



National Education Policy 2020 and Legal Education in India: A Transformative Approach

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ARTICLE DETAILS	ABSTRACT
Research Paper	
Keywords : <i>NEP 2020, Legal Education in India, Bar Council of India, Multidisciplinary Learning, Academic Bank of Credit, Digital Legal Education, Indian Legal Traditions</i>	<i>The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 aims to revolutionize India's education system by fostering multidisciplinary learning, digital integration, and research-driven education. Legal education in India has traditionally been rigid and insular, focusing primarily on theoretical aspects rather than practical and interdisciplinary learning. With the introduction of NEP 2020, India's legal education sector is poised to undergo a paradigm shift by incorporating global best practices, technology-driven pedagogy, and indigenous legal traditions. This paper critically examines the impact of NEP 2020 on legal education, exploring how reforms such as interdisciplinary legal studies, digital and experiential learning, credit transfer systems, and the promotion of Indian legal traditions can enhance the quality of legal education in India. It also highlights the challenges in implementing these changes, such as regulatory constraints, faculty preparedness, and infrastructural gaps. Finally, the paper offers policy recommendations to ensure the smooth adoption of NEP 2020's principles in legal education.</i>

1. Introduction

Legal education serves as the foundation of a nation's judicial and governance framework. It plays a pivotal role in shaping lawyers, judges, policymakers, and administrators who uphold justice and the rule of law. However, in India, legal education has historically been rigid, outdated, and disconnected from

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real-world applications. Legal education refers to the study, understanding, and application of laws that govern a society. It is not only a professional discipline but also a crucial component of a democratic and just society. In India, legal education has evolved significantly, influenced by historical developments, constitutional mandates, and global legal advancements. The primary objective of legal education is to equip individuals with the knowledge of laws, legal procedures, and justice delivery mechanisms. It prepares students for various roles, including legal practitioners, judges, academicians, policymakers, and corporate advisors.

Legal education plays a vital role in promoting the rule of law and ensuring access to justice. A well-educated legal community is essential for upholding constitutional principles, safeguarding human rights, and resolving disputes through proper legal channels. It also fosters a culture of legal awareness among citizens, enabling them to understand their rights and responsibilities. The effectiveness of a legal system largely depends on the quality of legal education imparted in institutions, making legal studies an essential pillar of a well-functioning democracy.

In addition to professional training, legal education contributes to social transformation by addressing issues related to justice, equality, and governance. It helps in developing legal professionals who can advocate for marginalized communities, contribute to policy-making, and engage in legal reforms. Moreover, legal education is instrumental in preparing individuals to handle contemporary challenges such as cyber law, intellectual property rights, environmental regulations, and international law.

With the advent of globalization and digitalization, the legal profession has undergone significant changes, demanding a more dynamic and interdisciplinary approach to legal education. The traditional methods of teaching law have been supplemented by modern pedagogical tools, including clinical legal education, moot courts, legal aid programs, and online learning platforms. These advancements enhance the practical exposure of students, making them more competent and adaptable to real-world legal scenarios.

Recognizing the need for reforms in legal education, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 introduces several transformative measures. It emphasizes multidisciplinary learning, skill-based training, and the integration of technology in legal studies. The policy also promotes research-oriented legal education to develop critical thinking and analytical skills among students. By aligning legal education with contemporary needs, NEP 2020 aims to produce legal professionals who are not only well-versed in laws but also capable of addressing emerging legal and socio-economic challenges.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is a comprehensive framework introduced by the Government of India to reform and modernize the education system. It replaces the previous National Policy on



Education (NPE) 1986, which was last modified in 1992. The NEP 2020 aims to make the education system more holistic, flexible, multidisciplinary, and aligned with the needs of the 21st century while remaining rooted in Indian traditions and values.

The policy was formulated after extensive consultations with educators, policymakers, students, and stakeholders at various levels. The Draft NEP 2019 was released by a committee chaired by Dr. K. Kasturirangan, former chairman of ISRO. After receiving feedback from the public and experts, the final policy was approved by the Union Cabinet on July 29, 2020.

One of the major focuses of NEP 2020 is equitable access to quality education across all levels, from early childhood to higher education. It emphasizes multidisciplinary, technology integration, research, skill development, and internationalization of education. Additionally, it seeks to reduce rote learning, promote critical thinking, and encourage holistic development among students.

The policy introduces several key reforms, such as the 5+3+3+4 schooling structure, flexibility in subject choices, multiple entry and exit options in higher education, and the establishment of regulatory bodies like the National Higher Education Regulatory Council (NHERC) and the Academic Bank of Credit (ABC). Furthermore, NEP 2020 places special emphasis on Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS), Indian languages, and regional diversity.

By integrating digital technologies, ensuring universal access, and restructuring higher education, the NEP 2020 sets the stage for a transformative shift in India's educational landscape, including significant reforms in legal education to align it with contemporary global standards.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, approved by the Government of India, envisions a flexible, multidisciplinary, and technology-driven approach to education, including legal studies. The policy aims to:

1. Enhance interdisciplinary learning by integrating legal studies with business, social sciences, technology, and ethics.
2. Modernize legal pedagogy by incorporating digital learning tools, AI-based research, and experiential learning.
3. Encourage research and innovation through the National Research Foundation (NRF).
4. Promote indigenous legal traditions, including ancient Indian jurisprudence and customary laws.
5. Ensure greater accessibility by introducing credit transfer systems and Special Education Zones (SEZs) for marginalized communities.

By analyzing these provisions, this paper evaluates how NEP 2020 can transform legal education in India, along with potential obstacles and practical solutions for its successful implementation.

2. Evolution of Legal Education in India

2.1 Pre-Independence Era: Colonial Influence

Legal education in India can be traced back to British colonial rule, when formal legal training was introduced to produce administrators and legal professionals familiar with English common law. Law schools focused primarily on memorization of legal texts, with little emphasis on analytical thinking or research.

2.2 Post-Independence Reforms

After 1947, India's legal education system underwent significant changes:

- The Bar Council of India (BCI) was established in 1961 under the Advocates Act to regulate legal education.
- National Law Universities (NLUs) were set up in the 1980s and 1990s to provide specialized legal education.
- Five-year integrated law programs (B.A. LL.B.) were introduced to improve legal training.

However, despite these reforms, the system continued to face several challenges, including:

- Limited multidisciplinary approach, preventing law students from learning about technology, business, and policy.
- Lack of research and innovation, as most law schools do not prioritize research-based education.
- Poor technological adoption, with minimal use of AI-driven legal research, virtual courts, and e-learning platforms.
- Rigid regulatory framework, as the BCI enforces strict guidelines, limiting academic flexibility.

NEP 2020 proposes groundbreaking reforms to address these issues and modernize legal education.

3. Key Provisions of NEP 2020 Affecting Legal Education

3.1 Multidisciplinary and Flexible Education

NEP 2020 promotes a multidisciplinary learning model, encouraging law students to study subjects such as:

- Technology and Artificial Intelligence (AI in law, cyber laws).
- Business and Economics (corporate law, trade laws).
- Social Sciences and Public Policy (constitutional law, human rights).

Legal institutions are encouraged to collaborate with engineering, management, and humanities departments to provide comprehensive legal training.

3.2 Digital and Experiential Learning

The integration of technology is a core aspect of NEP 2020. Legal education will benefit from:

- Virtual Court Simulations, allowing students to practically engage in trial advocacy.
- AI-Driven Legal Research, enhancing access to precedents, case laws, and legal analytics.
- Online Law Courses & MOOCs, making legal education more accessible to students from remote areas.

3.3 Research and Innovation (National Research Foundation - NRF)

The National Research Foundation (NRF) is a key initiative under the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, aimed at strengthening the research ecosystem in India. It is envisioned as a centralized body to promote, fund, and coordinate research across various disciplines, including science, technology, social sciences, and humanities. The foundation seeks to bridge the gap between academia, industry, and government research initiatives, ensuring that research efforts align with national priorities and contribute to socio-economic development.

The NRF is structured to function as an autonomous entity under the Department of Science and Technology (DST), Government of India. It is designed to provide financial support to universities, research institutions, and individual researchers, facilitating high-quality research and innovation. The foundation will also promote interdisciplinary and collaborative research by fostering partnerships between educational institutions, industries, and international organizations.

One of the primary objectives of the NRF is to enhance research funding and infrastructure in Indian higher education institutions. By allocating resources efficiently, the foundation aims to support projects that have the potential for technological advancements, policy development, and global competitiveness. Special emphasis is placed on encouraging young researchers, women scientists, and scholars from underrepresented backgrounds to contribute to cutting-edge research.

In addition to funding research projects, the NRF will play a crucial role in setting research priorities, evaluating research quality, and promoting ethical research practices. It will work closely with universities and research centers to ensure that research outcomes are effectively utilized for societal benefits. The foundation also aims to address issues such as brain drain by creating better opportunities for researchers within India.

Overall, the establishment of the National Research Foundation under NEP 2020 marks a significant step toward making India a global hub for research and innovation. By fostering a culture of inquiry, critical thinking, and knowledge creation, the NRF is expected to transform the research landscape and contribute to the country's long-term scientific and economic progress.

The establishment of NRF will facilitate legal research in emerging areas, such as:

- Cybersecurity and Data Protection Laws.
- Artificial Intelligence and Legal Ethics.
- Environmental Law and Climate Justice.

3.4 Academic Bank of Credit (ABC) System

The Academic Bank of Credit (ABC) system is a digital initiative introduced under the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 to promote flexible and student-centric learning. It is designed to function as a digital repository where students can accumulate, transfer, and redeem academic credits earned across different higher education institutions. This system aims to facilitate seamless mobility between institutions, allowing students to pursue multidisciplinary education at their own pace.

The ABC system enables students to earn credits from various recognized institutions and store them in an online credit bank. These credits can be accumulated over time and used to fulfill the requirements of degree programs, diplomas, or certifications. This flexibility helps students who need to pause their education due to personal or professional reasons, as they can resume their studies later without losing their previously earned credits.

One of the key advantages of the ABC system is that it promotes multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary learning. Students can take courses from different universities, both online and offline, thereby customizing their education according to their interests and career goals. It also supports the concept of a multiple entry and exit system, allowing students to earn a certificate after one year, a diploma after two years, and a degree after three or four years of study.

The ABC system is managed through a digital platform developed by the University Grants Commission (UGC), ensuring transparency, efficiency, and security in credit transfers. Institutions participating in this system must be accredited and follow the guidelines set by the UGC and other regulatory bodies.

Overall, the Academic Bank of Credit system is a transformative step in Indian higher education, enabling lifelong learning, academic flexibility, and better utilization of educational resources. It aligns with the NEP 2020 vision of making education more inclusive, accessible, and student-friendly.



NEP 2020 introduces ABC, which allows students to earn and transfer academic credits across universities. This will benefit law students by:

- Enabling them to take courses at multiple institutions.
- Allowing them to pause and resume education without academic loss.

3.5 Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) and Legal Traditions

NEP 2020 emphasizes indigenous legal traditions, promoting studies on:

- Ancient Indian jurisprudence (Dharma, Nyaya, Arthashastra).
- Customary laws of tribal communities.
- Comparative analysis between modern and traditional legal systems.

4. Challenges in Implementing NEP 2020 in Legal Education

Despite its ambitious vision, NEP 2020 faces several challenges in legal education:

4.1 Rigid Regulatory Framework

- The Bar Council of India (BCI) enforces strict rules that may conflict with NEP 2020's flexible learning model.
- Legal institutions may struggle to incorporate interdisciplinary courses under BCI guidelines.

4.2 Infrastructure and Digital Divide

- Many law colleges lack digital infrastructure for AI-driven research and virtual learning.
- Students from rural backgrounds may struggle to access online courses due to limited internet facilities.

4.3 Faculty Preparedness

- Law faculty members need training in digital pedagogy and interdisciplinary teaching.
- Traditional faculty may resist new teaching methods involving technology and research-based learning.

5. Recommendations for Effective Implementation

1. **Regulatory Reforms:** The BCI should revise its rules to allow flexible and interdisciplinary education.
2. **Investment in Legal Research:** The National Research Foundation should allocate more funds to policy-based legal research.
3. **Technology-Driven Learning:** Universities must develop AI-based legal research tools and virtual courtroom experiences.



4. **Incentivizing Faculty Training:** Law schools should introduce faculty development programs for digital and interdisciplinary teaching.
5. **Rural and Inclusive Legal Education:** Special Education Zones (SEZs) should be created in disadvantaged regions to improve access to legal education.

6. Conclusion

NEP 2020 offers a transformative approach to legal education in India, integrating multidisciplinary learning, digital tools, and indigenous legal traditions. While challenges remain, strategic policy reforms and institutional efforts can help bridge gaps and modernize legal education in alignment with global standards.

By embracing technology, research innovation, and flexible academic structures, India can produce well-rounded legal professionals equipped for the evolving legal landscape.

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