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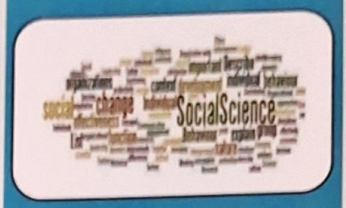

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'Ravichandram' Survey No-101/1, Plot No-23, Mundada Nagar, Jalgaon (M.S.) 425102

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Advancements in Higher Education in India: A New Academic Normal

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Abstract: Introduction of Internet brought a lot of changes in education field. Covid-19 created a deep impact on almost everything and education especially. A new culture on online teaching-learning came forward with the idea of work from home. And introduction of New Education Policy-2020 brought a number of changes with it. As a result of all these things Indian education system is witnessing a number of advancements like transforming single faculty higher educational institutions into multi-disciplinary institutions, in education in general and higher education in particular. The University Grants Commission (UGC) has proposed to allow students who have completed a four-year undergraduate (UG) programme, including a research component with a cumulative grade point average of 7.5, to directly enrol in PhD programmes without having to first complete a master's degree. And students can persuade two-degree programs in the same academic year.

Introduction:

With the introduction of the internet in our day-to-day life, the speed of learning along with the different methods of learning changed dramatically. Collecting data, converting that into information to gain certain knowledge was the past, going beyond knowledge and evolving new methods of self-supervised learning system is the future.

Local or global incidents have global impact, be it the World War I and II or COVID-19. The impact of World Wars is as such that the history of the world can be studied in pre- and post-World War. Similarly, once again the study of the world history can be made in two phases i.e. pre- and post-Covid-19. The world that was moving very fast stopped after one or two paddles of break. There was a paddle shift due to red signal and the world experienced unprecedented things. The world devised a number of novel ways to think and do to keep the world going. The biggest challenge before the world was to keep the world going on and that too by sitting at homes, which gave birth to a new feasible idea of 'work from home'. It was a hybrid version of the concepts like 'remote work', 'distance work' and 'telework', which further mutated into 'work from anywhere'. People began to look at everything from a very different angle, where safety of life was the priority and keeping the economy running was the necessity. All of a sudden, assemblies at schools and colleges were stooped, and the existing concept of distant learning came to help the education sector; and with the help of Internet and computers and, especially smart phones, the online mode of teaching-learning and examining the progress of the learners, helped, anyhow, to keep education system moving. Its advantages and disadvantages is different topic of study, but here we will consider, how this strange situation made us to adopt new changes and what kind of advancements the education sector has been experiencing.

NEP-2020:

The two years 2019 and 2020 were full of discussions, suggestions and modifications in the New Education Policy-2020 (NEP-20). And the year 2021 is the beginning of thinking in the direction of implementing the policy. Essential changes are being made to implement the NEP-20. But still it will take some time to evolve an entirely new education system.

If the entire education system is advancing towards a new beginning, advancements in various disciplines are but natural.

New Approach of UGC:

"The University Grants Commission (UGC) has proposed to allow students who have completed a four-year undergraduate (UG) programme, including a research component with a cumulative grade point average of 7.5, to directly enrol in PhD programmes without having to first complete a master's degree."

The new measure is a part of the Draft University Grants Commission (Minimum Standards and Procedures for Award of Ph.D. Degree) Regulations, 2022 released in the month of March, with the UGC seeking comments and feedback from the stakeholders by March 31. Feedbacks were taken from the stakeholders to improvise the draft. (ugc, 2022)

Multiple entry and exit points;

It is important to note that the four-year degree will have multiple entry and exit points, as envisioned by the NEP 2020. Students those who complete one year will receive a certificate (requiring 40-44 credits plus a 10 credit skills enhancement course), two years will earn a diploma (88 credits plus the exit course) and three years will earn a bachelor's degree (120-132 credit hours). The four-year degree, including either an honours programme focussed on a specific subject, a rigorous research project, or a multidisciplinary programme, will require 160-176 credits. At present, a number of universities have accepted credit system, but it is not found in its spirit. With NEP2020, credit system will be implemented in true sense. Master's degrees could be earned in one or two-year programmes, depending on whether the student has completed a three or four-year bachelor's degree. Earlier the effect of bachelor's degree was not much in case of completing PG, but with the implementation of NEP-2020, how one completes degree matters to complete PG. Each credit is likely to involve 45 hours of work, mostly split between teaching in the classroom and practical work, although provisions have been made for internships, seminars, studio sessions, community service and other types of learning methods. (Bureau, 2022)

On 24 March, 2022 University Grants Commission issued a public notice and invited feedback on Draft guidelines for transforming higher educational institutions into multi-disciplinary institutions. (Jain, 2022)

The Draft begins with a quote from *Rigveda* "Aano bhadra krtavo yantu vishwatah" which means Let noble thoughts come from all directions. It shows the very intent of all inclusiveness and making things better with the contribution of many minds. The Draft is a part of a number of advancements in higher education in India as a part of implementation of New Education Policy -2020. "India currently has various stand-alone and domain-specific institutions and universities." And now the challenge is to transform these HEIs into multi-disciplinary institutions. The purpose behind this is that "Internationally, the culture of establishing and sustaining a multidisciplinary university is increasing fast, thereby maximizing productivity with enhanced focus towards research and development, innovation, and incubation." At present India has a number of affiliated colleges and by the end of 2035 all these colleges will be either "achieve the degree-awarding status by passing through different stages of autonomy or by completing the process of becoming part of the cluster to become a large multi-disciplinary HEI". Either converting into a degree awarding autonomous colleges or a constituent units of universities; these are the only two options before the present affiliated colleges.

The features of a Multidisciplinary HEI: Orientation about new opportunities, Mobility of credits between institutions, and Online and ODL mode of education. There will be collaboration between two institutions for the award of dual degree for example B. Sc. from one institution and MBA from other. A student will get B. Sc. M.B.A. degree in near future. Cluster of Colleges will serve this purpose far better.

For the smooth functioning of cluster colleges there shall be a Board of Directors as per the following composition:

For cluster of government colleges:

1	Highly reputed persons from government, academic, industry or public administration. (nominated by the State government)	Chairman
2	Commissioner or director of HE or his or her nominee	Director
3	Vice-Chancellor of the affiliating university or nominee	Director
4	Principals from the cluster of colleges (Two)	Director
5	Academicians as external experts, as nominated by the Board (Two)	Director
6	One expert from the Industry, as nominated by the Board	Director
7	One principal from the cluster of colleges, as nominated by the government	Director

Note: Director Term: Five years

It is important to note the role of the State Government in case of cluster colleges. The Draft says, "State governments will continue to provide the same funds to government aided colleges as they had been doing before the cluster formation." And probably 2030 will be the deadline to convert all the single faculties into cluster colleges. And the role of the parent university will be to identify potentials of colleges and to encourage them by providing timely approval to their proposals and help to nominate representatives in various committees for the proper functioning of cluster colleges. (UGC, 2022)

Summing Up:

The Draft of New Education Policy-2019 opened a number of doors for discussions. Education policy was discussed in the academia from a number of points of view. Suggestions, feedbacks were invited, new policy draft was introduced to implement. During all this academic upheaval Covid-19 brought a number of challenges along with it a number of new opportunities to look at the problems differently. As a result of it a number of advancements are found in Indian education system in the post covid-19 world or in the new normal.

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