

National Seminar

Higher Education in Post Pandemic World: Search of a New Normal

10-12th March, 2022



Department of Higher and Professional Education

**National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration
New Delhi-110016**

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Pandemic has influenced every aspect of human life and education is no exception to that. It has caused disruption of teaching, research and training in higher education institutions (HEIs). This disruption was partly managed through technology. Notwithstanding the limits in terms of access to technology, some leading institutions continued teaching and research. There was large scale training of teachers by the HRDCs. A large number of webinars, predominantly, on the themes of National Education Policy, 2020 were organized by HEIs. Some teachers found time to intensify research based on available information as field visits were not feasible. So far, except a few surveys, not many researches were conducted on online teaching and learning. This raises a pertinent question of how teaching and research have been impacted by the pandemic?

There is a discussion taking place around new normal in HEIs in post pandemic world. What will be the new normal is difficult to conjecture, yet it certainly needs a critical reflection.

The questions related to the post-colonial developments in higher education has revolved around the inter-related concepts of modernity, democracy and development. This has also been envisaged by Radhakrishnan Commission, 1948-49, Kothari Commission, 1964-66, the National Policy on Education, 1986 and Programme of Action 1992 and several other Commissions. The results of past developments have created controversies on a large number of issues which were related to tensions between general, professional and vocational education, disciplinary and interdisciplinary knowledge, equity and excellence, teacher and student centric pedagogy, grants and loan-based funding. Moreover, the National Education Policy, 2020 has posed challenges regarding large affiliating system by proposing a new institutional arrangement. The University Grants Commission, the regulating and funding body, is said to be inefficient by National Knowledge Commission. Indeed, the NEP, 2020 has proposed its abolition and the replacement by Higher Education Commission of India along with its four vertical institutions.

The commitment of the state during the first three decades of post-colonial period seems to have waned and a gradual shift to privatization has been taking place. All India Survey of Higher Education, 2019-20 indicates sharp decline in the rate of growth of enrolment in past 5 years and Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) is estimated to touch a figure of 35 % in 2030 as opposed to the NEP target of 50% by 2030. This indicates a deeper crisis of some of the reforms proposed in higher education in last 5 years and begs larger questions regarding the future of higher education in India. In particular, the technology led reforms paving the way for online education may falter, given the sharp digital divide. The future of social sciences and humanities is becoming uncertain. Students, mostly first-generation learners' competitive entry is impacting campus environment. As a result, higher education is emerging as a site of conflict. The fundamental premise of the public good character of higher education and the role of state in steering higher education for an inclusive and egalitarian system as mandated by the Indian Constitution has remained elusive in the past education policies. In the last two decades market, technology and state had formed a trinity that determined developments in higher education. This complex trinity has been taking place in pre covid period and the hypothesis is that this new normal has a tendency to further strengthen it.

The National Education Policy 2020, announced during pandemic, is claimed to fulfil the constitutional obligations pertaining to higher education. It has ardently committed to spend 6% of GDP to support public funding for greater access, equity and excellence through research, teaching and training in higher education. However, this commitment appears to be untenable. The privatization has once again brought together the market forces and technology in education wherein state is going to be instrumental. This new normal may further intensify the new relationships forming the trinity.

This National Seminar attempts to pose some of the following questions for an in-depth deliberation:

While the disruptive effect of pandemic is necessary to understand, transition to a ‘new normal’ needs to be analyzed. Some of the important questions are: What is new normal? What will be the modes in which new technology will express itself in teaching, learning, assessment? Will education lose touch with human interaction? Will the questioning, debating and discussion give way to confirmation? How will then knowledge generation process be shaped? How will then technology shape both teachers and students in the absence of social environment of an educational institution?

Market is an ally of technology. Technology thrives when market process supports it in terms of demand for education technology. This means that marketization of technology, product and services will have to be promoted as a matter of policy. Will a new normal further promote privatization? Who shall be the new beneficiaries? How will the commodification shape knowledge development? How will the intensification of technology and market affect diverse learners? How new forms of governance shape the autonomy and accountability of teachers?

An important aspect of a new normal will be the role of the state. Caught amidst the contradiction, university may witness a site of conflicts. How does state respond to the conflicts? How does state create new ways of support to the vulnerable sections? How does state fulfill the commitment of 6% GDP on education? How does co-ordination of center and state take place? How does state succeed in implementing NEP 2020?

This National Seminar will attempt to explore the trinity of technology, market, state and their inter-relationships in a post-COVID scenario. In this backdrop, the objectives of this seminar are as follows:

1. To understand post-colonial developments in higher education in India.
2. To understand the impact of Covid on teaching, research and service functions of higher education.
3. To conceptualize the “new normal” in post Covid scenario with respect to the role of technology and market.
4. To analyze the role of state in new normal in the light of past developments in higher education.
5. To understand the effect of new normal on access, equity and quality.

Seminar Themes: In the backdrop of above objectives of the national seminar, papers may focus on post-colonial developments with respect to institutional developments and structures of governance, affirmative action policies of state, regulation and governance at different levels, the progress of science and technology, social sciences and humanities, vocational education, online/blended education, language, role of teachers and teaching-learning. The seminar has special focus on covid and disruptions in post-colonial developments in higher education. The papers may critically address the new directions of change in the light of past developments.

Proposed Dates: Seminar will be held on 10, 11 and 12 March, 2022 in face-to-face mode. If the situation has not become normal, an online/blended mode of presentation shall be adopted.

Open Invitation: Teachers and Researchers working in the area of higher education are invited to contribute a paper in the National Seminar. You may send your abstract in 350 to 500 words latest by **30th September, 2021** on the following email (sudhanshu@niepa.ac.in)