepreneurs globally and to engage them with the higher educational institutions (Global Initiative of Academic Networks, n.d). GIAN envisages transforming higher educational institutions of the country and it incorporates under its framework all IITs, IIMs, Central Universities, IISc Bangalore, NITs initially and later plans to incorporate good state universities under its fold as well. The scheme envisages participation of foreign faculty in the institutions of higher education.

Another scheme undertaken under the NEP 2020 is titled as Scheme for Promotion of Academic and Research Collaboration (SPARC). It is an initiative of the Ministry of Education, Govt of India to improve the research output in the country's higher educational institutions. It aims to facilitate research collaborations between institutions in India and best institutions across the world. The scheme is expected to improve research ecosystem of Indian higher educational institutions and accordingly a set of five thrust areas have been identified namely, fundamental research, emergent areas of impact, convergence, action-oriented research, and innovation-driven research.

The government has set up the National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF) which is a nationally integrated competency framework and is designed to be aligned with global standards. The credit based framework along with the practical approach of imparting vocational training to facilitate mobility across general and vocational education making students develop in a holistic manner.

National Research Foundation (NRF) has been carved out and on 28th June 2023. The National Research Foundation (NRF) Bill, 2023 was approved in the Parliament. NRF will act as the apex body to promote high-level strategic research in the country. The objective of NRF is to forge collaborations between academia and industry, research institutions and even government departments in a bid to improve the quality of research and allow for participation and contribution to research from governments as well as industries (Ministry of Science and Technology, 2023).

The process of internationalization through international collaborations in terms of academics and research has already seen action on the ground. A memorandum of understanding (MoU) has already been signed between Ministry of Education, Government of India; IIT Madras; and Ministry of Education and Vocational Training Zanzibar- Tanzania. The MoU has been signed for setting up the



first ever IIT Madras campus outside of India. Similarly, MoU has also been signed between Ministry of Education- Government of India, Abu Dhabi Department of Education and Knowledge, and IIT Delhi to establish its first ever campus in Abu Dhabi.

Discussion and conclusion

The internationalization and international collaborations in higher education institutions has better opportunities in the context of National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. Internationalization, as highlighted earlier, has been defined by different authors. While internationalization in the case of higher education is seen to be beneficial as it brings out different perspectives and allows for the merger of the same, internationalization also has its own pitfalls.

India is home to approximately 1.4 billion people with diverse cultural and ethnic background. Higher education system and gross enrolment ratio (GER) in higher education has seen a rise over the years. However, much needs to be done in order to catch up with the other developing and developed economies. According to the AISHE 2023 report, the gross enrolment ratio (GER) at the higher educational level is 27.1 percent which is an increase from the previous year. One of the reasons for low GER can be attributed to less number of higher educational institutions as compared to the significant population of the country (Iyer, 2019). National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 focuses on internationalization of education and research and attempts to facilitate international collaborations and attract international students; however, achieving the same may be difficult considering the shortage in higher educational institutions in the country.

In addition to this, Indian Universities and institutions hardly feature among the top 100 institutions all over the world in terms of rankings. As such, it is a difficult job to attract foreign students to join Indian higher educational institutions and universities. According to Mittal & Pani (2020), in the year 2018-19 only 47,427 foreign students were enrolled in institutions of higher education in India. Contrary to this, approximately 7,00,000 students went to study in international universities abroad (Mittal & Pani, 2020).

As a matter of fact, Indian universities and higher education institutions need to face several challenges, specifically in the domain of expansion, equity and excellence (Pujar, 2014). As such, the pressure to rise to the occasion of international collaboration and internationalization in higher education is especially challenging for Indian higher educational institutions.

Internationalization further requires Indian higher educational institutions and universities to set-up world class infrastructure along with developments in teaching, learning and research. Setting-up of infrastructure involves significant monetary expenditure and according to the Economic Survey of 2022-23, the total education outlay adds up to only 2.9 per cent of the country's GDP (The Economic Times, 2023). Considering the investments required in the process of achieving internationalization of higher education, investments in education has not increased gradually but has remained more or less stagnant. Moreover, internationalization and creation of foreign university campuses within the country is expected to lead to increase in the cost of education as well. When the country is already facing problems in terms of equity and access to education, internationalization is further expected to increase this divide and make quality higher education inaccessible to the poor and marginalized sections of the society.



The National Education Policy 2020 intends to make certain bold moves in terms of progression and evolution of higher education in India. While it is important to understand the importance of internationalization of higher education in this regard, it is important to tread the path to internationalization carefully. The higher education system comprises of several stakeholders, namely, the higher educational institutions both private and public, the government which includes the state and the central government, the faculty members, the students, the parents, and the society at large. It is important to carefully consider the requirements of the various stakeholders and also to understand the impact of policies on these stakeholders before taking steps to internationalize the higher education system of the country. The goal of NEP-2020 is to enhance internationalization of Indian educational needs to comply with global standards to enable Indian universities and colleges attract students from abroad and check Indian students going abroad. The National Education Policy-2020 has provided path breaking reforms to equip faculty members and universities to enhance capabilities and competencies to create a vibrant ecosystem of education. Reforms in admission procedures, affordable cost, developing collaboration in research can help in joint degree, twining degree and earning credit from trans boarder institutions can facilitate.

This study has important implications for universities and institutions of higher education in terms of understanding the requirements to operate at a global level and cater to international educational standards. The study also has important implications for faculty members and students because teaching and learning in a global environment requires inputs not just inside the classroom but also outside the classroom. Lastly, the government must look at the infrastructural facilities and capacities of universities to expand their infrastructure in order to fit into the concept of internationalization of education.

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