

# Assessment and Accreditation of Indian Higher Education Institutions in Light of New Education Policy 2020

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## Abstract

The Government of India recently announced the New Education Policy 2020 (NEP-2020), a landmark change for the existing education system in the country. Numerous issues were addressed to include Assessment and Accreditation, revamped course and exam structures, multidisciplinary institutions, enhanced emphasis on vocational courses and digitization of education etc. For the past 34 years, no such significant changes were carried out in the Indian education system. Thus, it's a historic moment across India, with the potential to translate into a much needed and timely reformatory movement. This paper discusses policy related issues in assessment and accreditation of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in light of NEP 2020.

**Keywords:** Assessment and Accreditation, Higher Education Institution, Accredited Institutions, Technology, public self-disclosure, Good governance.

## Introduction

The National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) has the vision and potential to transform the Indian education landscape. It relies on a comprehensive commitment for policy implementation by all stakeholders, including the Prime Minister and the Education Minister. Research related to policy implementation gaps has repeatedly demonstrated that avoiding policy failures involves creating robust means, methods and implementation mechanisms.

The National Education Policy 2020 has been widely acclaimed as a vision document of great scholarship. Ambitious, progressive and transformative, it seeks fundamental and substantive changes in the landscape of education at all levels. The challenge lies in laying a clear roadmap for transformative reforms and rolling out prioritized plans for implementation in a time bound manner without losing the impetus

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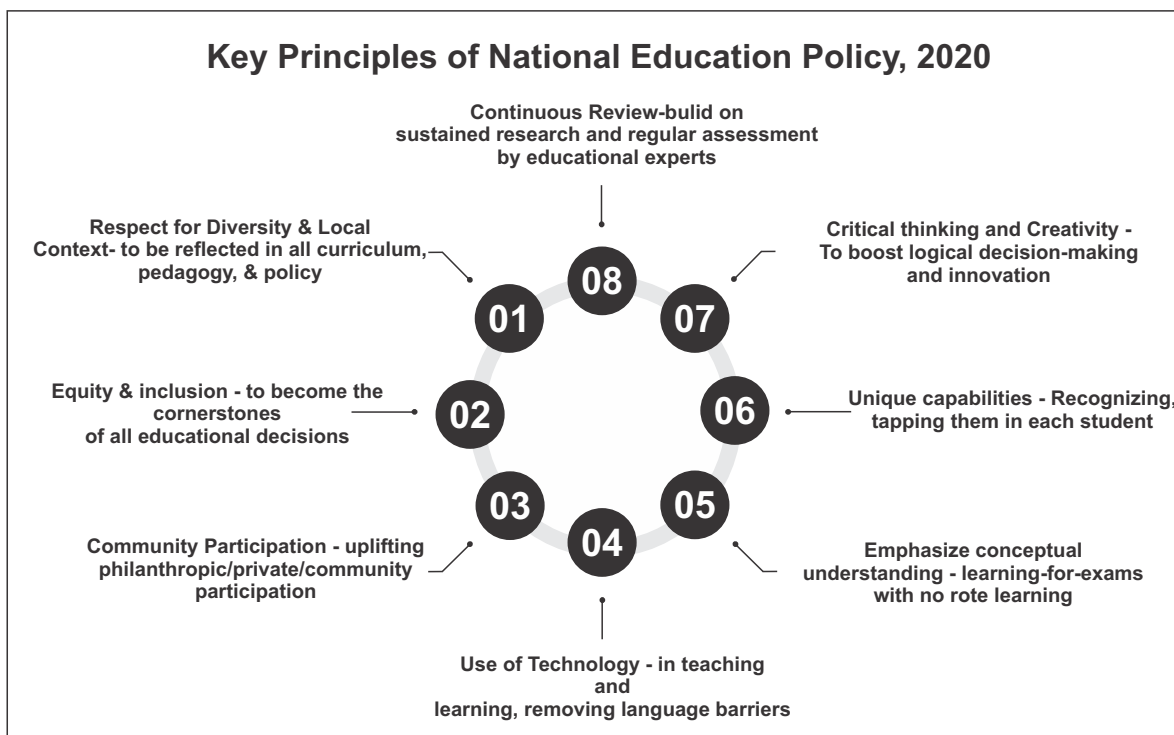
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generated. In the first instance, this would entail re-engineering the regulatory and governance framework.

## New Regulatory Framework

The National Education Policy (NEP 2020) has envisaged a single overarching body, the Higher Education Council of India (HECI) as a regulator for all higher educational institutions across the country. HECI shall have four verticals, namely:

- National Higher Education Regulatory Council (NHERC): will function as the common, single point regulator for the higher education sector



including teacher education but excluding legal and medical education.

- National Accreditation Council (NAC): will be a meta-accrediting body that will create, oversee and supervise an independent ecosystem of Accrediting Institutions (AIs).
- Higher Education Grants Council (HEGC): will carry out the funding and financing of colleges and universities.
- General Education Council (GEC): will frame the learning outcomes – referred as graduate attributes – for higher education programmes. It will also formulate a National Higher Education Qualification Framework (NHEQF).
- Each vertical will have a single role and autonomy in its functioning. It is expected that all the above entities will make use of extensive technology in

order to minimize human interface as far as possible and as a result maintaining transparency and efficiency in overall process. It is expected from them to set high standards of public probity based on transparent public disclosure.

Thus, NEP envisages a ‘Light but tight’ regulatory framework to be implemented in a facilitative manner. It expects from the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) the highest standards of professional integrity.

### Assessment and Accreditation as per NEP

National education policy 2020 intends to form up one single regulator body for higher education. A single regulator, the National Higher Education Regulatory Authority (NHERA), envisages a ‘Light but tight’ regulatory framework to be implemented in a facilitative manner. It expects

from the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) the highest standards of professional integrity – ensuring the regulation is effective and transparent. The major tool to ensure that regulation is effective and transparent is accreditation as Accreditation helps in building reputation of the HEIs and most importantly signifies the quality of education and nep suggest accreditation process to be focused primarily good governance, basic norms of the institution, public self-disclosure, would be done and evaluated by independent accrediting institutions monitored by a ‘meta-accrediting’ body, named National Accreditation Council (NAC). Only the institutions adhering to the quality parameters would be accredited successfully. The licence in order to work as a accreditor would be given by the NAC to suitable eligible institutions.

Accreditation is the bedrock for ensuring quality in higher education. NEP envisages a single regulator for the entire HE sector, namely, the general, professional and vocational streams, including teacher education but excluding medical and law education. NAC shall undertake the task of quality assurance for the entire higher education system. As an independent body, it will decide the accreditation framework for all HEIs, public or private. All Higher Education Institution will be accredited based on the set criteria, benchmark and processes. The focus will be on outcomes and less on inputs and process. Further, accreditation will be based primarily on basic norms, public self-disclosure, good governance, and outcomes.

As per the NEP 2020 plans it is expected that the existing number of Higher Education Institutions will be consolidated into around 15,000 institution offering programs with emphasis to multi-disciplinary approach. There will be one sole meta-accreditation agency; it will set up an independent ecosystem of Accrediting Institutions (AIs) who shall accredit the Higher Education Institutions under the supervision of NAC. Its own role will

clearly be enabling, facilitating and supervising the AIs.

During the implementation of NEP, both the HEIs and the degree programmes will undergo incremental as well as intended disruptive changes. HEIs would seek accreditation during the course of major transformative stages. Akin to the HEIs, NAC functioning through its AIs will also have to remain resilient, adaptive and agile. At the same time, it will have to ensure the regulatory mechanism and accreditation criteria are explicitly stated and available in public domain. This will entail design of novel generic accreditation framework focusing on outcomes considering the factor of diversity in HEIs.

### **Assessment and Accreditation based on NEP Parameters**

NAAC has huge amount of data, which have aided in giving good quality inputs, has created parameters as a benchmark to assess quality, and more. The number of institutions to be assessed or accredited has increased from time to time; NAAC may take lead role in guiding other bodies in conjunction with the new education policy 2020.

NEP also emphasis on outcome-based education the current system through which NAAC assesses and Accredits institutes is based on seven criteria that are input, process and outcome based. Out of these seven criteria’s criteria no 3, 5 and 7 focuses on outcome and criteria no 1.2.4 and 6 are input and process based.

The NEP also states that the higher education institutes to be regulated through full online and offline public disclosure of all finances, procedures, faculty/staff, courses, and educational outcomes. NAAC already conducts 70 per cent of its assessments online. The idea is to do as much as possible through less human contact and since

technology allows you to get everything online, information can be collected easily. As a result of grading by NAAC, they want to look or make things better than what already is. NAAC 's vast experience in assessing range of institutions from liberal art and science, engineering, medical, teacher education, law to most technical institutions have given array of experiences in understanding the diversity that is involved with the Higher Education System of India. NAAC is also in the process of accrediting the open universities and dual mode universities as a special step towards assuring the quality for open and distance mode learning. Also, the geographic multiplicity as rural-urban, state dynamics, inter-state geopolitics etc. have given a chance to understand the variety of issues involved in Higher Education of India.

NAAC Assessment and Accreditation enables Higher Education institutions to climb up the ladder of quality, and internalize the process of quality achievement, maintenance and sustenance. NAAC has been observant in adapting to the changing needs of Higher Education and has evolved several assessment reforms to suit the needs and demand on the field. Extensive peer involvement, strategic benchmarking, tactical piloting and deployment have infused transparency and confidence in the system Institutes are being asked to put everything online or on their website in full disclosure. None of the ranking systems like Times Higher Education World University Rankings or QS World University Rankings actually physically go to the universities or Higher education institutes; they rank from what is available on the public domain. All private and government institutions should be accountable and put all the academic relevant data on the internet which NAAC is already doing by putting all data on public platform.

## Way Ahead

It has long been recognized that Assessment and Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions through transparent and informed process is critical for the country to become a part of the global quality assurance system. Need to set up an independent ecosystem of Accrediting Institutions (AIs) as the primary mechanism for regulation of HEIs and their accreditation. The role of accrediting agency should be enabling, facilitating and supervising the AIs as suggested in NEP 2020.

1. Laying down a framework for mandatory assessment and accreditation of HEIs and/or programmes including Technical Education programmes conducted therein, mediated through an ecosystem of Accreditation Institutions (AIs) with clearly defined roles and responsibilities of various agencies and stakeholders.
2. Create the regulatory framework for setting up of AIs as the mechanism of accreditation by AIs. This would include procedures and criteria for selection, registration of AIs.
3. Define the jurisdiction of AIs vis-à-vis HEIs, procedures and criteria for accreditation.
4. Laying down a synergetic framework for development of assessment and accreditation tools (based on research and OBA-Out come based Accreditation), instruments and resources; training, handholding and incubating of AIs and Assessor community; Technological interventions; outreach and awareness programmes for the HEIs and other stake holders.
5. Create robust & independent oversight / review mechanism.
6. Provide full autonomy to AI's for carrying out the A & A process.

7. To keep benign watch on AI's, since its evolution to standardization.

8. Shall be the dispute resolving body through preset mechanism.

### **Conclusion**

National Education Policy 2020 is undoubtedly progressive and innovative. It beautifully balances the old policy with updated form. This change was much needed. This change is worth waiting for 34 years. If the implementation is done according to the policy it will definitely bring much needed change in Higher Education and will ultimately boost in the economic development of the country

and will bring drastic change in the GDP of the country.

The new policy does install a somewhat fresh perspective on regulation of higher education through Assessment and Accreditation towards its commitments on providing clarity on the three developments: the approach towards regulatory bodies, the changing approach to funding higher education; and the increasing presence of the private sector. Thus, as far as the approach towards regulatory bodies is concerned, the NEP, 2020, has calls for a complete overhaul through "light but tight regulation." as well as the need to regulate the "commercialization" through mandating full public self-disclosure of finances, procedures, course and programme offerings, and educational outcomes.