

NEP expects state univs to be more than mere exam-conducting bodies

Policy Wants Colleges To Be Autonomous & Bigger In Size

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The new National Education Policy 2020 (NEP2020) received accolades for perceived good from all corners of the educational spectrum. As an angel guardian, NEP2020 offered something significant to everyone. This unique attribute coupled with the transformative ability of the policy made it revolutionary.

The first phase of post NEP2020 announcement went into a well-orchestrated awareness drive where the sector and society both paid due diligence in comprehension of the document. Now, the focus is being shifted to the new regime where modalities for implementation of the policy is being

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contemplated by ways of committees at the state government level, by University Grants Commission at National level and by collaborative efforts for academic conversion at university level. The on-ground fruits for the students as well as society is expected sooner rather than later.

One key feature of the NEP2020 that has yet to garner attention is the state of affairs of state universities in the country. Their issues deserve greater attention simply for the fact that over 80% of the higher educational institutions belong to this category while their gross contribution to the na-



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tional research and innovation reservoir is far below. The NEP2020 expects state universities to move beyond the role of a mere examination-conducting bodies. Two extremely important functions of these state universities viz. granting affiliation and conducting examination is being proposed to be done away with in a phased manner. It also expects colleges to be bigger in size and autonomous in nature.

In such a case, state universities would be relieved from the role that is currently considered to be the most primary one. Instead, NEP2020 expects state universities to focus on providing research-based multidisciplinary modern and applied education to large number of students with focus on scalability and (self)employability and contribute to the macro goals set by NEP2020 which includes increased Gross Enrolment Ratio, superior global ranking of Indian Universities and enhanced impact in global re-

search and innovation. This indeed is a daunting task that would require more faculty, better research and teaching infrastructure, and facilities for students' holistic development. Besides, this demands governance of the institution to be speedier, accurate and transparent with simplified procedures and optimized process. Implementation of the 4 Ps principle of corporate governance which includes People, Purpose, Process and Performance is an imperative in the university system as well. Laying foundation for such a model will in many ways change the manner in which most of the state universities in the country are functioning.

The above ambitious endeavour of state universities will have to be confronted with two extremely important parameters viz. institutional financing and institutional autonomy. Though NEP2020 clearly specifies spending of 6% of GDP on education which in itself is a

daunting task. The fact of the matter is that the majority of the earmarked expenditure goes into salary disbursements, leaving hardly any room for research and student related facilities. This excessively skewed model of financial management calls for a major overhaul. The Hon'ble Prime Minister while speaking on NEP2020 very subtly linked the parameters of institutional financing and institutional autonomy with institutional performance.

Complete reliance on governmental grant for survival is certainly not the most prudent proposition while excessive reliance on income through fees cannot be an option considering the societal role of state-run universities. A strategic perspective based on synergistic relationship among university, government and society has to be evolved not just to ensure sustained survival of these state universities but also be more student centric.

Autonomy to these institutions thus comes for rescue to these institutions.

Post awareness, discussion of NEP2020 while evolving an implementation mechanism will certainly deliberate and decide to resurrect the real role of state universities with an eye on sustained solutions for greater good of students, society and education.

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