***A Brief Introduction to the Pedagogical Aspects of the New Education Policy, 2020: Implementing Strategies in the present Context with reference to Secondary and Higher Education in Assam.***

"*Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world"*

*Nelson Mendela*.

The much desired decision of the Government of Assam to implement the New Education Policy, 2020 in the state has been widely and whole heartedly appreciated by almost everyone in both letter and spirit. Assam, along with the other states of the Country, is going to bring about a drastic change in the domain of education after almost an interval of four decades. The active and positive role and action of the present Govt. of Assam deserves high applause for the sincere efforts on the direction of NEP, 2020

At the dawn of the implementing stage of the NEP,2020, the existing setup of educational strategies is set to undergo changes in every respect of the contemporary educational scenario with replacement of the present 10 +2 +3 pattern by 5+3+3+4. In order to prepare the state to implement this NEP 2020, certain conditions are to be fulfilled and educational planning should take primary concern and steps as summarized below:

The whole recommendations of NEP, 2020 are too vast to be covered here and so only the relevant portions with special references to the Pedagogical aspects of Secondary & Higher Education are attempted in this article. The objective of this article is to lay down the important aspects that need to be taken into consideration in the context of position of the existing education policy and the provisions suggested in the NEP, 2020.

Secondary Education in the purview of NEP, 2020

Secondary stage comprises 4 Years multi- disciplinary study (Class IX- XII) and accordingly,

Emphasis is to be made on the –

**Reducing Curriculum load to its essential core content**: The committee or Unit that prepares Course Curriculum should comprise Experts from well-versed in-service Teachers, Principals, Retired Teacher & Principals along with other Educational Experts proportionately so that the needs, drawbacks, real class room situations are studied and designed accordingly to fit the situation and learners appropriately.

**Subject oriented pedagogical and curricular based education with greater critical thinking and flexibility**: There will be a total of eight Semesters where a student has to take 5/6 subjects each semester. There will be flexibility for a student to make choice of elective subject out of Arts, Vocational and Physical Education. In this connection it is suggested that the students are to be empowered at the secondary stage with flexibility in course choices out of the subjects Sports, Yoga, Dance, Music, Drawing, Painting, Sculpting, Pottery Making, Wood working, Gardening, Fashion Designing, Interior Designing and electric works. Syllabi has to be prepared accordingly,

Now , this objective can be fulfilled through (i) employing skill-based teacher & Trainer in the schools with much care and responsibility be fixed on target based learning outcome.

(ii) Cluster based sharing of such teachers / trainers in schools can be done with planning so that such skill-based teacher trainers don't need to be appointed in every school. This will reduce the cost and expenditure of the government.

**Transacting Classrooms**: Since NEP, 2020 envisages education in the home or local language. or Mother Tongue basically at the elementary stage of education up to class VIII, there is a need to exercise this in the English medium schools too by employing Bilingual method instead of Mono lingual with introduction of Assamese as one of the compulsory subjects. Each class room should consist of a sizeable Learning Corner which will be used for demonstration of a particular competency and the Infrastructural design should be made accordingly

Since there is flexibility at the Secondary stage in using multi-lingual formula, stress must equally be put on English language teaching to promote Multilingual communicative abilities instead of teaching English as a Content or Literature subject. To make this approach more effective and realistic, introduction of Phonetics & Spoken English Course to each school enabling the existing English teacher to be skilful and well trained is to be made compulsory

**Capacity Building of Teachers and the School Heads**: NEP, 2020 puts much stress on qualitative aspect of teachers in order to facilitate student attaining desired learning outcome. Need-based incessant residential trainings are to be imparted to teachers in offline mode for more effective result.

***The Principals and School Heads of Secondary schools need to be trained up by NIEPA in a phased manner in order to equip them with required administrative and management capacity building.***

Secondary stage of education emphasizes **"Critical Thinking”** and **"Problem Solving”** to be the important aspect for the learners. This aspect can best be exercised with introduction of "Test of Reasoning” to the course as a compulsory part of Studies. This will help the students facing various competitive written examinations confidently for their future career.

**Incorporation of Ethical and Moral Values**: A book on Ethical and Moral studies should be

Incorporated in the curriculum. The ***course curriculum must conform to the National text book***

***pattern with local content & flavour.***

***Teacher transfer within the district or block should be initiated in order to motivate students with divergent exposure of knowledge and method of teaching*** in an interval of 3 years.

One of the major problems lies in maintaining of PTR. PTR should be assessed on the basis of class & medium wise enrolment of a school instead of calculating on general basis.

All vacant posts in schools are to be immediately filled up and Rationalization of teachers should be done on priority basis. Teacher sharing can be done on **Attachment basis** among the high PTR and low PTR schools.

Rigorous Monitoring of filling up processes of UDISE has to be ensured at school level as it is the main source of data base for educational planning.

**Free Text books are to be supplied to the schools before beginning of the new session. Book Bank system** in the schools has to be practically worked out to cover up the gap period if arises. It is seen that schools have been facing immense hardship of fund in maintaining contingency, cleanliness of toilets and campus of the school. Annual Grant is released to SMDC depending on enrolment of the schools. This grant too need to be enhanced and should be released in the beginning of each financial year/Academic year.

Schools are often overloaded with various activities and observances which cause academic losses. Many other departments, too, throw activities to be conducted by students through the parent departments. This needs to be minimized,

NEP 2020 mentions that over 10 lakh teacher posts are lying vacant. A Large proportion of them is in rural areas making even PTR larger then 60:1 .

Teachers are mostly used for non-academic duties like AADHAR etc. if urgently required also, selection of teachers should be based on Low PTR schools,

***Accreditation of Schools***. It is a very nice part of the NEP, 2020 in which the matter of School Accreditation is emphasized. Though our schools are graded through Gonotsav program, it should be modified by constituting an independent Body in the style of NAAC. But before this Body starts taking action, all the schools should be designed and facilitated with required infrastructure, amenities and teachers.

We suggest initiating a plan to mobilize local available resources for better development of infrastructure where community ownership may be patronized.

***Integrated HS-DELED & PST courses should be made available in maximum Higher Secondary schools where infrastructural provisions are within the permissible level.***

Subject teacher appointment criteria could be determined by ***STA (State Testing Agency).***

Provision for Residential induction training and refresher training needs to be made on compulsory basis for the teachers and Head of the Schools for effective teaching and administrative quality output.

**Higher Education in the purview of NEP,2020:** Apart from all above. it is equally important to refer briefly to the focal points of Higher Education laid down in the NEP, 2020.

NEP. 2020 has proposed a multi dimensional changes in the domain of Higher Education too. Besides various valuable recommendations to the modified shape of the Secondary Education, it has offered suggestions to the re-shaping of the higher education set up.

It is proposed to raise Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education to 50% by 2035 increasing from current GER of 26.3%. It is really very promising part of NEP, 2020.

The best part of NEP, 2020 in Higher Education is seen in its recommendation to increase around 3.5 seats and implementing flexible Under Graduate (UG) courses with multiple entry and exit.

To simplify it further, it may be said that students may choose course according to their own choice. They may exit from a course at a particular level with certification.

In a simpler way, the students will now enjoy options of multiple exits even during their Under Graduate (UG) programme. To illustrate it further, a student may exit just after 1st year of graduation with a certificate of completing that particular period of one year. Again, if the student opts to exit after the 2nd year, an advanced Diploma will be awarded. Similarly, after completion of the 3rd year of UG programme, Bachelor Degree certificate will be awarded. Finally, a certificate of Bachelor with Research will be awarded after completion of 4th year of UG programme. A system of Academic Bank of Credits will be established to facilitate Transfer of Credits for lateral admission to other institute.

Proposal for setting up/upgrading of Autonomous Colleges is also a remarkable aspect of the NEP 2020.

In order to obtain global standards in the country, **Multidisciplinary Education and Research Universities (MERU)** will be established at par with **IITs** and **IIMs**. **National Research Foundation** will be set up as an apex body for fostering a strong culture and opportunities.

The Higher Education is proposed to be under single umbrella entitled **Higher Education Commission a of India ( HECI)** with exclusion of medical and legal education.

These are some of the major highlights of NEP 2020 in the Arena of Higher Education. There are many more commendable features besides these and a thorough study with realisation of all such features makes the NEP 2020 an adorable and important document in the field of Education in our Country.

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