

NEP2020 : Multidisciplinary Issues

NEP2020 has emphasized the transformation of higher educational institutions into multidisciplinary institutions. The policy makers expect 'well-rounded individuals'. The Chairman of UGC stated that a substantial number of HEIs in the country are either 'single stream institutions' or 'multidisciplinary institutions with rigid disciplinary boundaries'. He has expressed his desire to accept the 'challenge' in order to transform the HE institutions into multidisciplinary institutions. During September 2022, UGC has circulated guidelines to fulfill the transformation. According to the NEP2020 recommendation, a large number of multidisciplinary institutes are to be established within 2030 in near or every district of India. At the end of 75 years of independence, the present government feels that India has 'domain specific stand-alone colleges and universities'. According to them this is not proper and hence a transformation is necessary. They like to have 'products' similar to those of the ancient institutions such as Nalanda and Takshashila. We are at 21st century now. Science and technology are dominating the world. The present time represents the age of information and biotechnology. It also ruled by artificial intelligence and machine learning. It is reported that 82% of enterprises adopting machine learning and artificial intelligence have gained a significant investments. NEP2020 suggested three kind of institutions: 1. Multidisciplinary research-intensive universities (RUs) 2. Multidisciplinary teaching-intensive universities (TUs) and 3. Degree-awarding multidisciplinary autonomous colleges. Is it not a fragmentation of different kind? According to NEP2020, the multidisciplinary RUs and TUs will be universities with 3000 or more students. Will it be practicable in all parts of our country? Government is desirous to withdraw the financial assistance in the field of college education. UGC in their guidelines has stated that by 2035 all affiliated colleges should become degree-awarding multidisciplinary autonomous institutions. There is an evolutionary history in the curriculum of education. Multidisciplinary approach in lower level is acceptable. At the present age of technology, the job-seeking world will be mostly reluctant to provide employment for multidisciplinary trained youths. In order to make their programme successful, NEP2020 has suggested student induction programme, academic bank of credit and addition of online courses. There are two important concept in the domain of education— multidisciplinary and interdisciplinarity. Multidisciplinary draws knowledge from different disciplines but they remain within their boundaries. Interdisciplinarity analyzes, synthesizes and harmonizes links between different disciplines into a co-ordinated and coherent manner. In a multidisciplinary curriculum, a learner may gain knowledge of everything but not be expert of anything. The students will have confusions in selecting subjects. NEP2020 is adamant but the stakeholders are still in a dilemma about its advantages and disadvantages. There is every chance of distraction from the final learning goal. The phrase 'Master of all trades, jack of none' exists till date.

UGC is tirelessly trying to introduce online education in our country gradually undermining the active role of teachers in classroom. UGC's own guideline states 'Online education is gaining acceptance and popularity. Hundreds of online course recognized including those available in the SWAYAM portal can provide an IDEAL (All Cap by me) platform to enable multidisciplinary education'

In order to make the multidisciplinary programme more meaningful, UGC not only suggested clustering of colleges but has submitted an advance forecast that it will help 'in securing good grades in NAAC accreditation.' It is interesting to note that UGC has stated that 'In case of private colleges forming a cluster, the trust, or society, or company which runs the college must be CHARITABLE and NOT-FOR-PROFIT bodies. We all know that the reality is just the reverse. There are governing bodies for colleges. Keeping similar nomenclature with the corporate sectors, UGC has suggested the highest administrative body as 'Board of Directors' consisting of nine members out of which only two will be academicians. The academicians will act as EXTERNAL experts NOMINATED by the board. Principals will be there but no representatives from the teaching, non-teaching and student communities both for the clusters of government and private colleges. There will be a silent transfer of education towards commercialization. In UGC guideline, they have put everything in few sentences without any practical consideration. According to them, there will be 'holistic and multidisciplinary education. So, there will be 'courses and resources for a variety of disciplines and providing flexibility to students to choose courses and pathways such that holistic individual development takes place in intellectual, aesthetic, social, physical, emotional and moral dimensions and that 21st century skills/competencies (including social and life skills) of critical thinking, problem solving, communication, leadership, teamwork, mastery of curricula across fields, increase in social and moral awareness and creativity and innovation are fully developed and put to practice'. Everything is there. Nothing is left.

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