



Research Paper

NEP-2020 Implementation in Rural colleges of Assam: Issues and Challenges

Rintu Handique

Assistant Professor in Education
Harhi College, Dhakuakhana
Dist. Lakhimpur, Assam, India

Abstract:

The National Policy of Education-2020 signifies a fundamental change in the educational framework of India, with the objective of establishing a comprehensive, adaptable, multidisciplinary and inclusive education system. Although its potential effects are extensive, the execution in rural regions, especially in states such as Assam, poses distinct challenges and opportunities. This paper aims to examine the current situation, implementation barriers, and future outlook of NEP-2020 in rural colleges of Assam. Though qualitative analysis derived from interviews, field visits, and policy evaluations, the research indicates that while there is awareness and intention, infrastructural shortcomings, digital challenges, and a shortage of trained personnel will pose considerable obstacles. Nevertheless, targeted investments and suggestive policies could convert these institutions into NEP-compliant education in the near future.

Keywords: NEP 2020, Assam, Rural Education, Higher Education Policy, Educational Reform, Implementation Challenges, Digital Divide

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I. Introduction:

The National Education Policy 2020 aims to overhaul India's educational system to meet 21st-century needs. It emphasizes equitable access, experiential learning, regional languages, multidisciplinary education, and integration of vocational skills. However, the policy's successful implementation heavily depends on contextual adaptability, particularly in rural and underserved regions. Assam, a linguistically and culturally diverse state in Northeast India, has a significant number of colleges located in rural areas. These institutions face a different set of challenges than their urban counterparts, including infrastructural deficiencies, shortage of qualified faculty, and limited access to digital tools. Understanding the local context is crucial to bridge the gap between policy and practice in actual field.

Objectives of the paper:

- To assess the level of awareness and preparedness for NEP 2020 implementation in rural colleges of Assam.
- To identify basic challenges in implementation of NEP-2020.
- To find out the opportunities and prospects NEP 2020 brings for rural higher education.
- To propose actionable recommendations for proper implementation.

II. Methodology:

This study adopts a mixed-method approach:

- **Primary Data:** Interviews with some college principals, faculty members, and some students from rural colleges in Assam.
- **Secondary Data:** Review of government reports, UGC guidelines, NEP 2020 document, and academic papers.
- **Data Collection Tools:** Semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and field observation.

Sampling was purposive to include a representative mix of colleges affiliated with state universities and autonomous institutions.

III. Findings:

Awareness and Perception

- **Administrators:** 85% of principals were aware of NEP 2020's key proposals but uncertain about practical implementation.
- **Faculty:** Most faculty members showed interest but expressed concerns about training and workload.
- **Students:** Very limited awareness of the policy; most associated it only with changes in exam patterns.
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Infrastructure and Digital shortcomings

- Many colleges lack basic digital infrastructure required for multidisciplinary and blended learning.
- Internet connectivity is poor or unreliable in several rural regions.
- Virtual labs and online courses are not accessible in most colleges.

Faculty Readiness

- Only a small proportion of faculties have received training on NEP 2020 implementation.
- There is a gap in understanding interdisciplinary teaching and outcome-based education.

Challenges in Implementation:

- **Infrastructural Gaps:** Lack of smart classrooms, libraries, labs, and hostels.
- **Policy-Execution Mismatch:** State-level roadmap for NEP 2020 implementation is still evolving.
- **Digital Exclusion:** Poor internet and low digital literacy among students and faculty.
- **Resource Constraints:** Insufficient funding and bureaucratic delays.
- **Resistance to Change:** Skepticism among some educators toward outcome-based models.

Prospects and Opportunities:

- **Skill Development:** NEP's vocational focus can enhance employability in rural areas.
- **Language Inclusivity:** Promoting Assamese and other regional languages as media of instruction can democratize access.
- **Interdisciplinary Learning:** Potential for collaborative teaching and curriculum innovation.
- **Capacity Building:** Opportunities for faculty development through online training and MOOCs etc.

IV. Suggestions:

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 seeks to revolutionize India's educational framework, prioritizing comprehensive, multidisciplinary, and adaptable learning. Although the policy outlines an extensive vision, its practical application in rural colleges of Assam encounters many challenges and also opportunities. Below are several recommendations for effective implementation of NEP-2020:

- **Smart Classrooms and Digital Connectivity.**
- **Utilize Government Initiatives:** Proactively pursue funding and assistance from state and central government initiatives aimed at enhancing digital.
- **Community Internet Centers:** Partner with local panchayats or NGOs to create community internet centers in proximity to colleges, enabling students from areas with limited connectivity to access digital resources.
- **Library and Lab Enhancement**
- **E-libraries:** Allocate resources to develop digital libraries that provide access to online journals, e-books, and research databases. This can help mitigate the constraints of physical library resources in rural settings.
- **Mobile Labs/Shared Labs:** Investigate the feasibility of mobile science labs that can serve multiple rural colleges, or establish shared laboratory facilities among a group of nearby colleges to optimize resource use.
- **Local Resource Mapping:** Identify and utilize local resources for hands-on learning and skill enhancement.
- **Sustainable Infrastructure:** Emphasize eco-friendly and cost-efficient infrastructure solutions that are appropriate for rural contexts, such as solar energy for electricity backup.
- **Regular Faculty Development and Training programme.**
- **Launch state-funded capacity-building programs for rural faculty.**
- **Improve internet connectivity and digital infrastructure in rural colleges.**
- **Include local stakeholders in NEP implementation committees.**

V. Conclusion:

The execution of NEP 2020 in the rural colleges of Assam presents both challenges and opportunities. The effectiveness of this policy will rely on some strategies that consider the infrastructural, pedagogical and socio-economic contexts. Through collaborative efforts from the government, academic institutions, and civil society, rural higher education in Assam has the potential to experience a significant transformation towards inclusivity and excellence.

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