

Governance and Leadership in Higher Education: A Study of India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020

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Abstract

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 in India heralds a significant transformation in the country's higher education landscape. Governance refers to the structure and processes of decision-making. Governance becomes effective and improves institutional performance when decisions are translated into operational practices accompanied by accountability measures at the institutional level. The concept of 'good governance' underlines the qualitative dimension of governance indicating effective, efficient, participative form of government responsible for transparent and accountable management of resources. Leadership has many definitions, and while some define leadership as a group process (involving coordination of collective action to attain group goals), others define it as an influence process (exerting social influence to maximize group efforts to attain goals). Still, others see leadership as the 'instrument' for achievement of goals. In the realm of higher education, leadership and governance are considered highly contested terms. A vice-chancellor is a leader of the university who upholds and maintains social responsibility, formal rationality and procedural legitimacy. Leadership and governance are not mutually exclusive terms, as good governance implies effective leadership; nevertheless leadership has an emotional dimension and a leader while facilitating practices, influences and motivates people. Central to this transformation are issues of governance and leadership within higher education institutions. This research paper delves into the dimensions of governance and leadership within higher education institutions under the purview of the NEP 2020. By exploring these critical aspects, this paper seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the NEP 2020's role in reshaping the governance and leadership dynamics of India's higher education sector.

Keywords:- Governance, Leadership, NHERA, LEAP, Institutional Autonomy, PMMMNMTT.

Introduction

The major issue in front of all of us is how to raise the quality and standards of Indian higher education and make it globally competitive and locally relevant. In this context, governance and leadership of higher education institutions needs major revamping in order to compete with the best universities globally. Reforming the system of governance and leadership of higher education is one

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of the most important parts of the transformative agenda of the National Education Policy- 2020. India's higher education landscape has long been a subject of scrutiny and reform, and the unveiling of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 marks a pivotal moment in this journey. The NEP 2020, with its comprehensive vision and ambitious goals, holds the potential to reinvigorate the nation's higher education system. Among the myriad aspects it addresses, the dimensions of governance and leadership stand out as critical pillars upon which the edifice of academic excellence and innovation rests. The NEP 2020 is a visionary document that seeks to transform India's education system to meet the challenges of the 21st century. This transformation is particularly pronounced in higher education, where governance structures and leadership dynamics play a central role in shaping the quality, accessibility, and relevance of academic programs. As such, the NEP's directives on governance and leadership are of profound significance, not only for higher education institutions but for the entire education ecosystem of the country.

This research paper embarks on a comprehensive exploration of the NEP 2020's implications for governance and leadership in India's higher education sector. It seeks to delve into the core provisions of the policy that pertain to governance, such as the establishment of the National Higher Education Regulatory Authority (NHERA) and the move towards autonomous degree-granting institutions. Simultaneously, it examines the policy's emphasis on leadership development, exemplified through initiatives like the Leadership for Academicians Program (LEAP). As we navigate the intricate interplay of governance and leadership within higher education, it becomes evident that these facets are intrinsically connected. Effective governance structures are a prerequisite for fostering visionary leadership, and visionary leadership, in turn, is essential for the successful implementation of governance reforms. Thus, the NEP 2020's vision is not merely to bring about structural changes but to catalyze a cultural shift that fosters innovation, academic excellence, and inclusivity within higher education institutions.

Governance in Higher Education

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 brings forth a comprehensive set of reforms aimed at reshaping the governance landscape of higher education institutions in India. There are a number of proposals relating to reforms in governance of higher education in India in NEP-2020. The proposals of reforming governance of higher education relate to all the three levels of governance of higher education; i.e. union, state and institutional levels. The policy proposes the creation of many new structures of governance. All of these shall have important bearing on the existing structures. Similarly there will be urgent need for harmonising the institutional level structures and process, state level structure and process of governance and the national level context. We observe state control is giving way to institutional management and the role of government is evolving into incentives and sanctions where it 'steers from a distance'. Moreover, in keeping with the global trend the NEP aims to restructure the higher education system, and create world class multidisciplinary higher education institutions supporting faculty and institutional autonomy with light but tight regulations. The NEP proposes transforming the regulatory system by setting up a single regulator as

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Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) with four verticals for regulation [National Higher Education Regulatory Council (NHERC)], accreditation [National Accreditation Council (NAC)], funding [Higher Education Grants Council (HEGC)] and academic standard setting [General Education Council (GEC)]. The basic idea behind creating a single regulator is to mitigate the problems of over regulation in higher and professional education. Secondly, it also intends to minimize the overlap between different regulating agencies. As per the

NEP there will also be professional councils, such as the Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR), Veterinary Council of India (VCI), National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE), Council of Architecture (CoA), National Council for Vocational Education and Training (NCVET) and the like will play a key role in the higher education system and will act as Professional Standard Setting Bodies.

Leadership in Higher Education

India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 recognizes that the transformation of higher education institutions requires not only structural reforms but also a focus on developing visionary leaders. The NEP 2020 introduces the Leadership for Academicians Program (LEAP), designed to nurture leadership qualities among faculty members. In addition to LEAP, the NEP 2020 underscores the importance of leadership development programs within higher education institutions. Visionary leadership is paramount for realizing the NEP's goals of fostering innovation and multidisciplinary in higher education. The perspectives of various stakeholders, including faculty members, administrators, students, and policymakers, are essential in understanding the NEP's impact on leadership development. There are initiatives in two components of the flagship scheme Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya National Mission on Teachers & Teaching (PMMMNMTT). These are the Centre of Academic Leadership and Education Management (CALEM), and the Leadership for Academicians Programme (LEAP) to identify and groom senior faculty for leadership positions. These should be strengthened further and also evaluated to assess how effective they have been in training leaders for the next level.

Challenges and Barriers

The implementation of governance and leadership reforms as outlined in India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is not without its share of challenges and barriers. The governance and management of higher education institutions is becoming increasingly complex against the backdrop of the expansion and diversification of higher education taking place globally and in India (Malik, 2017). Governance of higher education institutions is essential to fulfilling the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) of quality education. The proposals of reforming educational governance through restructuring existing structures or creating new structures of governance recommended under the National Education Policy-2020 can play an important role in improving the functioning of the higher education system. Based on the principles of efficiency, effectiveness, transparency, autonomy and accountability, the NEP envisages higher education system in India to move towards an output and outcome-based model. There is also a move to strengthen higher education institutions, and all efforts are being made for developing robust institutions by strong governance

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and effective leadership. It is often observed that India has an over-regulated and under-governed higher education system. The government is therefore taking multiple initiatives for NEP-2020 implementation and the plan for the overhaul of higher education involves its structural reorganization into an ecosystem of large, multidisciplinary universities and colleges, good governance and able leadership. NEP proposes to have only three types of higher education institutions: Research-intensive Universities, Teaching-intensive Universities and Autonomous degree-granting Colleges. HEIs are increasingly becoming difficult places to govern, manage and lead due to the growing contestations on campus and ideological divides. Industry, civil society, community and government interests frequently diverge and middle paths have to necessarily be carved out. Effective academic leadership in higher education is a function of several factors or characteristics. These include: leadership in teaching, leadership in research, strategic vision and networking, collaborative and motivational leadership, fair and efficient management, and the development and recognition of performance and interpersonal skills.

Roles of Leadership in Promoting Academic Excellence and Administrative Efficiency

Most of the research on leadership in higher education has focused on the holders of formal academic management roles, such as Vice-Chancellors/Principals, Pro- Vice-Chancellors, Deans and Heads of Department. Breakwell and Tytherleigh (2008) studied the leadership of VCs in UK universities, identifying the characteristics, i.e. academic credibility, financial awareness, adaptability, confidence, strong persona, and sense of mission, strategy and/or vision. There is however a tension between 'academic leadership' which is actually about the leadership of academic institutions rather than leadership of academic work. Administrative leadership includes all leadership roles and responsibilities existing within higher educational institutions that are not explicitly related to leading the academic core. Decisions about the creation, implementation, and improvement of the curriculum pertain to academic leadership, other decisions to be made, conflicts to be resolved, and consensus built outside strictly academic matters rest with administrative leadership. Moreover, academic communities, both students and faculties are more diverse than ever coming from various socio-economic backgrounds. Thus, academic leaders and administrators need to enable and endorse a wider community interaction.

Conclusion

India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 represents a watershed moment in the country's higher education landscape. The NEP 2020's provisions related to governance, including the establishment of the National Higher Education Regulatory Authority (NHERA) and the emphasis on institutional autonomy, have set in motion a shift toward greater academic freedom and innovation. These reforms hold the potential to unleash the creative energies of higher education institutions, fostering excellence and relevance. Simultaneously, the policy's emphasis on leadership development through programs like the Leadership for Academicians Program (LEAP) signals a commitment to nurturing visionary leaders who can guide institutions in this transformative journey. Visionary leadership is the cornerstone upon which the NEP's goals of innovation,

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multidisciplinary, and inclusivity rest. Through case studies, stakeholder perspectives, and an examination of challenges and barriers, this research paper has provided a nuanced understanding of how the NEP 2020 is taking shape on the ground. It has underscored the importance of diverse stakeholders—administrators, faculty, students, policymakers, and regulators—in shaping the future of higher education.

In conclusion, the NEP 2020 represents an opportunity to shape the future of higher education in India in a way that aligns with the nation's aspirations for growth, development, and global recognition. Governance and leadership are the catalysts that can propel this transformation forward. It is incumbent upon all stakeholders—policymakers, institutions, faculty, students, and the wider society—to work collaboratively to realize this vision, ensuring that India's higher education sector emerges stronger, more inclusive, and better equipped to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

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