



NAVIGATING CHANGE: THE EVOLUTION AND IMPLICATIONS OF ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS IN INDIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract:

This paper examines the multifaceted landscape of administrative reforms in Indian higher education, tracing its historical origins, evolutionary trajectory, and the implications of recent policy shifts. Beginning with an exploration of the early educational practices in India, it delves into the significant transformations initiated by administrative reforms, emphasizing the restructuring, rejuvenation, and realignment of educational governance and practices. The discourse navigates through the colonial legacy, the introduction of Western educational models, and the subsequent post-independence efforts to indigenize and expand the higher education sector. It critically analyzes the First, Second, and the revolutionary Third National Policy on Education (NPE) 2020, highlighting the shift towards inclusivity, quality, and global competitiveness. The paper also addresses the challenges and opportunities presented by the NEP 2020, particularly its focus on research, innovation, and a holistic, flexible educational framework. By assessing the governance structure, policy orientations, and strategic priorities, this study aims to provide insights into the administrative reforms' role in shaping a resilient, adaptive, and forward-looking higher education system in India.

Key Words: National, Policy, Education, Revolutionary

Introduction:

There are many different interpretations of what is meant by the term "administrative reform." Various names have been given to this type of organisational transformation, including administrative change, restructuring, reengineering, rejuvenation, and realignment. The concept here is that the administration needs to be realigned and readjusted, and it also needs to evolve into new form and structure through a methodical and well-directed process. Administrative reform is the forcible implementation of administrative change in the face of resistance. This concept emphasises three unique elements, it is a transformative procedure, and there is a subsistence of opposition to the change procedure.¹ Administrative reform is artificially stimulated. Of course, changes do not occur spontaneously by themselves. These programmes are well-researched, well-thought-out, and well-executed, with distinct goals to achieve.² Because it requires collaboration, persuasion, and the cultivation of a conviction for improvement, reform can be seen as a change that is induced and manipulated. Even though it results from a series of tiny adjustments, reform is more than a series of incremental changes; it regularly demands thorough and methodical efforts. Reform is more than a series of incremental changes or marginal adjustments. Introducing new administrative procedures is one factor that helps bring about a new era of order. The phrase "formal, mechanical, and envisaged structured transformation procedure" alludes to what is being discussed here.

Administrative reform in higher education refers to a process of improving the management and organization of institutions of higher learning. This typically involves changes to the administrative structure, policies, procedures, and practices of the institution, with the aim of enhancing efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability. Administrative reform in higher education may involve a range of measures, such as restructuring administrative units, streamlining decision-making processes, improving communication and collaboration among different departments, introducing new technologies, and enhancing the skills and training of administrative staff.³ The ultimate goal of administrative reform in higher education is to create a more responsive, effective, and transparent system of governance that can better meet the needs of students, faculty, staff, and other stakeholders. By improving administrative efficiency and effectiveness, institutions of higher learning can more effectively fulfill their educational mission and contribute to the advancement of knowledge and society.

¹Freire, P. (1985). *The Politics of Education: Culture, Power, and Liberation*. Translated by D. I. Macedo. Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey.

²Rawat, P.L., *History of Indian Education* Agra, UP, Ram Prasad and Sons.

³Hough, J.R. (Ed.). (1984). *Educational Policy: An International Survey*. London: Academic Press.

Early History of Higher Education:

Indian religions, mathematics, and logic were taught at early Hindu and Buddhist learning sites like Takshashila (now in Pakistan) and Nalanda, which pioneered higher education in India. Sanskrit universities like Banaras Hindu University and Nalanda University (India) offer early study. Islamic education was introduced to the Indian subcontinent by mediaeval Islamic dynasties. Europeans brought western education to colonial India. In the 19th century, the British founded several Western-style universities in India.⁴ A series of acts in the first half of the 20th century laid the framework for the educational institutions of India, Pakistan, and a large part of the Indian subcontinent. Nalanda was a renowned center of higher education in ancient India, and it is believed to have been founded in the 5th century CE. The origins of Nalanda University are unclear, but it is widely believed to have been established during the Gupta dynasty. Nalanda University was known for its rigorous academic programs and attracted students and scholars from all over India, as well as from other parts of Asia. The curriculum included a wide range of subjects, such as Buddhist philosophy, logic, grammar, medicine, astronomy, mathematics, and literature.

The early history of higher education in Nalanda was marked by a period of growth and expansion, as the university attracted large numbers of students and scholars. Under the patronage of wealthy kings and nobles, Nalanda became a major center of learning in ancient India, and its reputation spread far beyond the Indian subcontinent. During its peak, Nalanda had thousands of students and hundreds of teachers, and the university was a bustling center of intellectual activity.⁵ However, the university declined in the 12th century due to a number of factors, including invasions by Muslim armies, political instability, and a shift in intellectual focus towards other centers of learning. Despite its decline, the legacy of Nalanda continued to influence the development of higher education in India and other parts of Asia. Today, efforts are underway to revive Nalanda University as a modern center of higher learning and research, building on the rich legacy of this ancient institution.



Figure 1: Nalanda - teaching platform

India's traditional education system was heavily influenced by its faiths. Heterodox schools include Buddhism and Jainism. Heterodox Buddhist monastic groups and urban learning establishments like Taxila and Nalanda provided a more complete education. These schools taught grammar, medicine, philosophy, logic, metaphysics, arts and crafts, and allied subjects. Early secular Buddhist universities like Taxila and Nalanda attracted Chinese and Central Asian students. The common era saw these universities operate.

Early Common Era-High Middle Age

Xuanzang and Yi Jing visited Indian universities to study Buddhist texts. Yi Jing also knew 56 Indian, Japanese, and Korean scholars entered. However, Buddhist educational institutions were progressively making way for the rebirth of the centuries-old Brahmanic tradition. Indian academicians in China translated Buddhist scriptures. In the eleventh century, Nalanda monk Dharmadeva translated various scriptures in China. A Vikramshila centre maintained close relations to Tibet. Before travelling to Tibet, Buddhist instructor Atisa was the Vikramshila monastery's chief monk. The 945 CE Rastrakutadynasty built buildings with royal patronage.

⁴Saikia, Siddheswar, (1998), History of Education in India, Mani Manik Prakash Sharma, R.N., History and Problems of Education in India, Delhi, Surjeet Publications

⁵McLennan, B. N. (1975). Comparative Political System. City of Publication: Publisher.

These were built.⁶ The institutions prepared faculty housing and state-funded student and scholar housing. The Chola dynasty adopted a similar project in 1024 CE.⁷ It helped certain college students financially. 12th- and 13th-century temple schools existed. Chidambaram's Nataraja shrine had a school. Eight of this school's 20 librarians copied manuscripts, while two verified them. The remaining staff members preserved and maintained reference material.

Late Middle Ages - Early Modern Era:

Traditional Indian higher educational practises gradually were more influenced by Islamic thought once the religion of Islam was introduced to India. These pre-Mughal monarchs, such as Qutb-ud-din Aybak and other Muslim rulers, were responsible for establishing institutions that were responsible for disseminating religious knowledge. Scholars who later became essential instructors and founded Islamic monasteries include Nizamuddin Auliya and Moinuddin Chishti, amongst others. Students from Bukhara and other parts of Afghanistan travelled to India to further their education in the sciences and humanities.



Figure 2: The 15th century Mahmud Gawan Madrasa in Bidar

Indian Islamic education included madrassas and mastabas. Before Islam expanded to India, Persia and the Middle East acquired Greek traditions in grammar, philosophy, mathematics, and law, which these institutions taught. Science and the humanities were integrated in traditional Islamic education. India's educational centre was Delhi's 18th-century Madrasah-iRahimiyah. Shah Waliullah, an educator, oversaw it.⁸ Five books on mysticism, two on grammar, one on philosophy, two on logic, two on astronomy and mathematics, and two on logic were required for the Madrasa Rahimiya course. Mulla Nizamuddin Sahlawi established another significant centre in Lucknow. His Dars-i-Nizami curriculum was taught in the Firangi Mahal. Logic dominated this curriculum.

Akbar encouraged the incorporation of medicine, agriculture, geography, and even Sanskrit texts like Patanjali's in his higher education system. Traditional science was influenced by Aristotle, Bhaskara II, Charaka, and Ibn Sina. In Mughal India, inclusiveness was common. The conservative Aurangzeb supported administrative disciplines.⁹ As interaction with Persia developed, the Ottoman school of manque education was supplanted by the more moderate maqui school. The Mughals were liberal in the sciences. Mughals adopted this technique. India's Middle Ages private tutoring grew due to the state's underinvestment in public education. A tutor, or riyaz, was an educated professional who could make a fortune making calendars or revenue predictions for the aristocracy. These were tutors' specialties. This period also had flexible occupational roles. Qaim Khan, a prince who made leather shoes and cannons, showed this aptitude.

Governance of the Education System:

The Indian nation is organised as a federation of states, and the central government and the individual states share authority over many matters. The Constitution lays forth unequivocal terms of the authorities and

⁶Leader, P. S. (2003). How an Effective Leadership and Governance Supports to Achieve Institutional Vision, Mission, and Objectives. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Development*, 2(5), 154-161.

⁷Kumar, K. (2005). Quality of Education at the Beginning of the 21st Century: Lessons from India. *Indian Educational Review*, 40(1), 3-28.

⁸Nikam, K. (2004). Information and communications technology and the revolution of knowledge in India. *Information Technology and Society*, 15(2), 39-55.

⁹Plummer, L., & Taylor, M. (2004). Entrepreneurship and human capital in local economic development. *Economic Development Quarterly*, 18(3), 207-222.

responsibilities that can legally belong to the federal government, the states, or even to both simultaneously. In 1976, a resolution was approved, establishing education as a shared responsibility between the federal government and the individual states. However, traditionally, the states have been responsible for overseeing the public school education systems, while the federal government is in charge of formulating policies at the national level. As was mentioned earlier, a national policy on education was introduced in 1986 and later revised in 1992. In addition, there has been a Central Advisory Board of Education in place since the time of the British, and its primary function is to serve as a mechanism for consultation between the central government and the individual states. However, the federal government provides grants to the states to carry out projects conceived of, outlined, and authorised by the federal government.

The states must pay a significant portion of the costs associated with public education out of their budgets. The financing provided by the central government is used as a potent instrument by the central government to determine the course that the expansion of education will take across the entire nation. Other ministries, such as the Ministry of Scheduled Castes and Tribes, provide financial assistance to schools that have been explicitly opened for specific categories of children. For instance, individual states or schools can apply for and receive grants from the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment. State Councils of Educational Research and Training are each state's primary research and development institutions. The National Council of Education Research and Training (NCERT) defines the National Frame Curriculum for grades I-XII.

School boards in each state are responsible for the affiliation of secondary schools and establishing examination criteria in conformity with the national framework. Almost every facet of public-school education is governed by an educational bureaucracy that operates at the state, district, and sub-district levels.¹⁰ This bureaucracy operates under the overarching supervision of the political leadership. These factors include the curriculum and the textbooks, the recruitment, deployment, and training of instructors, and the certification of children when they have graduated from the secondary and senior secondary stages. The autonomy of the states explains the vast disparities that can be found in the educational systems of the various states: According to the results of the Census of India carried out in 2011, Kerala has an almost entirely literate population (93.91%), whereas Bihar's literacy rate is only 63.82.

Illiteracy was a significant problem for the Government of India (GOI) when it gained independence in 1947. Programs, rules, and regulations were put in place by the GOI to address the issue of illiteracy. Abul Kalam Azad's vision for a unified education system was realised via central solid government control of the education system and policies. All of these commissions were established in order to offer ideas to modernise education systems in India, including the University Grants Commission (November 1956) and the Secondary Education Commission¹¹. Prime Minister Nehru endorsed the Scientific Policy Resolution to boost science education. The Nehru administration financed the Indian Institute of Technology to advance engineering and science (IITs)¹². The United States government created the National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) in 1961 as an independent agency. Education policies are the focus of this mechanism, which advises the government on how to execute them.

The First National Policy on Education, 1968:

In 1968, the administration of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi issued the first NEP, which was based on the findings and recommendations of the Kothari Commission (1964–1966). "Radical reform" and the recommendation of equal educational opportunities for rural and urban areas were examined for the policy's consideration.¹³ However, the plan to make Hindi the country's official language was met with opposition. In order to create a single language in India, the strategy called for the use and study of Hindi to be encouraged. The ancient Sanskrit language was also urged to be taught since it was an essential component of Indian culture and legacy. In addition to promoting sports and games culture, this initiative aimed to increase access to physical education. An increase in education spending to 6% of national revenue was advocated in the 1968 National Policy on Education (NPE) (Govt. of India, 1968).

Second National Policy on Education, 1986:

Former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi introduced a new national policy in 1986 to boost educational opportunities for people from all socioeconomic backgrounds. There is a "Special Emphasis on the Elimination of Inequalities and to Sequentialise the Educational Opportunity," according to the accepted policy, independent of caste (scheduled caste, scheduled tribes), gender (primarily females), and economic standing (primarily men). Scholarships, subsidies, allowances, and adult education were among the measures included in the strategy to promote social integration.

Known for its "child-centred approach," this NPE pioneered the widely lauded educational reform known as "Operation Blackboard" in elementary school. In order to improve elementary schools throughout the

¹⁰Psarras, J. (2006). Education and training in the information economy. *Education + Training*, 48(8), 587-596.

¹¹Kothari Commission (1964–1966)

¹² Onwuegbuzie, A. J., Dickinson, W. B., Leech, N. L., & Zoran, A. G. (2009). A qualitative framework for collecting and analyzing data in focus group research. *International journal of qualitative methods*, 8(3), 1-21

¹³Swaak, J. (2005). Challenges in the information economy. *Information Systems Journal*, 16(1), 81-99

nation, this was the goal¹⁴. The Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) was established in 1985 as a part of the strategy. This strategy adheres to Mahatma Gandhi's worldview to help rural India's economic and social growth (Govt. of India, 1986).

Revisions in Second National Policy on Education in 1992 and 2005:

In 1992, former Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao reworked the National Employment Guarantee (NEG). The Common Entrance Examination (CETE) was one of the most notable outcomes of this educational strategy (CEE). Manmohan Singh, the previous Indian Prime Minister, announced a new "Common Minimum Program" programme in 2008. All India-based vocational and technical training admissions will be subject to a single test under the PoA 1992 of the NEP 1986.

Third National Policy on Education, 2020:

The Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) issued a Draft of NEP 2019 in 2019, then several proposals and discussions from stakeholders and the general public. Reduced curriculum material is discussed in the Draft National Education Plan (NEP). The goal is to foster holistic, experiential, discussion-based, and analysis-based learning. It also discusses the first-ever change in the curriculum. What is significant about this new system is that it is far more flexible and adaptable than the old one. Learning may be improved depending on children's cognitive growth. A NEP, authorised by the cabinet (senate) on July 29, 2020, aims to change India's current educational system significantly. Our school system will benefit much from the NEP 2020, which is appropriate and liberal. The higher education commission of India would become the one regulating authority for all higher education institutions, including AICTE, UGC, DCI, and MCI. A new national accreditation body will replace NAAC and NAB accreditation. There will be funding for HEI research activities offered by the National Research Foundation (NRF). As we move toward a more interdisciplinary approach to schooling, the research will be a multi-disciplinary approach to teaching undergraduate and graduate students. Pupils were taught to communicate effectively via various methods, including case studies, debates, projects, research, and creative approaches to problem-solving.

It has been determined that the M.Phil. programme will be cancelled. The use of regional dialects will become more widespread. Teaching methods that put the interests of the students first rather than those of the instructor. In order to keep track of academic credit, an "Academic Bank of Credit" will be established. The online distance learning course should be encouraged to be included as part of a degree programme. In order to meet the worldwide standard of quality, a degree programme may integrate classroom teaching, online teaching, and remote learning.¹⁵ A greater emphasis is placed on hands-on training to obtain the necessary abilities. Two notions will be used to define the term "university," a university that focuses on research and a university that focuses on teaching. Multiple departure options and awards are dependent on time invested in the degree programme. After completing the first two years, a certificate, diploma, and degree are all awarded. The four-year degree programme should comprise a minor, a major, and a research project as project-based activities. An innovative and adaptable Competency-Based Credit System will be implemented instead of the Choice Based Credit System, replaced by incubation, technology, interdisciplinary research, and professional academic and career counselling centres.

Implications of NEP 2020 on the Indian Higher Education System:

In order to reach the position of decision-maker, one must be a competent role model. When deciding on and enforcing higher education regulations, bureaucrats and false educators who hold top posts like Chairman of UGC, AICTE and MCI may be out of the picture.¹⁶ One may become Vice-Chancellor of Public Sector Universities and rise through the ranks of the Indian Higher Education (HE) system without having published a single academic paper. As the Director of Technical Institutions position, the Chairman of AICTE might be appointed by someone with no patents. A person with no intellectual property rights (IPRs) can hold positions of power in Higher Education Divisions, such as the Association of Indian Universities. In order to clean up the higher education bureaucracy, merit-based appointments of research and innovation leaders should be made.¹⁷ Professors who have not published or been granted a patent as the first author in at least five academic articles in the previous five years will not be eligible to serve as directors, vice-chancellors, or the like under the University's new structure. Thirdly, A strong emphasis on research and innovation at both the undergraduate and graduate levels encourages students and faculty members to think creatively and confidently about proposing and implementing new ideas, which leads to innovation.

The Board of Governors (BoG) of any autonomous institution is supposed to include highly qualified, competent, and devoted members who have demonstrated competencies and a strong feeling of commitment to the organisation to prevent abuse of power by individuals. The Board of Governors (BoG) bears primary

¹⁴ Pradeep M.D, and Aithal, P. S., (2015). Learning through Team Centric Exercise & Key Point Pedagogy - An effective Learning Model for Slow Learners in Higher Education Training, International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Development, 2(9), 265-270.

¹⁵ Jarman, D., & Singh, P. (2008). Business services and knowledge economy in Malaysia. Journal of Business Research, 61(9), 947-957.

¹⁶ Pradeep M.D, and Aithal, P. S., (2015). Learning through Team Centric Exercise & Key Point Pedagogy - An effective Learning Model for Slow Learners in Higher Education Training, International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Development, 2(9), 265-270.

¹⁷ Chen, L. (2008). Technology and the global knowledge economy. Innovation: Management, Policy & Practice, 10(2-3), 123-137.

responsibility for the HEI's results, which it will make publicly available via appropriate records. The National Higher Education Regulatory Authority stipulated that BOG must adhere to all applicable rules and regulations (NHERA). It is possible to effectively regulate the financial probity of HEIs, governance, open disclosure of financials, faculty/staff, courses, and educational quality by establishing a single HEIs regulator: the National Higher Education Regulatory Authority (NHERA). To eliminate the complication of education, HEIs should guarantee that they are not for profit and that any excess is reinvested in the institution's growth under the supervision of Board members. Even though private HEIs may establish their rates, they are responsible for providing at least 20% free shipping and 30% scholarships.¹⁸ This strategy enables them to recoup their costs reasonable while still fulfilling their social responsibilities. The 20 per cent free shipping and 30 per cent scholarship offered by private HEIs would lead to the overcrowding of meritorious students at private universities, resulting in a decrease in the quality of education available to students from low-income families, minorities, and women.

Conclusion:

The trajectory of administrative reforms in Indian higher education reflects a dynamic response to historical legacies, socio-economic needs, and global educational trends. From its ancient roots in Nalanda and Taxila to the contemporary emphasis on inclusivity and digital learning, the evolution of India's higher education system is marked by efforts to balance tradition with modernity, equity with excellence, and local identity with global visibility. The introduction of the Third National Policy on Education (NPE) 2020 represents a pivotal moment in this ongoing journey, offering a comprehensive framework for reform that addresses critical issues of quality, access, and relevance. This policy's focus on a multidisciplinary approach, digital education, and research and innovation underscores a commitment to preparing a future-ready workforce and nurturing a knowledge society. However, the successful implementation of these reforms requires robust governance, sustained investment, and collaborative engagement among all stakeholders. As India navigates these changes, the higher education system stands at the cusp of transformation, poised to enhance its contribution to national development and global academia. The path forward demands a commitment to continuous learning, adaptability, and strategic vision, ensuring that administrative reforms translate into meaningful outcomes for students, educators, and the broader society.

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