

Education Sector Hotline

October 14, 2020

NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY- INDIA'S MANTRA TO BE A GLOBAL HIGHER EDUCATION HUB

This article was originally published in the October 2020 edition of



India announced its National Education Policy 2020 ("NEP") a few weeks ago, replacing the three-decade-old National Education Policy of 1986. The NEP has been formulated after several rounds of consultations and discussions and is futuristic in its approach.

Importantly, the NEP has a keen focus on the internationalisation of higher education. It also aims to promote India as a global study destination, providing premium education at affordable costs.

It's important to know that the NEP is a vision statement of the government. The policy will find teeth once laws and regulations for implementation are enacted.

Some key takeaways from the policy which might be of specific interest to the *international community* are:

- High performing Indian universities will be encouraged to set up campuses in other countries. The initial action on this front has **commenced already**, and this will certainly result in more outbound work in education from India. The presence of Indian university campuses overseas is likely to result in more recognition of Indian education abroad, which could benefit collaborations. Until now, collaborations were largely focused on foreign universities partnering with Indian institutes and providing education services in India. This change would open doors for Indian universities to expand their base in other countries. Indian universities can also explore collaborations with local foreign universities for branding and reach.
- Select universities (e.g. those from among the top 100 universities in the world) will be permitted to open campuses in India. A legislative framework facilitating such entry will be put in place, and such universities will be given special dispensation regarding regulatory, governance and content norms on a par with other autonomous institutions of India. The government seems keen to **take this forward**. The proposal to allow foreign universities to have a campus in India has been on the cards for a long time, and time will tell if the top 100 universities will take up India's offer, although, with the pandemic, immigration restrictions and failing economies campuses closer to home may be the new choice.
- Credits acquired in foreign universities will be permitted, where appropriate as per the requirements of each higher education institution, to be counted towards the award of a degree. This is a new but critical proposal as it will make collaboration models a bigger success. As of now, foreign universities were licensing their content / recognising credits from India and awarding degrees to Indian students. The implementation of this recommendation potentially means that foreign students can also complete their studies in India and receive an Indian degree, making dual degree programs more popular and bringing more impetus to collaborations.
- Research/teaching collaborations and faculty/student exchanges with high-quality foreign institutions will be facilitated, and relevant mutually-beneficial MOUs with foreign countries will be signed. This will be particularly helpful for collaborative research-based programs.
- There is a proposal to increase research collaboration and student exchanges between Indian institutions and global institutions, which will result in the internationalisation of education in India.
- To promote India as an education centre, an International Students Office at each Indian higher education institution will be set up. This office will host foreign students and co-ordinate all matters relating to welcoming and supporting students arriving from abroad.

The policy also envisages several radical changes for Indian higher education which will indirectly benefit the international community. Some suggestions in the NEP are:

- To untangle the regulatory complexity with a single regulator for education proposed with a focus on "*light but tight*" regulation. This single regulator will regulate all higher education, including professional education, but excluding law and medicine.
- The new regulatory system aims to foster an overall culture of empowerment and autonomy to universities and promote innovation.
- There is a push to have large multidisciplinary universities with a focus on research, liberal arts, skill-based,

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employment-oriented new-age learning. Institutions and faculties will have the autonomy to innovate on matters of curriculum, teaching and assessment within a broad framework of higher education qualifications that ensures consistency across institutions and programs, and across ODL (open and distance learning), online and traditional 'in-class' modes. The programs will also offer multiple entry and exit points for students, removing current widespread rigid course patterns. This will give greater flexibility to institutions with regard to program structuring.

- There is a significant push for online learning and creating digital repositories.
- Changes in structure and length of degree programs to offer flexibility to students are proposed.
- There is an encouragement for credit based courses. An Academic Bank of Credit (ABC) will be established which would digitally store the academic credits earned from various recognised higher education institutions so that the degrees from them can be awarded taking into account credits earned.

Further significant developments and announcements to give effect to various facets of the NEP are expected soon. As of September 4, 2020, India overhauled its online degree and open and distance learning regulations. This is just the beginning, as we gear up for the next, improved and internationalised phase of higher education in India.

We hope this information creates as much excitement and positivity towards the Indian education sector amongst our foreign university friends as it does in India.

— **Aarushi Jain & Vivek Kathpalia**

You can direct your queries or comments to the authors

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