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National Education Policy And Higher Education

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This article is based on **How NEP can transform higher education in India** which was published in The Hindustan Times on 30/07/2021. It talks about issues with higher education institutions and how National Education Policy can be a game changer for such institutions.

India today has over 1,000 **Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs)**, including over 150 of national importance. Over the years, it has also become a hub of scientific research. HEIs have shown a consistent growth in both the quality and the quantity of research in the past decade.

India currently ranks third globally in terms of the total research output, accounting for 5.31% of the total of research publications. Of three aspects — education, knowledge generation (research and development) and innovation — Indian HEIs have performed very well, in relative terms, in the first two aspects, but **lack on the innovation front**.

National Education Policy (NEP) is expected to transform the landscape of higher education in India by making HEIs work on “**solutions to the problems**” rather than “**solutions looking for a problem**”.

Issues With Indian HEIs

- **Enrollment:**

- According to the **All-India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) report 2019-20**, the **Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER)** in Higher education in India is only **27.1%**, which is quite low as compared to the developed as well as, other developing countries.
- With the increase of enrollments at the school level, the supply of higher education institutes is insufficient to meet the growing demand in the country.

- **Quality:**

- Ensuring quality in higher education is amongst the foremost challenges being faced in India today.
- A large number of colleges and universities in India are unable to meet the minimum requirements laid down by the **University Grant Commission (UGC)**.

- **Political Interference:**
 - Increasing interference of politicians in the management of higher education jeopardises the autonomy of HEIs.
 - Also, students organise campaigns, forget their own objectives and begin to develop their careers in politics.
- **Poor Infrastructure and Facilities:**
 - Poor infrastructure is another challenge to the higher education system of India, particularly the institutes run by the public sector suffer from poor physical facilities and infrastructure.
 - Faculty shortages and the inability of the state educational system to attract and retain well-qualified teachers have been posing challenges to quality education for many years.
 - Large numbers of NET/PhD candidates are unemployed even though there are a lot of vacancies in higher education.
- **Inadequate Research:**
 - There is inadequate focus on research in HEIs.
 - There are insufficient resources and facilities, as well as limited numbers of quality faculty to advise students.
 - Most of the research scholars are without fellowships or not getting their fellowships on time which directly or indirectly affects their research. Moreover, Indian HEIs are poorly connected to research centres and to industries.
- **Poor Governance Structure:**

Management of Indian education faces challenges of over-centralization, bureaucratic structures and lack of accountability, transparency, and professionalism.

Prospects of NEP For HEIs

- **National Research Foundation (NRF):** Indian academia has traditionally been focused on R&D without much emphasis on relevance and delivery. The establishment of the **National Research Foundation (NRF)** is expected to connect our academia with ministries and industry and fund research that is relevant to local needs.
 - Under the framework of NRF, each government ministry, be it central or state, is expected to allocate separate funds for research.
 - NRF, therefore, is expected to pose well-defined problems to the researchers, so that they can find solutions in a goal-oriented and time bound manner.

- **Multi-disciplinary University:** In order to unleash the technology development potential of HEIs, our institutions need to not only become **multi-disciplinary** in their scope and offerings, but also **collaborate among themselves**.
 - Bringing “unlike” minds together in terms of disciplines, cultures (international programmes) and attitudes (academia-industry collaborations) is the need of the hour.
 - Multi-disciplinary universities, as envisaged in NEP, rightly emphasises on the creative potential of researchers.
- **Scaling up existing HEIs:** With the goal of increasing the gross enrollment ratio (GER) from the current 27% to 50% by 2035, India needs to not only open new HEIs and universities but also scale-up existing HEIs.
 - This massive expansion will not only require additional financial resources but also calls for a new governance model.
 - NEP speaks of achieving graded autonomy for HEIs. Over time, independent boards will manage the HEIs with active participation from alumni and experts from academia, research and industry.
- **Funding For HEIs:** NEP is expected to bring in significant funding. For higher education, for the first time, the government promises a **budget allocation for education as a fixed percentage of Gross Domestic Product at 6%**.
This will be a game changer for HEIs.
- **Right Focus:** Under NEP 2020, Indian HEIs will focus on 3Is – Interdisciplinary research, Industry connect and Internationalisation, the three pillars needed to elevate our institutions to global standards.
 - Until now, Indian HEIs lacked international diversity and remained predominantly local; they hired only Indian faculty and trained only domestic talent.
 - The lack of international faculty and students in Indian elite institutions is one reason for the poor rankings of Indian institutions.
 - NEP has enabled mechanisms for Indian HEIs, such as IITs, to venture out and open international campuses across the world. This will not only increase their international footprint but also improve their perception globally.

Conclusion

The new National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, is a good policy as it aims at making the education system holistic, flexible, multidisciplinary, aligned to the needs of the 21st century. The intent of policy seems to be ideal in many ways but it is the implementation where lies the key to success.

Drishti Mains Question

Discuss the issues faced by Higher Education Institutions in India and examine how National Education Policy would bring the transformation in Indian higher education.
