

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FOUR-YEAR UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMME UNDER NEP 2020: POLICY VISION AND INSTITUTIONAL CHALLENGES

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ABSTRACT

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 made a lot of big changes to the Indian higher education system. One of these changes was the Four-Year Undergraduate Programme (FYUP). The FYUP wants to promote interdisciplinary and holistic education, make undergraduate research more focused, and provide students more options for how to study and when to leave. This policy objective strives to bring Indian higher education in line with worldwide academic standards while also making sure that students learn the critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills they will need in the twenty-first century. This study analyses the policy goal and the execution of the Four-Year Undergraduate Program under NEP 2020, as well as the institutional challenges faced by higher education institutions. To understand the targeted outcomes and the practicalities of implementation, the research analyses policy documents, academic publications, and relevant literature using a descriptive and analytical approach. The report stresses that even while the FYUP framework encourages research engagement, skill development, and learning across disciplines, many institutions have a lot of operational problems. Some of these disadvantages include poor infrastructure, not enough trained academics, difficulty with changing the curriculum, inadequate awareness among stakeholders, and issues with credit transfer and academic flexibility.

Institutions need a lot of preparation, money, and training to make the switch from the standard three-year undergraduate structure to a four-year model. Universities and colleges need to update their curriculum, make their credit systems work better, and improve their academic advising systems if they want to get people to use them. The research concludes that the FYUP has the potential to transform undergraduate education in India; nevertheless, effective institutional readiness, supportive governance, and continuous monitoring of policy implementation are essential for its success. To achieve the broader goals of NEP 2020 in higher education, it will be necessary to enhance teacher training, institutional autonomy, and resource allocation.

Keywords: National Education Policy 2020, Four-Year Undergraduate Programme, Higher Education Reform, Multidisciplinary Education, Institutional Challenges, Curriculum Restructuring, Academic Flexibility, Multiple Entry and Exit, Credit-Based System, Educational Policy Implementation, Undergraduate Education, India.

INTRODUCTION

People have known for a long time that education is a key part of country development, social improvement, and economic growth. In a world that is growing more international and information-driven, higher education institutions must teach students disciplinary knowledge

as well as critical thinking, creativity, flexibility, and the capacity to study for the rest of their lives. India, which has one of the largest higher education systems in the world, has been making changes to keep up with the changing needs of society, the economy, and the worldwide academic environment. The transformation in higher education in India was driven by the understanding that old ways of teaching and learning are not enough to prepare students for the challenges of the 21st century. Consequently, legislative actions have prioritized the flexibility, transdisciplinary learning, research focus, and skill enhancement of undergraduate education.

The history of reforms in higher education in India shows a lengthy history of policy changes aimed at improving relevance, quality, fairness, and access. Since independence, several groups and commissions have looked at how the education system is set up and how it works. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan was in charge of the University Education Commission from 1948 to 1949. The commission stressed how important higher education is for developing minds and being a good citizen. The Kothari Commission (1964–1966) subsequently spoke of a complete national education system that links knowledge with social and economic growth. These principles had an impact on the National Policy on Education (1968) and the National Policy on Education (1986), which tried to make higher education more accessible and raise academic standards at the same time.

Reforms throughout the years have focused on making universities stronger, getting more students to enrol, adding new disciplines, and improving quality assurance via regulatory bodies like the University Grants Commission (UGC) and the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC). However, the Indian higher education system still had a lot of structural problems, even after all of this work. Traditional undergraduate programs often focused on memorization instead of analytical and interdisciplinary approaches. They also had tight academic rules and didn't give students much choice in what classes they could take. The three-year undergraduate degree program, which hadn't changed much in a long time, was seen as not enough to provide students a well-rounded and skill-based education. Also, governments, teachers, and businesses grew more and more worried about the gap between what students learn in school and what they need to know to get a job.

The significance of NEP 2020 is in its comprehensive approach to higher education reform. It recommends a lot of big structural changes, including making colleges that can do more than one thing, adding vocational education, encouraging research and innovation, and making academic routes more flexible. The policy also talks about better governance structures, making higher education more global, and using technology in teaching and learning. NEP 2020 wants to make higher education more dynamic and open to everyone by focusing on access, equality, quality, affordability, and accountability. This will help meet the needs of a diverse population. One of the most essential parts of this bigger reform agenda is the reorganization of undergraduate education. The Four-Year Undergraduate Programme (FYUP) is a major change from the usual three-year undergraduate degree paradigm. It is one of the most important new ideas that NEP 2020 brought about.

Research and hands-on learning are also very important to the idea of FYUP. During the program's fourth year, students are encouraged to do research projects, internships, or advanced courses that will help them learn more about their subject of study. This feature not only gets students ready for college or a career, but it also aims to improve the research culture in undergraduate education. To bridge the gap between academic knowledge and practical application, the curriculum includes skill-based and vocational courses. The goal of FYUP is to make college more well-rounded and focused on students by giving them greater academic freedom and exposure to other fields.

The start of the Four-Year Undergraduate Programme shows that more people are realizing that India's undergraduate system has to be reorganized. In today's globalized world, colleges and universities are expected to turn forth graduates who can adapt to changes in society, technology, and the economy. The traditional paradigm of rigid specialization sometimes limits students' ability to explore many subjects and gain skills that may be used in other areas. On the other hand, a diversified approach encourages creativity, new ideas, and a desire to learn more. It helps students use what they learn in different subjects to solve problems in the real world. People think that reforming undergraduate education via programs like FYUP is necessary to make higher education in India better and more useful.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To examine the policy vision of the Four-Year Undergraduate Programme (FYUP) under NEP 2020.
- To identify institutional challenges in implementing FYUP in higher education institutions.

METHODOLOGY

The current study utilizes a descriptive and qualitative policy analysis research approach to investigate the implementation of the Four-Year Undergraduate Programme (FYUP) established under the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. A descriptive research approach is suitable for this study as it aims to illuminate the institutional challenges associated with the implementation of the FYUP in Indian higher education institutions while clarifying and analysing its principal features, objectives, and structural framework. The qualitative policy analysis technique facilitates a comprehensive understanding of educational reforms by examining policy documents, institutional regulations, and academic discourse related to the new undergraduate framework.

The research mostly relies on secondary data sources, examined via document analysis and qualitative content analysis. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 document from the Government of India is the main source of information. This policy statement provides the philosophical foundations and vision for transforming India's higher education system via the implementation of transdisciplinary education, adaptable learning paths, various entrance and exit choices, and research-oriented undergraduate programs. The study in this paper helps us understand what the FYUP model is supposed to achieve and what its broader policy goals are. The NEP 2020 paper also looks at the University Grants Commission's (UGC) rules and guidelines for carrying out the Four-Year Undergraduate Program. These rules give a lot of information about academic flexibility, credit systems, curriculum structure, and how to include research components in the last year of undergraduate studies. To learn more about the administrative and institutional systems needed to carry out the program, we look at government reports, policy briefs, and official publications about higher education reforms.

POLICY VISION OF THE FOUR-YEAR UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMME (FYUP) UNDER NEP 2020

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 brought about the Four-Year Undergraduate Programme (FYUP), which is a big alteration to India's higher education system. The strategy's purpose is to make undergraduate education more broad, flexible, interdisciplinary, and research-based, so that students learn both academic and practical skills. The FYUP framework aims to align Indian higher education with worldwide norms while equipping students for diverse career opportunities, fostering lifelong learning, and promoting responsible citizenship. The following part talks about the main parts of this policy view.

A WHOLE PERSON'S EDUCATION

One of FYUP's key goals is to promote integrated and comprehensive education. NEP 2020 puts a lot of stress on students' social, emotional, ethical, and intellectual development, as well as their academic success. The initiative encourages schools to include value-based education, critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills in their lessons. By combining the humanities, sciences, arts, and vocational education, FYUP wants to help individuals become well-rounded and make important contributions to society. This holistic vision goes beyond the usual strategy of focusing on information and instead focuses on the whole personality development of the pupils.

FLEXIBILITY IN THE CURRICULUM

The FYUP framework gives you a lot of leeway when it comes to choosing courses and designing the curriculum. Students may choose classes from a wide range of subjects depending on what they are interested in and what they want to do with their careers. Because of this flexibility, students may make their own academic plans that include optional classes, major and minor topics, and skill-based learning modules. The Academic Bank of Credits (ABC) and the credit-based system also help with this flexibility by letting students earn and transfer credits across schools. This type of flexibility lets students learn about a wide range of topics and encourages them to be independent learners.

DEVELOPING SKILLS

One of the main goals of the FYUP strategy is to include skill development in undergraduate education. NEP 2020 talks about how important it is to connect what you learn in school with what you do in real life. This is why the curriculum includes classes for skill development, internships, hands-on learning, and vocational education. The goal of these parts is to make students more likely to get jobs, start their own businesses, and be ready for the workforce. FYUP focuses on both academic knowledge and practical skills, which helps graduates become ready for the changing needs of the global labour market.

A MULTIDISCIPLINARY APPROACH

The FYUP encourages students to take courses in many different fields instead of just one. For example, a student majoring in physics could decide to take coursework in the arts or social sciences. This exposure across disciplines broadens students' viewpoints, fosters creativity, and promotes collaboration across different fields. The policy also encourages the transformation of higher education institutions into multidisciplinary universities and colleges to improve integrated learning environments.

FOURTH YEAR OF RESEARCH ORIENTATION

One of the things that makes FYUP stand out is that the fourth year is focused on research and allows students the ability to do advanced academic research. Fourth-year students may work on research projects, write dissertations, or take advanced classes to improve their analytical and investigative abilities. This part will be very helpful for those who desire to work in research or higher education. By starting research at the undergraduate level, NEP 2020 wants to improve the research cultures at universities and make India a bigger part of the global knowledge economy.

MULTIPLE WAYS TO ENTER AND EXIT

To make it easier for people to get in and out of the program and to keep more people in it, FYUP offers a range of entrance and exit alternatives. Students may exit the program at different times if they have the right credentials:

- ❖ After one year, a certificate.
- ❖ Two years later, a diploma
- ❖ Three years to get a bachelor's degree
- ❖ Four years of research for a bachelor's degree

This method takes into account the different settings and learning needs of each student. It makes sure that students who can't complete the program will still get credit for the work they've done. The Academic Bank of Credits also promotes lifelong learning and more educational mobility by letting students pause and continue their studies without losing credits they have already earned.

APPLICATION OF FYUP IN TERTIARY EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020's introduction of the Four-Year Undergraduate Programme (FYUP) marks a major shift in how Indian higher education is organized and what it stands for. Its use in universities aims to make academic programs more in line with the changing needs of society and the global knowledge economy, while also encouraging flexible, multidisciplinary, and holistic learning. To meet the requirements of FYUP, schools and universities throughout the country are slowly changing their academic systems, curricular frameworks, and institutional processes. Restructuring the curriculum, using a credit-based system, adding interdisciplinary courses, giving students opportunity to improve their skills, and focusing on research-based learning are all important for the program to work well.

RESTRUCTURING THE CURRICULUM

Restructuring the undergraduate curriculum is one of the most important parts of putting FYUP into action. In India, conventional undergraduate programs were mostly focused on one subject and were quite hard, so students didn't have much leeway to take classes outside of their area of interest. Under FYUP, universities are changing their curricula to provide students a more complete and cross-disciplinary education. The curriculum includes core courses, electives, courses that help students improve their skills, and courses that offer value. This framework lets students look into several subjects and build a strong base in their main topic. Institutions are also making sure that the aims of their courses fit with the more general goals of NEP 2020, which include critical thinking, creativity, problem-solving, and being conscious of ethics.

CREDIT SYSTEM

The implementation of FYUP is directly tied to the introduction of a Choice Based Credit System (CBCS) and the integration of the Academic Bank of Credits (ABC). Each course in this system has a certain number of credits based on how many hours of teaching are needed and what the learning goals are. Students earn credits throughout their time in school, which are kept in the Academic Bank of Credits. This method makes it easier for students to move about and be flexible in their studies, so they may transfer credits between schools or take a break and then pick up where they left off without sacrificing any academic progress. The credit system also supports the multiple entrance and exits options indicated in NEP 2020, where students may earn certificates, diplomas, or degrees according on how long they have studied.

COURSES THAT CROSS DISCIPLINES

One of the most important things about FYUP is that it encourages learning across disciplines. Higher education institutions are introducing courses that allow students to connect with information outside their primary area. For example, a student who is majoring in education could take coursework in environmental studies, psychology, sociology, or digital technology. This exposure to different fields helps students see things from several angles and gives them the tools they need to cope with tough social and work problems. Universities are also encouraging departments to work together so that they may create integrated courses that include material from many different fields of study.

COURSES TO IMPROVE YOUR SKILLS

Adding skill-building classes to FYUP is another crucial part of making it work. These classes are meant to help students become more employable and improve their practical skills. The major purpose of these classes is to help students learn both hard and soft skills, such as how to solve problems, how to communicate, how to use technology, how to be an entrepreneur, how to be a leader, and how to collaborate with others. Also, vocational and industry-oriented training is becoming a part of undergraduate curricula in colleges and universities. The curriculum is gradually including internships, workshops, and practical training sessions to ensure that students acquire experiential knowledge alongside academic understanding.

RESEARCH PROJECTS

The fourth year of the FYUP program gives students a chance to learn via research. Schools are encouraging students to do their own research projects, dissertations, or field-based studies with the help of academic members. The goal of this part is to help college students develop their ability to think critically, be creative, and ask important questions. Research projects teach students about research methods, data analysis, and academic writing, which helps them be ready for graduate school or a job in research. Moreover, NEP 2020's main objective of becoming universities centres for innovation and knowledge development fits with the emphasis on undergraduate research.

INSTITUTIONAL OBSTACLES IN THE EXECUTION OF THE FOUR-YEAR UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMME (FYUP) ACCORDING TO NEP 2020.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020's Four-Year Undergraduate Programme (FYUP) is a big reform for higher education in India. The strategy's goal is to create an undergraduate education system that is flexible, varied, and cantered on research. For it to work, however, universities and colleges need to have the right resources. Many colleges and universities have structural, academic, and administrative problems that might make it hard to successfully implement FYUP.

LIMITATIONS ON INFRASTRUCTURE

A lack of infrastructure in many schools is one of the biggest problems in putting FYUP into action. The new curriculum puts a lot of emphasis on interdisciplinary education, research opportunities, and skill-based courses. All of these things need well-stocked laboratories, libraries, and classrooms. But many universities and colleges don't have enough modern classrooms and labs, especially in rural and semi-urban areas. Also, NEP 2020's increased emphasis on online resources and digital learning means that we need a strong digital infrastructure, such as high-speed internet, smart classrooms, and access to digital databases.

Students may have trouble getting to these capabilities in schools that don't have a lot of technology.

LACK OF TEACHERS AND TRAINING

Another big problem is that there aren't enough trained teachers and that professionals need to keep learning. The FYUP model encourages new ways of teaching, learning based on research, and teaching across disciplines. The present faculty may not be competent enough to teach transdisciplinary courses, and many institutions are having trouble finding enough teachers right now. Faculty members require training and orientation to become used to new teaching methods, outcome-based education, and the credit-based mechanisms that FYUP has put in place.

COMPLICATED CURRICULUM DESIGN

Universities need to design a curriculum that is both adaptable and varied. There is major, minor, interdisciplinary, skill-building, and research courses in the FYUP framework. It is hard to coordinate these things while yet keeping academic integrity and standards. Universities need to carefully plan courses that provide students a deep understanding of one subject while also exposing them to other subjects. This requires a lot of academic knowledge and careful planning.

LIMITATIONS DUE TO MONEY

Another problem with successfully implementing FYUP is that there isn't enough money. To hire new teachers, build new infrastructure, renovate labs, and add new courses, a lot of money has to be spent. Many public universities and their partner schools don't have the money to make the changes they need to without more funding and help from the government.

PROBLEMS IN COORDINATING POLICIES AND ADMINISTRATION

The University Grants Commission (UGC), state governments, universities, and affiliated colleges must all work together well for FYUP to work. Institutions may become confused when there are several ways of doing things, policies take too long to be communicated, and there aren't any clear guidelines. To make sure the program goes well, there has to be good governance and effective administrative procedures.

STUDENTS AND FACULTY NEED TO BE AWARE

Another problem is that both students and teachers don't know about or comprehend how the FYUP works. Many students may have a hard time understanding the several ways to get in and out of school, how to transfer credits, and the different types of courses available. In the same way, faculty members may need to be trained to fully understand the program's goals and how it works. Without enough information and guidance, the advantages that FYUP was meant to have may not be completely achieved.

CONCLUSION

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020's Four-Year Undergraduate Program (FYUP) is a big step in changing the way higher education is structured and thought about in India. The plan shows that they want to go beyond conventional, restrictive ways of teaching undergraduates and create a more flexible, diverse, and student-centered academic framework. FYUP wants to provide students the skills they need to deal with the problems of the twenty-first century knowledge economy by integrating holistic education, skill development, research focus, and learning across disciplines. The strategy also connects

Indian higher education to global academic standards while satisfying the needs and goals of individual students. The study presented in this article illustrates that FYUP's policy vision is founded on many innovative mechanisms, including the Academic Bank of Credits, adaptable curricular frameworks, transdisciplinary course options, and diverse entrance and exit paths. The goal of these parts is to make education more accessible, let students to move between schools more easily, and provide people more chances to study throughout their lives. Adding skill-based courses, internships, and research projects also makes the connection between what students learn in class and how they use it in real life stronger. This makes them more likely to get a job and encourages them to come up with new ideas.

The research also shows that the institutional competency and readiness of colleges and universities are very important for the effective implementation of FYUP. The new framework may not be able to be effectively adopted because of poor infrastructure, a lack of competent people, problems with curriculum design, limited funding, and a lack of awareness among stakeholders. Legislators, regulatory bodies, universities, and faculty members all need to work together to solve these problems. To turn policy aims into real educational practice, there has to be enough money, initiatives to help teachers grow, institutional independence, and good cooperation amongst administrators. FYUP may improve the way college students learn in India by promoting learning that is broad, adaptable, and based on research.

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