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NEP 2020 AND ITS IMPACT OF IMPLEMENTATION IN RURAL COLLEGES IN ASSAM

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Abstract

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 represents a transformative shift in India's educational landscape. It emphasizes inclusive education, Flexibility, multidisciplinary and holistic education and digital integration. The National Education Policy is significantly transforming rural colleges in Assam by shifting focus towards skill based vocational education and multidisciplinary learning aims to enhance employability through local entrepreneurship. While its implication for higher education are profound nationally the implementation in rural colleges of Assam face major implementing challenges including digital divides, infrastructural deficiencies and shortage of trained faculties. The objective of the paper is to study about how NEP has been implementing in rural colleges and the infrastructural and pedagogical barriers they faced and the early effects on students, faculties and academic practices. The paper also discusses prospects for improving educational quality and inclusivity under the policy framework. For rural colleges in Assam this policy offers both hope and hardship. This paper discusses the real-life impact of NEP on rural colleges of Assam in a simple manner, highlighting opportunities, problems and practical suggestions.

Key words *inclusive education, Flexibility, multidisciplinary, holistic education.*

Introduction-

Education is the backbone of social and economic development in a country. Education Plays a very important role in shaping the society especially in rural areas where colleges are the often the only Centers of higher learning. In India higher education has always faced challenges related to access, quality and equity specially in rural areas. The National Education Policy 2020 is a landmark reform introduced by the Government of India to improve the quality, accessibility and relevance of education. The National Education Policy 2020 aims to improve Indian education system from early childhood to higher education. The key reforms include in higher education are multidisciplinary and holistic education, flexible curriculum, introduction of the four

year undergraduate program, the academic Bank of Credits, focus on research work, skill development and technology integration. NEP 2020 is introduced after more than three decades to address these challenges and prepare students for the modern world. Assam a Northeastern state of India has a large rural population. Most rural colleges in Assam serve students who come from agricultural, low-income households and remote villages. NEP 2020 espouses inclusivity and aims to bridge urban-rural educational gaps. However, its implementation varies across regions and rural areas like Assam face unique study challenges due to infrastructural, socioeconomic and resource limitations. Therefore, understanding how NEP affects rural colleges in Assam is essential to evaluate whether the policy truly promotes inclusive development.

Objectives of the Study-

The objectives of the study are-

- (i) To know how NEP 2020 is being implemented in rural colleges of Assam.
- (ii) To identify challenges for possible solutions for NEP 2020 implementation in rural colleges of Assam
- (iii) To assess awareness and preparedness among stakeholders.

Methodology – The study is conducted on qualitative analysis based on published research reports on NEP 2020 implementation in Assam and policy document guidelines by the Ministry of Education. Key sources are collected by field studies, interviews and opinions of principals, teachers and students in some rural colleges of Dhemaji and Lakhimpur District of Assam.

Key features of NEP 2020 relevant to higher education

NEP 2020 focuses on transforming education by making it more student-centric. Some of its important features related to higher education are,-

- (i) **Multidisciplinary and Holistic education** – NEP 2020 encourages colleges to offer a wide range of subjects and flexible course structures. This means students in rural colleges can learn multiple disciplines without rigid streams.
- (ii) **Emphasis on skill development** – NEP 2020 encourages colleges to integrate vocational and skill-based education with practical abilities that increase employability, especially in rural agriculture, local industries and community services.
- (iii) **Technology and Learning** – NEP strongly promotes technology use including –
 - online courses and digital learning.
 - Virtual labs and digital libraries
 - Digital classrooms.
- (iv) **Teacher Training and Support** – NEP proposes continuous professional development and Teacher Training programs. By which teachers are able to improve teaching quality and pedagogical skills.

(v) **Inclusivity and Equity** – NEP 2020 gives special attention to inclusive practices and scholarships, support for disadvantaged groups and gender sensitive policies aims to improve access and retention in rural areas.

Present Conditions of Rural Colleges in Assam-

Rural colleges Play a crucial role in educating students from villages, small towns and economically weaker background families. How ever many rural colleges face serious problems such as –

- Lack of proper infrastructure and laboratories.
- Shortage of trained teachers with digital knowledge.
- Limited access to digital facilities and the internet connection.
- High drop out rates due to financial and social reasons
- .Less exposure to skill based and practical learning.

Because of these issues students from rural colleges often struggle to compete with students from urban institutions.

Impact of NEP 2020 on Rural Colleges of Assam.

i) **Multidisciplinary Education** – NEP 2020 encourages to offer multidisciplinary courses. This allows rural students to study subjects of their choice instead of being limited to one stream. It helps students to develop broader knowledge and critical thinking skills. Students can now study combination of subjects such as science with humanities or commerce with vocational courses. This flexibility helps rural students to explore wider career options.

(ii) **Focus on Skill-based and vocational education-** One of the most positive impacts of NEP 2020 is it's focus on Skill development. Rural colleges can introduce courses related to -

- Agriculture and allied activities.
- Local crafts and entrepreneurship.
- Computer skills and digital literacy.

This helps students become self- reliant and find employment opportunities within their local areas and prepares students for real- world jobs and not just theoretical knowledge.

(iii) **Use of technology in Education-** NEP 2020 promotes online and blended learning, digital class rooms, online courses and virtual libraries. It can help rural colleges to overcome resource limitations. Students can access quality learning materials that were earlier available only in urban collages. Technology can help rural students access quality educational content.

(iv) **Teacher Training and Development** - The policy gives importance to continuous professional development of teachers. Proper training can improve teaching quality in rural colleges and make learning more interesting and engaging for students.

(v) Inclusion and Equity – NEP 2020 focuses on providing equal opportunities to disadvantaged groups. Scholarships, academic support and flexible learning options help rural students to continue their education and despite economic difficulties .

vi) Greater Flexibility and Reduced Drop-out- Introduction of multiple entry and exit system of NEP 2020 allows students to leave and rejoin courses without losing their academic progress. This is specially helpful for rural students who may have to stop studies due to financial problems, family responsibilities or health issues.

(vii) Enhanced Institutional Vision – NEP encourages colleges to think beyond traditional constraints to innovate, collaborate and contextualise learning. Some rural colleges have begun

- Industry tie-ups for internship
- Collaboration with universities for resource sharing
- Community learning and programmes

This gradual change is shifting academic culture towards a more holistic approach.

Challenges in Implementation-

Despite its transformative potential NEP 2020 faced several obstacles in rural Areas. These are –

(i) Infrastructural Constraints – Many rural colleges lack modern facilities such as computer labs, smart class room, libraries and research resources. Without these many NEP provision remain aspirational. Lack of consistent electricity and power back-up further complicates digital learning initiatives.

(ii) Digital Divide – NEP 2020 emphasis on technology assumes widespread internet access. In rural Assam internet connectivity remains weak inconsistent in many areas and it limiting online learning opportunities. Many students unable to afford digital devices or data plan.

(iii) Teacher Shortage and Training Gaps- While NEP emphasises teacher development, some rural colleges often struggle to attract and retain qualified faculties with digital knowledge. Even when training programmes are available online, workload and limited digital literacy make it harder for teachers to participate actively.

(iv) Financial Limitations- NEP 2020 calls for increased funding for innovation digital infrastructure and teaching enhancement. But rural colleges often work with limited budgets and need additional financial support from state and central government. Lack of proper funds it is difficult to implement new initiative and slow down implementation.

(v) Awareness and mindset barriers – Many students and parents are still not fully aware of NEP's flexible pathways, skill opportunities and multidisciplinary options.

Recommendation for Better Implementation :

To strengthen the impact of NEP 2020 in rural Assam, following steps are essential.

(i) Adequate funding is required to build digital class room and library facilities. Reliable electricity and internet connectivity should be provided for proper implementing online learning. Science and computer labs should be developed in every rural colleges. So proper funds should be provided to strengthening digital infrastructure and internet access.

(ii) Regular teacher training programmes should be organised for professional development and digital literacy.

(iii) Local communities should be involved actively with educational planning of institutions.

(iv) Curriculum should be prepared based on local needs and real life . The vocational courses and skill based courses should be designed with local industries.

(v) Awareness programs should be organised for students about NEP provisions. .

Conclusion –

NEP 2020 has the potential to bring transformative changes in rural colleges in Assam by making it more flexible, inclusive and skill oriented. The impact of NEP 2020 in rural colleges of Assam is characterized by emerging institutional changes , increased attention to curricular Flexibility can improve access to quality education, promotes skill development and reduce the gap between rural and urban institutions. How ever successful implementation depends on strong infrastructure, digital access, trained teachers and adequate funds. If the challenges are addressed effectively through coordinated policy action, resource allocation and capacity building NEP can contribute a more inclusive, skill oriented and future – focused higher education institutions and truely improve the quality of education in rural colleges and contribute a better society.

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