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Implementing NEP 2020: Issues and Opportunities for Higher Education Administrators

Dey M[1], Saha S[2*]

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[1] Munmun Dey, Assistant Professor, Department of Commerce, Vivekananda Mission Mahavidyalaya, Purba Medinipur, West Bengal, India.

[2*] Soumya Saha, Assistant Professor, Department of Commerce, Vivekananda Mission Mahavidyalaya, Purba Medinipur, West Bengal, India.

The paper explores the challenges and opportunities facing institutional management and administrators in implementing the NEP 2020. This stakeholder analysis will assess the preparedness of HEIs to adapt to the policy requirements and administrative hurdles (if any) encountered by them. Data has been collected from 121 administrators of colleges of West Bengal, Jharkhand, Assam and Tripura.

Resource availability and action plan have emerged as important factors in determining the preparedness of HEIs. There is a significant difference in perception of administrators across states wrt general awareness, resource availability and action plan. Administrators consider curriculum enrichment and pedagogy as the greatest opportunity promised by NEP 2020 and substantial infrastructure and resource gaps in HEIs as the greatest challenge set by NEP 2020.

Keywords: NEP 2020, HEIs, administrators, preparedness, resource availability

Corresponding Author

Soumya Saha, Assistant Professor, Department of Commerce, Vivekananda Mission Mahavidyalaya, Purba Medinipur, West Bengal, India.

Email: soumyasaha@vmmahavidyalaya.ac.in

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1. Introduction

Three approaches to education reform have been implemented by India since its independence. India passed two national education policies; the first in 1968[1] and the second in 1986[2] which was again revised in 1992[3]. The third and the most recent national education policy was adopted in the year 2020 which is a step in the direction of achieving uniformity along with international academic standards and practices.

The nation's education department bears the obligation of enhancing gross enrolment ratio (GER) to encompass all its citizens to easily access higher education opportunities. Hence, the policy seeks to increase the current gross enrolment ratio (GER) to 50% by 2035[4] by providing liberal education which is both transdisciplinary as well as interdisciplinary to each and every individual who aspires to pursue higher education. The NEP 2020 now focuses on competency-based education for students. Through a series of fundamental reforms, it aims to redefine the way education is conceived, delivered, and assessed. It also aims to boost the education industry and its related sectors (Aithal & Aithal, 2020; Verma & Kumar, 2021; Reddy et al., 2023).

All stakeholders including educators, students, policymakers, parents, and the general public have a shared responsibility for NEP 2020's success (Roy & Swargiary, 2023). With this in mind, the study was initiated to examine the views and experiences of one of the major stakeholders at higher education institutions in the eastern and northeastern regions of the country, primarily administrators in order to infer a better understanding of their perspectives.

2. Objectives

1. To investigate the challenges and opportunities facing institutional management and administrators in implementing the NEP 2020.
2. To assess the preparedness of HEIs to adapt to the policy requirements and administrative hurdles (if any) encountered by them.

3. Data and Methodology

The current research employed a structured questionnaire method for collecting quantitative primary data.

The questionnaires were precisely designed according to the objectives of the study.The target population of the study with regard to colleges consisted of 875 public, government-aided and autonomous colleges throughout the four states of West Bengal, Jharkhand, Assam and Tripura. Private colleges have been excluded from the study as it is presumed that they have ample resources at their disposal to augment infrastructure as and when required. Initially, the allocation of colleges for each state was based on population density, resulting in estimates as shown in Table 1. A simple random sampling approach was employed by generating random numbers to select the first designated number of colleges in an ascending order representing both urban and rural areas.

Table 1: State-wise details of stakeholders

States	Administrator
Jharkhand	30
Assam	21
Tripura	24
West Bengal	46

Pilot testing has been conveniently performed on 5 administrative members to understand the language clarity, reliability, and validity of the questions.Since the questionnaire was administered to the respondents personally by the researchers, there has been no case of missing data.

The perception of administrators has been formulated into four variables such as, general awareness, resource availability and action plan and overall preparedness. Equal probability index has been calculated to formulate the values of all the above-mentioned variables.

The following OLS regression has been applied to identify whether general awareness, resource availability and action plan can predict the preparedness of administrators regarding NEP 2020 on overall data as well as across states.

preparedness of Admin =α + 1genaware + 2resavail + 3 actionplan …….eq(1)

In the next step, by using Kruskal Wallis test, whether perception of administrators on overall preparedness is significantly different across states has been tested.

Research Hypothesis: No significant deviation between the administrator's opinions regarding overall preparedness across states.

We also used Relative Important Index to identify and rank challenges and opportunities faced by administrators.

4. Findings and Observations

4.1. Results

Table 2: Regression Analysis[5] of administrators' overall preparedness across four states

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.708[a]	.501	.488	.523329

a. Predictors: (Constant), action plan, resource avail, Gen aware

Table 3: Correlation statistics of Regression Analysis[6] of administrators' overall preparedness across four states

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1 (Constant)	.680	.292		2.331	.021		
Gen aware	.118	.074	.122	1.597	.113	.736	1.359
Resource avail	.110	.044	.180	2.491	.014	.812	1.231
Action plan	.586	.087	.540	6.717	.000	.659	1.516

Multivariable regression has been employed to examine the overall preparedness (dependent variable) of the administrators across four states with respect to action plan, resource availability and general awareness (independent variables) towards implementing NEP 2020. Data reveals in table 3 that the association between the dependent and independent variable is statistically significant ($F=39.176$, $p=.000$) except for general awareness. Moreover, the value of R square is .501, indicating that approximately 50% of the variance in overall preparedness is significantly described by the above-mentioned independent variables (refer table 2). Moreover, the results exhibited that if there is an increase of one s.d. in the 'action plan' and 'resource availability' the overall preparedness of administrator will increase by 0.54 and 0.18 s.d.

4.2. Results of Kruskal-Wallis Test

In this section we determine whether there is significant difference in perception of administrators across the 4 states. The difference in perception is measured in terms of the overall preparedness.

Table 4: Mean rank of four codes (States) to examine the association among them with regard to overall preparedness

Ranks			
Overall Preparedness	Code	N	Mean Rank
	1	21	88.95
	2	24	70.69
	3	30	41.13
	4	46	56.14
	Total	121	

Table 5: Kruskal-Wallis Test to examine the association among the four states with regard to overall preparedness

Test Statistics[a,b]	
	overall preparedness
Kruskal-Wallis H	25.890
Df	3
Asymp. Sig.	.000

A Kruskal-Wallis test (Kruskal & Wallis, 1952)has been performed on the overall preparedness of administrators with regard to implementation of NEP 2020 across four states- Assam (code 1), Tripura (code 2), Jharkhand (code 3), and West Bengal (code 4).The selected variable for study i.e., the overall preparedness of administrator data was collected using ordinal scales and derived using 5-point Likert scale. We applied Kruskal-Wallis test as the data is found to be non-normal (Shapiro-Wilk test, $p< 0.05$). Moreover, to justify the use of Kruskal-Wallis test we also calculate an effect size measure and the value of η^2 is 0.195, which indicates a large effect size (Cohen, 1988).

The Kruskal-Wallis test (Kruskal & Wallis, 1952)showed a significant difference in overall preparedness across states (table 5). This is a relevant inference as the four states have different government, different universities and are in different phases of implementation of NEP 2020. While Jharkhand is ahead of all the 3 states in terms of one year earlier implementation, Tripura is at the most initial stage of implementation. While some governments have actively taken steps for the implementation, some government like that of West Bengal are in double minds about it. Some universities have been very proactive in setting up guidelines and are arranging for restructuring of curriculum by involving the HEIs.

They are also conducting workshops for administrators so as to provide them with clear understanding of the policy requirements and hand holding them to align their administrative environment with the objectives of NEP 2020. However, there are many other universities who are yet to decide on the way forward for the implementation of NEP 2020.

Since the Kruskal-Wallis test is significant, reporting post-hoc comparisons from the Pairwise Comparisons table (refer table 6) are being recommended.

Table 6: Post-hoc comparisons to examine the overall preparedness across code (states)

Pairwise Comparisons of code					
Sample 1-Sample 2	Test Statistic	Std. Error	Std. Test Statistic	Sig.	Adj. Sig.[a]
3-4	-15.008	8.197	-1.831	.067	.403
3-2	29.554	9.566	3.090	.002	.012
3-1	47.819	9.938	4.812	.000	.000
4-2	14.546	8.795	1.654	.098	.589
4-1	32.811	9.199	3.567	.000	.002
2-1	18.265	10.437	1.750	.080	.481

Post-hoc comparisons using Dunn's method with a Bonferroni correction for multiple tests[7] exhibited that overall preparedness (dependent variable) of Jharkhand (code 3) is significantly different than that of Tripura (code 2), p=.012, and Assam (code 1), p=.000. Similarly, the overall preparedness (dependent variable) of West Bengal is significantly different than that of Assam (code 1), p=.002. However, there is no significant difference with respect to other code groups (refer table 6).

Jharkhand is ahead of the other 3 states as it has implemented the NEP 2020 in 2022, one year earlier. Hence, it is better prepared than the others. West Bengal is in double minds about NEP 2020 and it is the largest of the four states under study.

4.3. Relative Importance Index (RII)[8]

4.3.1. Inferential Statistics: Relative Importance Index (RII)- Challenges

Relative Importance Index (RII) analysis has been employed to rank the challenges across the four states according to their relative importance. As shown in the table 7, highest ranking of challenge across the four states is Financial constraints and the lowest ranking of challenge is training of non-teaching staff to meet NEP 2020 requirements.

Table 7: Relative Importance Index values of four states w.r.t. Challenges

Challenges	Rank Total	Assam	Tripura	Jhar-khand	West Bengal
Financial constraints have limited HEIs ability to invest in the necessary infrastructure and resources for NEP 2020 compliance.	1	2	1	7	1
HEIs have encountered administrative hurdles (e.g., resource constraints) in the implementation of NEP 2020.	2	1	3	5	2
HEIs are facing difficulties in designing, implementing, and managing assessment methods of NEP 2020.	3	4	2	2	4
HEIs are facing difficulty in having useful and effective collaboration with other HEIs.	4	3	4	6	5
HEIs invest in professional development and training of academic staff to meet NEP 2020 requirements.	5	7	7	1	3
HEIs have encountered administrative hurdles (e.g., regulatory obstacles) in the implementation of NEP 2020.	6	5	5	3	6
HEIs invest in professional development and training of non-teaching staff to meet NEP 2020 requirements.	7	6	6	4	7

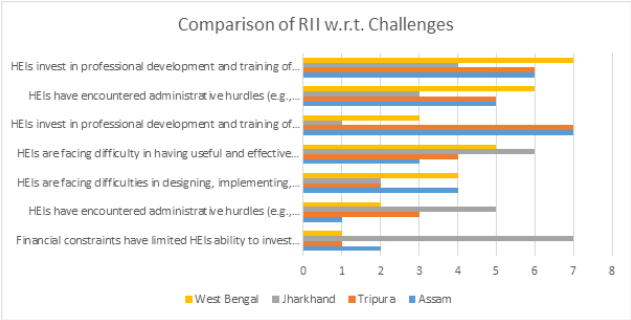

Figure 1: Relative Importance Index values of four states w.r.t. Challenges

Financial constraints and administrative hurdles (e.g. resource constraints) in the implementation of NEP 2020 are the two major challenges faced by three states except Jharkhand. The administrators of these three states perceive that to implement the multi-faceted NEP 2020, the primary constraint is to have adequate financial resources.

To successfully implement NEP 2020 in these tough times is burdensome for the HEIs unless they receive financial resources from the higher education departments.

For Jharkhand training of academic staff is the biggest challenge. It seems that management of human resources is a major concern in Jharkhand. However, Jharkhand has received financial support from the higher education department as it has implemented NEP 2020 in the year 2022.

Investment in training of teaching and non-teaching staff have received the lowest ranking in the other three states. These states do not consider training to be challenging at all and perceive that training can be arranged once the financial resources are available to them.

4.3.2. Inferential Statistics: Relative Importance Index (RII)- Opportunities

Relative Importance Index (RII) analysis has been employed to rank the opportunities across the four states according to their relative importance. As shown in the table 8, opportunity with the highest ranking across the four states is "Curriculum and Pedagogy" and the opportunity with the lowest ranking is "Flexible fee structure".

Table 8: Relative Importance Index values of four states w.r.t. opportunities

Opportunities	Rank Total	Assam	Tripura	Jharkhand	West Bengal
Curriculum and Pedagogy	1	1	1	1	1
Innovation	2	2	2	2	2
Leadership	3	3	3	3	3
Multilingual Education	4	4	4	4	4
Online Learning	5	5	5	5	5
Faculty Development	6	6	6	6	6
Flexible Fee Structure	7	7	7	7	7

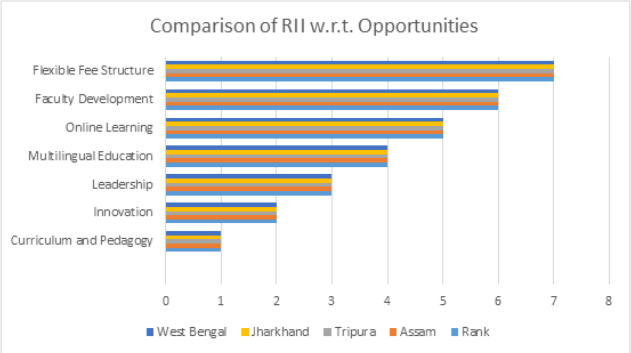

Figure 2: Relative Importance Index values of four states w.r.t. Opportunities

The administrators of all the four states have unanimously ranked the opportunities provided by NEP 2020. The greatest opportunity is the curriculum and pedagogy. The innovation that has been brought in by NEP 2020 in the form of participative learning, experiential learning and critical thinking-based assessment are truly noteworthy.

All the administrators perceive the flexible fee structure as the least ranking opportunity as though there is provision for this in NEP 2020, there are no clear guidelines about this provision yet.

5. Summary of Findings and Recommendations

a. Resource availability and action plan are important factors in determining the preparedness of HEIs. General awareness is not a significant factor because even if they are aware of the policy, the lack of resource availability or proper action plan to materialize the provisions will lead to under preparedness.

b. The post hoc analysis to identify the area where the state wise difference lies reveals that Jharkhand is significantly different in terms of perception about preparedness. Since, the NEP 2020 has been implemented earliest in Jharkhand in the year 2022, they are better prepared as compared to the other three states and already have a long-term action plan in place for meaningful implementation of the policy.

c. Administrators consider financial constraints to be the biggest challenge. There is a paucity of classrooms and physical infrastructure such as adequate number of computers, books on new variety of subjects that have been introduced, seating arrangements etc.

d. Administrators consider curriculum enrichment and pedagogy as the greatest opportunity. The introduction of ability enhancement courses and skill enhancement courses will equip the students to be industry ready. The introduction of multidisciplinary courses will play a pivotal role in the holistic development of the students.

It is understood that overnight changes in physical infrastructure as per the requirements of the execution of the new education policy is a distant possibility. In this light, it is hereby suggested to give priority in renovation of the current infrastructure along with the unused and underused

infrastructure available with HEIs as per the basic structure of NEP 2020.

Since each region has a different socio-economic environment, it is recommended to provide a specific framework and implementation strategy, particular to each region, so that NEP-2020 fits in with the environment and tackles the issues that are unique to it.There is a difference in acceptance of online courses across universities for acquisition of credit. The universities that have introduced the concept have also specified the selective subjects for which credit can be acquired through online courses. Hence, we recommend that the states with multiple universities have uniform policy to provide a level playing platform for all students in the state.

6. Limitations and Scope for Further Study

When the present study was conducted, the implementation of the policy was at its nascent stage in a majority of states. Hence it is worthwhile to have a study on the efficacy of the programme in meeting its target objectives in the long run, once at least a full duration of the undergraduate programme is completed. Further, the present research was focused on the eastern and north-eastern states of the country. It would be important to further extend the perception study to other socio-economic, geographic, linguistic and cultural settings to exactly assess the challenges and prospects of NEP-2020 at the national level. It is also recommended to conduct a longitudinal study to capture the change in perception of administrators over time and generalize the policy evaluation prospects.

Data Protection Note: The information provided by respondents has been used **solely for academic and research purposes** related to this study. No personally identifiable information of respondents has been disclosed in any report or publication. The collected data has been **anonymised and aggregated** for analysis to ensure privacy.

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Footnotes:

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Annexure 1: Description of the variables used in Regression Analysis

Action Plan	Our institution has a well-defined long term plan for integration and implementation of Indian Knowledge System (IKS)
	Our institution has a well-defined long term plan for implementation of Academic bank of Credit System. (ABC)
	Our institution has a well-defined long term plan for implementation of Skill Development Course.
	Our institution has a well-defined long term plan for incorporation of online course (MOOC/SAYAM) in curriculum.
	Our institution has a well-defined plan for long-term NEP 2020 implementation.
	Our HEI has developed an action plan to align its assessment systems with the recommendations of NEP 2020.
	Our HEI has developed an action plan to align its teaching methodologies with the recommendations of NEP 2020.
	Our HEI has developed an action plan to align its curriculum with the recommendations of NEP 2020.
General Awareness	Our Higher Education Institution is familiar with the objectives and key provisions of the NEP.
	I understand how the NEP aligns with our administration's environmental goals.
	Education Institution (HEI) has a clear understanding of the policy requirements and objectives of NEP 2020.
Resource Availability	Our Higher Adequate resources (financial) have been allocated for our HEI to successfully implement the provisions of NEP 2020.
	Adequate resources (human) have been allocated for our HEI to successfully implement the provisions of NEP 2020.
	Adequate resources (physical) have been allocated for our HEI to successfully implement the provisions of NEP 2020.
Preparedness	Overall, I believe our institution is prepared to adapt to policy requirements.
	Regular assessments are conducted to measure our progress in NEP 2020 implementation.
	Feedback from stakeholders and the public is considered in NEP evaluation