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Voices of the Future Regarding the National Education Policy (2020) : Students Opinion

[1*]Dr. Pushpa Kumari, [2]Dr. Sunita Dixit, [3]Babita Vishwakarma and [4]Pooja Mishra

*Assistant Professor Deptt. Home Science, B.H.U Varanasi, U.P, 221005
Email : pushpa.kumari@bhu.ac.in

ABSTRACT

The New Education Policy 2020 of the Government of India identifies education and institutional capacity building as two programmes that could support the implementation of sustainable development of the country and also make it self-reliant. One issue that the policy completely ignores is how it intends to guarantee that students' intellectual freedom will be maintained in universities. A total of 470 students were selected by random method. This representative sample was drawn from each discipline (science, arts, and social science) at the university. A critical analysis of the relative merits and demerits of the new education policy is, therefore, necessary. The majority of students (40.2%) had the opinion that flexible curriculum, practical-oriented training (38%), andvalid student assessmentin the new education policy 2020 however most of the students were undecided as to whether the new education policy provided scope for better teaching and learning or not.

Keywords : Education policy, Merits, Demerits, Intellectual freedom, Practical approach

INTRODUCTION

Education is fundamental for achieving full human potential developing an equitable and just society and promoting national development. Providing universal access to quality education is the key to India's continued ascent, and leadership on the global stage in terms of economic growth, social justice and equality, scientific advancement, national integration, and cultural preservation. New education policy lays particular emphasis on the development of the creative potential of each individual. It is based on the principle that education must develop not only cognitive capacities - both the 'foundational capacities 'of literacy and numeracy and 'higher-order' cognitive capacities, such as critical thinking and problem-solving – but also social, ethical, and emotional capacities and dispositions.

There are still conflicting opinions in the country on whether this new education policy in 2020 is better than the old one. A critical analysis of the relative merits and demerits of the new education policy is, therefore, necessary. The current educational system is grade-oriented, and knowledge is becoming talent-oriented rather than talent-certificate-oriented the NEP 2020 signifies a shift

towards emphasizing the development and nurturing of individual abilities over the traditional focus on grades and certification. Instead of making students mark-seekers, the educational ecosystem should develop talent and technology-driven experts. The NEP 2020 presents twenty-two guiding principles, encompassing conceptual comprehensiveness, flexibility, and holistic development. These principles are intended to underpin the entirety of the Indian education system (Shamsu, 2021).

Only an exam cannot predict student's future, so they must be given the chance to select a vocation that suits their interests and preferences (Saurabh, 2012).The prevailing teacher-centric model, in which teachers determine subjects, curriculum, evaluation criteria, etc., is set to be supplanted by a student-centric approach. Under this new paradigm, students will have the authority to choose the subjects they wish to study at the institution. (Simao, A. M. V., & Flores, M. A. 2010)

Since this system wasn't used during data collection at the four main universities and because of the new education policy in 2020, it hasn't been assessed yet. Therefore, the study was conducted in 2022-23 at four central universities in Uttar Pradesh, India, to obtain students' opinions on the NEP.

METHODOLOGY

Population and sample

An online survey method was used to collect thedata. The study was conducted on a sample size of 470undergraduate final-yearuniversity students. This sample was drawn giving representation to each discipline (science, arts, and social science), of four central universities of Uttar Pradesh i.e.Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University, Lucknow, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, University of Allahabad, Allahabad.

Instrument used for Data Collection

A set of Guttman scales was constructed to measure the opinion of the students relating to the items and demerits in respect to the new policy of education. A five-pointratio scale on the Likert pattern was used to get the opinions from the sample students on the Guttman scale. This rating procedure ranged from strongly disagree to strongly agree with undecided as a middle point. The Guttman scale known as the cumulative scale measures a unidimensional conceptwith several statements placed in a hierarchical order.

Clarification of Guttman Scale

In our study, the Guttman scale was utilized to capture the degree of agreement with various statements about the new education policy. This cumulative scale allowed us to assess the consistency of students' opinions across related items.

To illustrate the use of the Guttman scale, we present a matrix of student responses. Each row represents an individual student's responses, while each column corresponds to a specific statement. '1' indicates agreement with the statement, while '0' indicates disagreement. The cumulative nature of the Guttman scale is evident as students who agree with a higher-order

statement also agree with all preceding statements. The results from the Guttman scale were analyzed to determine the consensus index for each item, which reflects the level of agreement among students. The consensus index was calculated for both merits and demerits of the new education policy, as shown in the table 1 and table 2.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Students'Opinions on the items of merits of New Education Policy 2020

Opinions of students regarding the merits of the New Education Policy are given in Table 1.

Flexible Curriculum

The consensus index of 0.14 for this item was statistically significant at 0.01 level. Although this consensus was not very high, the new education policy (2020) has a flexible curriculum according to students. The consensus index is a statistical measure used to determine the level of agreement among respondents in a study. The calculation of the consensus index typically involves analyzing responses to a particular item or question and determining the extent to which respondents agree or disagree. It often ranges from 0 to 1, where 0 indicates no agreement and 1 indicates perfect agreement.

Better Trained Students

The index of consensus was -0.28 for this item and was significant at 1 percent level. This implied that the students did not feel that they would be better trained under the new education policy. The fact that most students seem to find the new education policy satisfying, while not being better prepared for the new system, may suggest that the majority of students find the courses easier to complete under the new system than under the previous one.

Practical-oriented training

the consensus index of 0.08 through significance at 5 percent level, indicated a low consensus. This finding confirms the statements made by many university students, indicating that the new system has successfully provided more practical-oriented teaching-learning methods.

Academic freedom for teachers to develop their own course content

The consensus index of-0.04 was significant at 5 percent level. It revealed that the students did not recognize that academic freedom was given to the teachers under the new system of education. “Academic freedom" refers to the autonomy that teachers have in their professional roles, including curriculum design and teaching methods. The consensus index suggests that students did not perceive teachers as having this freedom within the new education system (Wilkins. 2019).

Table 1 : Distribution of Respondents According to Merits of New Education Policy

Sl. No	Items of the Merit	The number of respondents expressing					Total	Index of consensus (Cc)	Standard error (SCc)	Normal Deviate
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree				
1	Flexible Curriculum	18	171	189	74	18	470	0.14	0.02	5.90**
2	Better trained students	17	61	143	178	71	470	-0.28	0.03	10.15**
3	Practical oriented training	25	154	179	86	26	470	0.08	0.02	3.44**
4	Academic freedom in the teacher to develop own course content	14	71	268	101	16	470	-0.04	0.016	-2.63*
5	Scope for better teaching methods	16	109	243	87	15	470	-0.03	0.017	1.77
6	Desirable students	0	38	211	188	33	470	-0.22	0.02	-11.47**

**significance at 1 percent level
* Significant at 5 percent level

Scope for better teaching methods

The consensus index of -0.03 was not significant. Thus, the student's opinion was not in favour of the fact that there is more scope for better teaching methods in the new education policy.

Desirable students' behavior

The consensus index of -0.22 was significant at 1 percent level. This implied that the students did not accept this item as a merit of the new system of education. It is rather difficult to explain why the students disagree with this idea while many authorities have observed that the students are found busy although the course period in the new education policy.

Opinion of Students' opinions on the item's demerits of New Education Policy 2020 Students opinions on the items of demerit are summarized in Table 2.

Misuse of Academic freedom

The consensus index of -0.15 was significant at 1 percent level indicating that the students did not accept the item under the demerit list.

Unhealthy competition among teachers in grading

The consensus index of 0.11 was significant at 1 percent level. This implied that from the students' viewpoint, the unhealthy competition among teachers in grading was an item of demerit in the new education policy.

Lowering of academic standards

The index of consensus of -0.38 was significant at the 1 percent level, indicating that there is a perception that academic standards are being lowered in the new education policy.

Table 2 : Distribution of Respondents According to Demerits of New Education Policy

Sl. No.	Items of the Demerit	The numberof respondents expressing					Total	Index of consensus (Cc)	Standard error (SCc)	Normal Deviate
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree				
1	Misuse of Academic Freedom	13	75	195	136	51	470	-0.15	0.02	-7.22**
2	Unhealthy Competition among teachers in grading	28	158	179	82	23	470	0.11	0.02	4.93**
3	Lowering Academic Standards	14	38	144	164	110	470	-0.38	0.03	-12.99**
4	Poor comprehension of subjects	13	35	129	226	67	470	-0.38	0.03	-14.26**
5	Inconvenient to students	0	55	173	189	53	470	-0.27	0.02	-11.71**
6	Lack of uniformity in teaching and evaluation	17	26	123	228	76	470	-0.39	0.02	-14.72**
7	Inconvenient to teachers	26	86	212	118	28	470	-0.03	0.02	-1.63

** Significant at 1 percent label

Poor comprehension of the subject: The consensus index of -0.38 was significant at 1 percent level. Thus, the results pointed out that in students under the new education policy 2020 is not poor.

Lack of Uniformity in Teaching and Evaluation: This has the most negative consensus index of -0.39 and a normal deviate of -14.72, indicating a very strong perception of this as a demerit.

Inconvenient to teachers: The consensus index of -0.03 was not significant. This implied that the students did not consider the new system as convenient to teachers. The New Education Policy (NEP 2020) presents challenges for teachers, notably in increased workload due to curriculum revisions and unfamiliar teaching methodologies. Inadequate infrastructure and resource constraints impede effective implementation, particularly in marginalized communities. Critics argue that NEP's reforms may exacerbate existing inequities. Addressing these concerns necessitates comprehensive support systems, tailored training, and equitable resource distribution to ensure NEP's objectives are met while minimizing inconvenience to teachers (Smith *et.al* 2023).

This study revealed that the merits of the new education policy have been a flexible curriculum, valid student assessment, scope for better-trained students, satisfactory student progress, practical-oriented teaching and academic freedom to teachers, while the demerits have been, pressurizing teachers, lack of uniformity in teaching and evaluation, poor comprehension, inconvenience to teachers and lowering of academic standards.

CONCLUSION

There is no unanimous opinion in the country on whether the new education policy 2020 introduced in the universities based on foreign patterns is better than the old system. Dr. Sujatha, Ramesh, and Dr. K. Natarajan (2019) compared the NEP (2019) with the American Education system. The NEP permitted to swap over the course like that USA. In students' opinion, the merits of the new system of education are Flexible curriculum, practical-oriented training,and valid student assessment. The students did not agree that the new system resulted in better-trained students; provided academic freedom to teachers; and resulted in desirable student behavior. Majority of students were undecided as to whether the new system of education provided scope for better teaching methods.

The demerits of the new system of education as the students felt that unhealthy competition among teachers in grading and the students did not agree that the new system resulted in 1) misuse of academic freedom, 2) lowering of academic standards, 3) poor comprehension of the subjects, 4) inconvenience to students, 5) lack of uniformity in teaching and evaluation and 6) inconvenience to teachers.

Thus, in students' opinion, the new system of education has more merits than demerits. Some appreciate its flexibility and emphasis on holistic learning, while others express concerns about implementation challenges and preserving traditional education methods. A comprehensive and progressive framework, the National Education Policy 2020 tackles numerous issues facing the Indian education system today. The 21st-century learner's needs are well-aligned with its emphasis on flexibility, skill development, early childhood education, and technology integration.

IMPLICATION OF THE STUDY

A Student's Opinion sheds light on students' perspectives regarding the NEP 2020. Understanding students' views is crucial for crafting policies that resonate with their needs and aspirations. This study underscores the importance of including students in educational policy discussions, acknowledging them as key stakeholders. Their insights can inform policy decisions and help create a more inclusive and student-centric education system. Policymakers should heed these voices to ensure that the NEP aligns with the expectations and aspirations of the future generation.

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