

FOUNDATION DAY LECTURE

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“Roadmap to Sustainable Higher Education”

by

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BRAOU Foundation day Lecture-2022

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It is a great honour and privilege for me to deliver the Foundation Day Lecture at Dr B R Ambedkar Open University, Hyderabad. I thank the Vice Chancellor, Prof. K Seetharama Rao for giving me this opportunity and thereby allowing me to visit this beautiful campus and interact with you all. I feel deeply connected with the University as Dr Seetharama Rao has been one of the esteemed Governing Council members of Association of Indian Universities, and had contribute immensely in its various policy deliberations. I am greatly touched with the gracious hospitality, kindness and simplicity of the University faculty and staff.

I also congratulate the Vice Chancellor and his entire team for the commendable work they are doing in promoting quality teaching, learning and research in the university. The University setup in 1982 as Andhra Pradesh Open University and renamed as Dr. B.R.Ambedkar Open University in 1991 has completed 40 glorious years of its existence. The motto of the University “EDUCATION FOR ALL” augurs well with its objectives. It is heartening to see that the university has been catering to a variety of students like housewives, farmers, skilled and unskilled labour, Jawans, Policemen, prison inmates etc., who would otherwise not be able to acquire new skills and higher qualifications through a wide network of 213 study centres including 23 regional co-ordination centres and 14 centres exclusively for women students. The University has gained a prestigious and enviable position in society by providing access to large number of learners, designing courses

innovatively, producing quality materials for interactive learning, setting up a wide network of support services, widening access to research, postgraduate and professional programmes and giving hands on training for laboratory practice in science and technology Courses. The university is contributing immensely in improving the access to quality education as envisaged in the National Education Policy 2020.

For the growth of any nation, education is the most important attribute which enables it to achieve its full human potential, develop an equitable and just society, and promote national development. Therefore, the education system of any country must align itself with the changing employment landscape and global ecosystem. The Education pedagogy should inculcate critical thinking and problem-solving approach in students thereby making education more experiential and enjoyable. The Education sector across the world has recently observed transformations in the program structure and outcomes due to rapid scientific and technological advancements. The ‘New Normal’ being created in the whole world due to Corona Pandemic has forced us to use the technology in a big way to promote quality education.

The emphasis is now on sustainable higher education. We need to focus on universal access to quality education for maximizing country’s talent and resources. The road map to sustainable higher education is very well laid down in India’s National Education Policy 2020 which is a remarkable step in this direction since it is developed on the philosophy and thought of ancient Indian knowledge, wisdom and truth. It has been drafted considering the local and global needs of the country, and is a forward looking, innovative and a student centric policy. The policy is most democratic as for the first time in the country’s history, suggestions were obtained from more than 2 lakh people and experts starting from panchayat to the national and international experts. The NEP

of India emphasizes that our education system must be able to develop among students a deep sense of respect towards the fundamental duties and constitutional values, share of bonding with one's country and conscious awareness of one's role and responsibility in a changing world. The policy envisages a quality education for all the students irrespective of their place of residence, origin and caste. The policy particularly focuses on betterment of historically marginalized, disadvantaged and underrepresented groups. The NEP endeavors to empower teachers, at all levels of education, and promote them to teach effectively while making use of technology. It emphasizes on recruiting and retaining the best teaching professionals to aid in shaping the citizens for next generation.

The major policy reforms envisaged in NEP to shape the future of young students are as follows:

New Regulatory Structure of Higher Education

The NEP has considered several important reforms at the architectural level requiring changes in the regulatory structure. At present India has several regulatory bodies which includes major regulators i.e. UGC and AICTE and seventeen statutory professional councils like NCTE, MCI, BCI, ICAR, NCI, COA, DCI etc. To remove structural overlaps in terms of functioning of these regulatory bodies and to segregate the functions of regulation, funding and accreditation, the policy has recommended setting up of a Higher Education Commission for India (HECI) as an umbrella institution. The commission shall have following four independent organizations each having its own well-defined roles and functions:

National Higher Education Regulatory Council (NHERC)

Higher Education Grant Council (HEGC)

National Accreditation Council (NAC)

General Education Council (GEC)

Restructuring of Universities

The policy has recommended that higher education institutions shall be transformed into large multidisciplinary universities, colleges, HEI clusters each of which should have at least 3000 students. The aim will be to increase Gross Enrolment Ratio in the higher education from 26.3% to 50% by 2035.

The NEP suggests abolishing the affiliation system imposed on our country by the British legacy in the next 15 years. This will be achieved by giving graded autonomy to around 40,000 colleges and converting them into independent, autonomous degree awarding colleges.

Further, the NEP policy has classified Universities into following three categories:

Research Intensive Universities

Teaching Intensive Universities

Autonomous Degree Awarding Colleges

The Research-Intensive Universities will give equal emphasis to research and teaching. On the other hand, the Teaching Intensive Universities will also conduct both research and teaching but their main focus will be on teaching. The last category i.e. Autonomous Degree Awarding Colleges may also conduct minimal research activities but their primary focus will be on teaching of UG/PG courses. Thus, the NEP will result in re-alignment of the University structure. The policy suggests that all the Universities will be multi-disciplinary in nature i.e. there will be no programme specific or single faculty University like Law University, Medical University, Technology University, Agriculture University etc. All these universities over the time would be required to add disciplines and academic programmes over time to become multi-faculty. This will ensure holistic development of students with some basic

knowledge of all the fields and give them the freedom of choice, should they wish to study any other subject.

While giving impetus to online education, the highly accredited institutes will now be able to conduct both open and distance learning (ODL) and online learning programmes. This will help in improving the GER to 50% as envisaged in the policy and at the same time give a flexibility to the students in terms of pursuing education along with work or for pursuing two degrees at a time.

Restructuring Academic Programmes

In our ancient Vedic culture students were taught about 64 kalas which not only comprised of kalas like music, dance and art but also included kalas like humanities, languages, science, medicine, technology etc. The NEP considers our ancient Vedic system comprising of ‘knowledge of many arts’ as the base for formulation of Liberal education for 21st century students. Liberal system of education suggests that students should be given education about multiple disciplines so that they have basic knowledge of each domain. Under the domain of liberal education, the NEP has transformed three-year graduation programme into a four-year programme with multiple entry and multiple exit facility. The main advantage of this is that student can resume their education at any point of time in life and from any university in the country by getting re-entry into the system. The studies pursued earlier will not go waste and one can resume the studies from the second or third year if he/she already possesses a certificate or diploma. Moreover, if one is not able to continue studies further, he/she becomes eligible for the job on the basis of the certificate and diploma qualifications. While advocating for holistic and multidisciplinary education, the policy also emphasises on education through projects in the areas of community engagement, environment education and value-based education. In keeping with the global requirements, the Policy recommended that education should create global citizens who are

aware of global issues and work towards resolving them. They should create and promote more peaceful, tolerant, inclusive, secured and sustainable societies. Another significant reform in the NEP–2020 is regarding admission to PhD programme. Now, the Master’s degree would no longer be the only criteria for admission in PhD. A Bachelor’s degree holder with research would be eligible to directly get admission in the PhD program. Similarly, the duration of Master’s degree shall be of 2 years if the Bachelor’s degree is of the 3-year duration, but one can obtain a Master’s degree in one year if she/he has completed a four-year Bachelor’s programme with research. Therefore, a very flexible structure has been given in the NEP–2020 for the benefit of students. The policy also focuses on experiential learning of students through internships. Therefore, it has been made compulsory for students of every program to undergo internships during semester or winter breaks in the industry, business houses, schools, studios, with craft persons, research institutions, etc. Institutions are now supposed to allow active engagement of the students with the practical side of their learning which would be helpful in improving their employability and entrepreneurship opportunities. The policy further suggests an integrated BEd programme of 4 years so that the students who wish to become teachers can be effectively groomed in the aforesaid duration. The NEP–2020 also emphasizes on ensuring the quality of online degree to be at par with the degree obtained via regular mode. The policy focuses on continuous assessment and evaluation of students throughout the semester rather than on a three-hour examination at the end of semester. The continuous assessment of students can be done through various techniques like projects, activities, face-to-face interaction, group discussions etc. This has to be adopted by the universities in letter and spirit to produce successful and employable graduates.

Academic Bank of Credit

The most revolutionary recommendation of NEP is the Academic Bank of Credit (ABC) which will prove to be a game changer by providing wings to the students for a free flight of knowledge. ABC is conceptualized as a digital/virtual/ online entity to function like a Commercial Bank with students as account holders to whom the bank shall provide a variety of services including credit accumulation, credit verification and credit transfer. ABC shall provide credit deposit accounts to all the students who are studying in any recognized Higher Education Institute (HEI) or even to those who are not students at present but wish to pursue education as a freelancer. The academic credits earned by a student from multiple institutions, both in online or regular mode, shall be credited to his account. After accumulation of credits up to a given threshold level, a student can redeem the credits for an academic degree at any convenient time. The ABC shall facilitate student mobility across the system including movement between campus-based education and ODL, movement between skill-based programs and formal Degree programs and movement between Indian and foreign Universities. It will also allow the students to learn over a long span of time, thus promoting lifelong learning. ABC shall prove to be a panacea for the students for pursuing quality lifelong education while exercising freedom of subject, freedom of time, freedom of university, freedom of country and freedom of speed.

Internationalization of Higher Education

The policy emphasizes on promoting India as a global study destination providing premium education at affordable cost to restore its status as '**Vishwa Guru**'. The policy has laid path for opening of campuses of high performing Indian universities abroad in order to promote our cultural heritage, ancient knowledge system, Indian system of Medicine like Ayurveda, naturopathy, yoga etc. Apart from this, top 100 universities of the world will be allowed

to open their campuses in India. To promote research collaboration and student exchanges between Indian and foreign universities, the credits acquired in foreign universities may be considered for the award of a degree by the Indian universities. This is going to be a revolutionary step in view of the fact that around 1 million students from India go abroad for their higher education and only about forty-eight thousand students come to India to pursue their higher education with highest number being from Nepal, Bangladesh and Afghanistan. The primary focus of the policy is to increase the number of inbound students from other countries to India and to take measures to reduce the number of outbound students from India. So, in future, if students from neighbouring countries wish to study in top 100 universities of the world, they can come to India and thus save a lot of funds and at the same time be in close proximity with your family.

Re-energizing Faculty

The NEP while acknowledging the importance of faculty in achieving the growth of higher education, has proposed that the faculty be given the freedom to design their own curricula and pedagogical approaches within the approved frame work. It seeks to encourage and incentivize the faculty for doing innovative research, outstanding and creative work and adopt new teaching pedagogies using technology. The policy also recognizes the need for reducing the student teacher ratio and excessive work load of the teachers to ensure that teaching remains a pleasant activity with adequate time for interaction with students and for conducting research. The faculty has been given complete freedom to decide, what to teach, how to teach and how to assess and evaluate the students based on continuous evaluation of their students throughout the semester rather than depending upon a three-hour examination at the end of the semester. The policy focuses on acknowledging excellent faculty members through rewards or

incentives while focussing on tenure track and fast track promotion of faculties based on their performance. To produce good academic leaders and administrators, the emphasis is on identifying good faculty having leadership qualities and administrative acumen and preparing them for leadership roles by training and grooming them for the future roles.

Promoting Research

The policy while stressing on the importance of research has mentioned that the research and innovation investment in India is only 0.69% of GDP as compared to 2.8% in USA, 4.3% in Israel and 4.2% in Korea. The policy while stressing on increasing the total funding on higher education to 6% of GDP has also strongly emphasized on increasing the research funding. The policy has recommended establishment of National Research Foundation which will completely oversee and monitor funding of research grants to universities. The National research foundation will avoid overlapping of research grants from different sources and carry out linkages of universities with various funding sources.

Empowering Students

The NEP is a forward-looking and student centric policy, in which complete freedom is given to students in terms of selection of subjects, selection of courses, selection of multiple universities with in a program and freedom of speed for completion of programme. The student can now take a break from their studies and resume their education at any point of time. The transfer of credits from online mode to regular mode, from foreign university to Indian University and from one program to another will give a lot of flexibility to the students to choose their learning path. The policy focuses on use of open education resources and platforms like Swayam for online teaching and learning. The NEP focuses on blended learning i.e. combination of online and offline learning.

Integrating Vocational Education

The policy while stressing on the employability of students, focuses on integration of vocational education with higher education. It also underlines on the need for giving due prestige, dignity and honour to skill-based education.

It is recommended that the Vocational Education Institutions and HEIs of repute should work on upgrading their infrastructure to world class level in a phased manner for increasing capacity and reaching targets of 50% of vocationally trained students by 2025.

While concluding, I would like to say that the National Education Policy, a very innovative and ambitious policy, well-grounded in the roots of Indian Ancient Knowledge system has provided the roadmap to sustainable higher education. The NEP focuses on holistic development of students and has the potential of making India a *Vishwa Guru* once again. The essence lies in its implementation in letter and spirit in a time bound manner. For this all stakeholders i.e., the central government, state governments, statutory professional councils, state councils of higher education, universities, colleges along with the Educational Leaders, Faculty and students are working hard with passion to ensure that the vision set in the policy actually sees the light of the day.

I wish that the faculty and students of this university may succeed in their future journey and keep climbing the limitless ladders of excellence. The mantra to succeed in this rapidly changing world is skilling, upskilling and reskilling while ensuring that no one is left behind in the process of change. An inclusive development is the holistic development. Together we all can succeed. Remember Ubuntu – “I am because you are” – a quality that includes essential human virtues; compassion and humanity.

Thank You.

Jai Hind!