Time to Change the Dance:
Implications of the National Education Policy, 2020 on Career Guidance Practice in India

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Abstract

Policies pertaining to education, employment, and social justice form key contextual variables determining the career and livelihood trajectories of individuals. Indian parliament ratified a National Education Policy (NEP) in 2020 for the country, the third one after independence and the first one in the 21st century. It aims to initiate transformative changes in the Indian education system by 2040 through advancements in pedagogies, knowledge creation, innovative delivery mechanism and integrated management. It presents the vision for greater access, equity, excellence, inclusion, and affordability to help India emerge as a knowledge superpower. The present paper does not deliberate on the merits or demerits, commissions, or omissions of the policy. Assuming that the proposals made in the document are implemented completely, this paper simply aims to identify and articulate implications of this policy for career guidance practice in India. The first section describes key provisions, targets, and timelines regarding career decision support. The second section articulates implications of these changes for the practice of career guidance. The final section lists key imperatives for career guidance practitioners working in the country.

Keywords: Career guidance in India; Career support services; Education Policy, NEP 2020.

Introduction

An African proverb says: "When the music changes so must the dance." The dance of career development and career guidance practice too depend on the musical rhymes and rhythms of the grand contextual symphony. While contextual variables have always characterised and determined careers (Bluestein, 1997; Collin, 1997; Patton & McMahon, 2006; Young, Wallach & Collin, 2002), enhanced volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity of the contemporary world (Canzittu, 2020) make the task of practitioners more challenging.

Government policy becomes one of the key contextual variables that shape the career trajectories of individuals (McCash, Hooley & Robertson, 2021). In India, an all-age, comprehensive career guidance policy is absent (Kumar, 2013). But India is certainly not an exception. It has been observed that in most countries policy threads pertaining to career guidance are typically subsumed in legislations and policies pertaining to education, employment, and social justice (McCarthy & Borbély-Pecze, 2021). In the case of India as well, education policies have commented on or provided for career guidance systems and structures. The Indian parliament passed the first

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education policy in 1968, followed by the National Policy on Education (NPE) in 1986, and its Programme of Action (PoA) in 1992. After 34 years, the third education policy after independence and the first one of the 21st century, the Union cabinet adopted the National Education Policy (NEP) on July 29, 2020 (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2020). This policy is an outcome of experiences, empirical research, stakeholder feedback, and lessons from best practices. Dubbed as a landmark document, NEP 2020 aims at initating transformative changes in Indian education by 2040 through advancements in pedagogies, knowledge creation, innovative delivery mechanisms, and integrated management of education systems. It presents the vision for greater access, equity, excellence, inclusion, and affordability to help India emerge as a knowledge superpower. The editorial of Issue 1, Volume 8 (Kharkongor, 2019) of the Indian Journal of Career and Livelihood Planning, provided a glimpse into the many promises that the draft education policy brought forward by the Government of India (MHRD, 2019) held for career practitioners. This paper extends that editorial in the light of the final policy document ratified by the union cabinet on 29 July 2020. Like any other policy statement, NEP, 2020 has received its share of bouquets and brickbats, praises, and criticism (e.g., Gavhane, 2020; KPMG, 2020; Kumar, Prakash & Singh, 2020; Kumar, 2021; Sarma & Banuri, 2020,7 August). This paper does not deliberate on merits or demerits, commissions or omissions of the policy. Assuming that the proposals made in the document are implemented completely, this paper simply aims to identify and articulate implications of this policy for career guidance practice in India. The first section locates key mentions of career guidance/counselling in the policy document and describes key targets and timelines regarding career decision support. The second section articulates the implications of the major changes for the practice of career guidance. The final section lists key imperatives for career practitioners working in the Indian context.

Career guidance and NEP 2020: Provisions, Tasks, Agencies, Timelines

The NEP has come up with a number of transformative proposals and subsequent documents have come up with key tasks and timelines as well. Appendices A and B of this paper list out key proposals and the timeline respectively. This section aims specifically to identify the places, context, and provisions pertaining to career support services and notes that the phrase career choice/counselling/guidance has come up seven times in the policy document, thrice in the School Education section, and four times in the Higher Education section.

School Sector

The first mention in the school education section can be noted in chapter 3 of the policy that focuses on curtailing dropout rates and ensuring universal access to education at all levels. Paragraph 7 of this chapter calls for involving volunteers from the community and alumni for providing a number of possible services including mentoring and career guidance. Chapter 4 of this document talks about transforming assessment for student development. It proposes development of Artificial Intelligence-based software for tracking students in order to provide them with information on interests, abilities and related areas so that they can make informed career choices. Chapter 7 of the policy deals with efficient resourcing and effective governance through school complexes/clusters. Paragraph 11 of this chapter talks about the establishment and/or strengthening of 'Bal Bhavans' (Children Homes) as a special daytime boarding school in every district, preferably in every school cluster, where children can visit once a week to participate in art-related, career-related, and play-related activities.

As one of the vital next steps of the adoption of this policy, the Department of School Education and Literacy, Ministry of Education has recently come up with a

suggestive and indicative implementation plan for school education called 'Students' and Teachers' Holistic Advancement through Quality Education (SARTHAQ)' (Ministry of Education, 2021). This document clearly delineates goals, outcomes and timeframe. The recommendations pertaining to school education have been translated into Part 1, which identifies 297 tasks along with responsible agencies, timelines and 304 outputs. Part 2 of this implementation plan covers a set of five annexures. Annexure 1 contains chapter-wise task tables. Annexure II contains organisation-wise task tables. Tasks identified in Part I of the document have been assigned to 23 bodies (please see Appendix C). Annexure III of SARTHAQ document lists these tasks by commencement year. Annexure IV contains lists of tasks for which guidelines and frameworks are being developed. It lists agencies responsible for developing those documents. Only 56 tasks, with agency timelines and outputs, have been given, for which guidelines and frameworks are to be developed. None of the tasks that pertain to career guidance appears in this Annexure. Implementation of these tasks needs extensive training programmes for various actors and stakeholders. Annexure V lists out training needed for completing these tasks along with responsible agencies and expected outcomes from these trainings. Only 19 out of 297 tasks have been identified in this table and tasks related to guidance and counselling are not listed in this Annexure as well.

Out of these 297 tasks, Task numbers 70, 238 and 239 directly relate to the provision of guidance services.

- Task 70 which relates to curtailing dropout rates and ensuring universal access to education at all levels, directs states to review and develop plans for engaging and connecting counsellors to schools (through both, online and offline modes), or preferably to a group or cluster of schools or school complexes. Their engagement may be planned to be implemented by states from 2022-23

onwards. By 2025, it is expected that the availability of counsellors will be at the 50% mark in schools/ school clusters/complexes of states and union territories and by 2030, 100% achievement of this task has been envisaged.

- Task 238 pertains to guidance for making informed choices. It envisages that states/union territories and CBSE and State boards of assessment will work out an online/offline mechanism for providing career counselling and guidance to children in Classes IX to XII so that children can make a career choice based on their interest, aspiration and abilities. This task is expected to be executed during 2022-23.

- As per Task 239, NCERT is expected to develop Skill Based Aptitude Test (SBT) in the online mode at end of Class VIII and Class X in order to facilitate the choice of courses and careers. States/Union Territories/ Boards of Assessment/CBSE have been given the option to introduce it or prepare their own version of SBT. This task is to be executed during 2022-25.

Besides Task numbers 70, 238 and 239, there are a few other tasks as well that have implications for career service delivery to students.

- Task 206 has been articulated in order to strengthen existing Bal Bhavans in order to develop these centres as a space for art, play and career-related activities. This task is to be achieved during 2022-30.

- Tasks 107-109 relate to the development of a holistic progress card documenting students' strengths, areas of interest, and needed areas of focus, and thereby helping them make optimal career choices.

- Tasks 93-98 pertain to the development of new curricular

frameworks by NCERT and SCERTs. NCERT is expected to develop position papers with the help of 25 Focus groups for formulating the new National Curricular Framework on School Education (NCFSE). Of these, 12 Position Papers will be related directly to curriculum and Pedagogy, 5 Position Papers will be related to crosscutting themes, and 8 Position Papers will be related to various other important areas in NEP, 2020. Guidance and Counselling fall under the last set, i.e., other important areas.

It is evident that the NEP creates a number of spaces and opportunities for supporting young persons in the career development process.

Higher Education Sector

In the context of Higher Education, Chapter 12 of the policy deals with optimal learning environments and support for students. In its 4th paragraph, concerns have been expressed regarding the successful transition of students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds to higher education. This paragraph envisages for the establishment of a support centre that would offer professional academic and career counselling services. Chapter 14 on equity and inclusion too emphasises a need for providing socio-emotional and academic support through counselling initiatives. Chapter 18 pertains to catalysing quality academic research in all fields through a new National Research Foundation. Its 8th paragraph sums up the overall approach of the policy for developing a research mindset. The efforts listed to develop scientific methods and critical thinking interestingly include identification of interest and talents in schools as a part of career counselling.

So far as implementation of the recommendations related to higher education are concerned, state governments and universities have been instructed to formulate their own strategies.

Some of these documents are available in the public domain. Examples from two such documents are given below:

- *The Association of Indian Universities (AIU) (2021)* in its Vice Chancellors' Conference in various regions discussed recommendations of the NEP 2020 and suggested action points and implementation strategies. It proposes that there will be professional academic and career counselling available to all students, as well as counsellors to ensure physical, psychological and emotional well-being. It suggests that by 2021, higher education institutions will establish systems for mental wellness counselling, workshops, awareness, and activities and by 2023 these institutions identify and deploy the appointed staff for the Learner Centers and set up focused counselling (academic and professional) for students from socio-economically disadvantaged Students.

- *Central University of Haryana (2021)* mandates its Centre for Equal Opportunities to impart all sorts of academic, professional and career counselling/coaching to the students and gives this task a timeline of 5-10 years, treating it as a long-term goal.

It is evident that in the context of higher education, career support services are seen largely as an equity mechanism to support students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Key Provisions of NEP and Implications for Career Guidance Practice

Changes in Academic Structure: School Education

Currently, the country follows a 10+2 system where the first 8 years are termed as Elementary, grades 9 and 10 are termed Secondary, and classes 11 and 12 are variously termed as higher/senior secondary, pre-university or intermediate. Formal school education is supposed to

begin from age 6 (grade 1) culminating at age 18 (grade 12). One of the most important changes planned is in this curricular structure (Appendix D). The present school system, will now begin from age 3, will be divided into 5 + 3 + 3 + 4 years with four stages: namely Foundation (3 years of pre-primary+ classes 1 and 2), Preparatory (classes 3-5), Middle (classes 6-8) and Secondary (classes 9-12) respectively.

While this change has a number of implications for the education ecosystem in general, career guidance practice too is required to adapt. The key role of a career practitioner is to facilitate smooth transitions from one stage to another. With alterations in the academic structure, these transition points will change. In the current situation, students need guidance at class 10 regarding choice of subject stream for higher secondary studies. They need to decide whether they should join Arts/Humanities or Science or Commerce or the Vocational streams. Another key transition point currently is at the Senior/Higher Secondary stage where they need to decide whether they should transition into a professional course, non-professional or a vocational course, and what subjects should they choose within the course of their choice. But in the changed curricular structure, while the second major decision point remains the same, i.e., Class 12, the first transition point would be preponed to Class 9 itself.

Another major change that has been proposed is doing away with the artificial boundaries of Arts, Science, Commerce and Vocational. Currently, students are expected to choose a stream in Class 11. But in the newly proposed structure, students can choose any subject of their choice at the beginning of secondary level which has been envisaged as 4 years of multidisciplinary study beginning at Class 9. While this will afford greater flexibility, the counsellors' job could become more challenging because unlike the earlier system, students will choose not just amongst 4 subject streams, rather they will be presented with a plethora of

seemingly unrelated subjects from which they are expected to make up a suitable combination of subjects. In a context where the choice of courses and careers have largely depended upon subject choices made at the school level and trajectories on the basis of newly available and possible subject combinations remain uncharted. It could be really difficult for a career practitioner to suggest realistic options that connect with subjects offered by the college and university systems of the country downstream. There is no clarity regarding the mechanism to ensure vertical mobility of students studying a particular combination of subjects. For example, if someone selects Sanskrit, Physics and Music at the secondary level, what kind of courses would s/he be eligible for later on? Therefore, the emerging career guidance task before the career practitioner would be to help students and their families discern between subject combinations that are 'available' or seem 'interesting' to the student and make a choice based on a realistic analysis of the future career development prospects of a particular set of subject combinations.

Changes in Academic Structure: Tertiary Education

After completion of secondary school, students would enter higher education where they would have the opportunity to go for a multidisciplinary undergraduate degree programme for 3 years. Those with a minimum CGPA of 7.5 can opt for an extended undergraduate course of one more year where they will largely gain research skills that will prepare them for a post-graduate programme of one-year duration. Those who would have done a 3-year long undergraduate programme can opt for a 2 year long post graduate course. The existing research degree of M.Phil. stands abolished and students can go for a doctoral programme immediately after post-graduation.

Just as in the secondary stage, the key assignment for the career practitioner would be to help college students select an appropriate course, and subjects at the

undergraduate level. In the changed setting 'multi-disciplinarity' would be the buzzword. Yet, the future prospects of multidisciplinary combinations remain unknown making the work of a career practitioner more complex. Career practitioners' main role would be to ensure that students do not just go for "interesting" subject combinations without being aware of the scope these subjects have in the real-world labour market. While a deterministic career path is limiting and restrictive, a career path that is very broad and uncertain could be unnerving too.

Provision for Multiple Entry/ Exit and Academic Bank of Credits (ABC)

Another key proposal in the realm of higher education is the opportunity to take multiple entries and exits. Students who drop out during a degree programme will be able to complete the programme after a break. At the same time, they will be awarded: a certificate if they complete one year of coursework; a diploma if they complete 2 years of coursework; and, a degree if they complete the 3-year programme. This proposal ensures that the time they do put into education is not wasted and at the same time, they have opportunities to complete the course after a gap from any other institution in India. Guidelines have been issued to develop curricula in such a way that even certificate holders gain skills that would make them employable in the world of work. While these are good intentions, there seem to be a number of challenges in the implementation of this provision. Some of these challenges would be to: devise job-oriented syllabi of various durations; facilitate smooth transitions of the certificate, diploma, and degree holders into the labour market; bring those students back to complete their education who drop out in the middle.

At the same time, the idea of Academic Bank of Credit (ABC) is being mooted wherein credits awarded to a student for one program from an institution may be transferred or redeemed by another institution. This would facilitate mobility across geographical regions and institutions. It appears to be a welcome step that would give academic flexibility to students. However, the implementation guidelines (UGC, 2021) make this facility seem exclusionary in nature and biased against disadvantaged students, particularly those coming from small towns. To illustrate, only those higher education institutions would be able to avail the facility of ABC that have been awarded A grade by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC). As of October 2021, only 22% of institutions of higher learning were received A grade (NAAC, 2021). This means that the majority of students would automatically become ineligible for ABC. In these circumstances, career counsellors' need to be cognizant about the contexts of the clients with whom they are working and must guide them accordingly.

New Career Opportunities

Complete implementation of this policy would open up career opportunities in a number of sectors specifically in the realm of education. Opportunities for teachers are likely to change in an unprecedented manner. More teachers would be needed because the policy aims at:

- including 3 years of pre-primary education before Class 1;
- universalising education from pre-school to secondary level with 100% Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) by 2030;
- extending Right to Education from 6-14 years to 3-18 years; and,
- achieving 50% GER in Higher Education by 2030.

These proposals would propel the demand for teachers to unprecedented volumes.

It must be noted here that this discussion is not just about numbers. The type of teachers and their training, expected skill sets and eligibility criteria too are likely to change. For example, coding, computational thinking and vocational courses are being introduced from Class 6

which would enhance the demand for computer teachers and vocational instructors. Those who are experts in new age digital technologies such as artificial intelligence, big data, machine learning would be needed in large numbers. Further, the policy talks about: developing 21st century skills among students; integrating 'Indian knowledge systems' covering subjects like yoga, Indian philosophy, and Adivasi/indigenous ways of learning; introducing tectonic changes in the examination system; laying more emphasis on skill development and experiential learning, and a number of other innovations in the teaching-learning-evaluation process. Another key emphasis of the policy is on the use and promotion of regional/local languages at various levels. It encourages local languages to be the medium of instruction at least up to Grade 5, promotes bi-lingual education and textbooks for learning, as well as multiple languages at middle and secondary levels. This would mean teachers now need to be well versed in at least two languages.

These proposals have obvious consequences for both pre-service and in-service teacher training. At the same time, there is a proposal of providing merit-based scholarships for rural students to complete a 4 year- integrated B Ed. course. They will also have preferential employment in the local schools. Such scholarships and job openings will provide local job opportunities to students, especially to female students. Teacher Eligibility Tests (TETs), which are mandatory for primary and secondary level now, will also be extended to cover teachers across all stages: Foundational, Preparatory, Middle and Secondary of school education.

Other than teachers, social workers and counsellors would be in great demand since they need to be employed in every school complex across the country. Social workers are primarily needed to mobilise communities for enhancing GER, counsellors would be needed to facilitate optimal choices at various levels and to facilitate students' emotional wellbeing. With enhanced opportunities, career decision making possibilities also multiply.

Hence counsellors would be needed to facilitate decision making. Counsellors would also be needed to help students prepare for various public exams and entrance tests whose numbers are likely to increase manifold as per this policy. Most of these public examinations would be high stake assessments adding to students' stress. Counsellors would be needed to assist students in coping with this stress.

Besides these expected needs in the labour market of the education sector, a number of opportunities are likely to surge in the allied sector as well. For example, as education will be made available to students in remote locations where brick and mortar educational institutions are not available, and teachers are expected to compulsorily engage in continuous professional development activities through digital platforms, the Ed-tech industry is likely to gain a major boost. Since preference would be given to the use of mother tongue or regional language up to at least Class 5, teaching-learning material also needs to be developed accordingly. Demand for those who could develop such material would increase.

Other changes

In the realm of higher education, a number of new courses are likely to come up giving students new opportunities. Courses are likely to emerge in the areas of translation and interpretation, art and museum administration, archaeology, artefact conservation, graphic design, and web design. At the same time, with changes in the age brackets of various levels, the age of candidates and other eligibility criteria for a number of recruitments may change. Career practitioners need to keep themselves abreast of these changes.

Key Imperatives for Career Practitioners

Keep Yourself Updated

While updating oneself has always been key for career counsellors in order to remain relevant, the changed and fast-changing education sector and labour

market make this imperative more challenging and pertinent. As discussed in the previous sections of the paper, with the speedy implementation of the policy, the education sector is going to change dramatically in the coming years. It is important that career practitioners keep themselves abreast of these changes, foresee their consequences and integrate the information and insights into their day-to-day practice. It should also be borne in mind that since education falls under the concurrent list of the constitution, legislations and directives can come from both the central and provincial governments. At the same time, a number of proposals in the policy document are suggestive in nature which implies that they may be implemented or partially implemented or may not be implemented at all. Therefore, due to the federal nature of educational administration and suggestive nature of the policy provisions, regulations may vary drastically on the ground. Practitioners need to be cognizant of these dynamics and act according to local ramifications of changes specifically in the context of the client with whom they are they are working.

Also, the training for career practitioners does not adequately focus on skills related to the labour market (Kumar & Arulmani, 2014). The labour market is going to experience major shifts where the relevance of certain careers may decline, new careers may emerge and eligibility requirements may change in some cases. One needs to be sharply aware of these happenings.

Gain Skills in Personal -Emotional Counselling

Skills for counselling have been recognised as one of the 13 specialised competencies for educational and vocational guidance practitioners (IAEVG,2018) which means that practitioners, besides developing core competencies, may choose counselling as one of the specialisations. However, it is suggested here that it should be included as one of the core competencies in the

contemporary Indian context. This imperative comes from the following reasons:

- Transition points and high-stakes public examinations are likely to multiply as a consequence of the implementation of the policy which will bring stress and conflict to the fore. In order to address these emergent mental health issues career practitioners must also acquire skills for personal-emotional counselling.

- As Savickas (1993) famously remarked, 'career is personal' (p.212). A career counselling discussion often turns into a discussion of personal-emotional issues that undergird the career decision-making process. Career counsellors who possess skills for personal-emotional counselling are likely to be more effective and in greater demand.

- While the policy does acknowledge the role of career counselling, it largely talks more about generic counselling support and less about career counselling. It is unlikely therefore that government will hire separate counsellors for career guidance and for emotional personal counselling. Hence, it is important that career practitioners learn skills for emotional-personal counselling and counsellors gain skills for career guidance.

Ensure Vertical Integration of Subject Choices Made Before Recommending Them

As mentioned in the previous section, there will not be any rigid separation between humanities and sciences, commerce, vocational and academic streams. This will provide students with unlimited subject combinations to choose from. Our earlier experience informs that a similar experiment at the undergraduate level in Himachal Pradesh under Rashtriya Uchhatar Shiksha Abhiyan (National Higher Education Campaign) proved counterproductive ruining the future of hundreds of students who were denied

admission in the desired subject at the postgraduate level or were declared ineligible for appearing in a job recruitment tests (Kumar & Kumar, 2015). It is assumed that implementing agencies would look into this issue. It is vital that the entire system is geared up in such a way that those who choose unorthodox combinations are accepted at the next level. But till the time such integrations are made possible, perhaps it would be safer to go with subject combinations that have greater acceptance and a clear niche in the labour market.

Be Extra-cautious Before Recommending New Age Careers

While the previous section anticipates a burgeoning demand for new-age careers such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, big data analytics in the wake of industrial revolution 4.0, career practitioners need to be extra cautious before recommending these options to their clients. This caution stems from the following rationale:

- It is true that the number of new-age careers are going to increase. But it still remains likely that the foundations of these careers lie upon the orthodox sectors. For example the foundational course for big data analytics would be statistics or computer science.

- Most of these careers are likely to yield jobs in the urban context. This makes job finding difficult for rural job seekers who may not be willing to relocate.

- As Arulmani (2014) has repeatedly pointed out availability of careers is contingent upon the vagaries of labour market cycles. Therefore, the personhood of the individual should be at the heart of the career development process rather than unpredictable (often transient) labour market trends.

The mere availability of a career is not enough. Accessibility, affordability, the profitability of a career and above all suitability of the client should be the prime desiderata.

Engage in Advocacy to Ensure that Vacancies are Created and Filled

While there are provisions, targets and timelines for recruitment of counsellors, there is no clarity on the ratio of counsellors to students, and at what level they will be appointed or how they be hired. In these circumstances, it is important to engage in advocacy through counsellors' associations to ensure that vacancies are created and filled with appropriate human resources in order to deliver quality career guidance services for young people as envisaged in the NEP document. There is also a tendency in the government sector to make ad hoc arrangements to: show tokenistic adherence to directives, adjust people who do not possess requisite qualifications into posts, and postpone payment of full salaries and emoluments. Therefore, advocacy work is needed so that vacancies are created accordingly. It is equally important to make efforts to create performance standards and robust recruitment guidelines.

Engage with the Curriculum Development Process

The curriculum framework is currently being deliberated upon by state agencies such as SCERTs, and State Education Departments with the assumption that a bottom-up approach would be closer to realising the vision of the policy. As mentioned earlier, a position paper is being developed on guidance and counselling. It is important that career counsellors, counsellor educators and counsellor associations engage themselves in the process so that the curriculum adequality covers career guidance related components and it does not get subsumed under the generic content of guidance and counselling which has been the case for many years (Kumar, 2013).

Concluding Thoughts

Based on the framework proposed by Morestin (2012) for analysing public policies, Banuri and Sarma (2020, Aug. 22) have made an attempt to look at key

aspects of the NEP on the basis of stakeholder beneficiality (sic), political acceptability, financial viability, administrative feasibility and unintended consequences. While a similar analysis regarding provisions pertaining to career support services is yet to be done, ambiguities pertaining to the ratio in which counsellors need to be appointed, their eligibility criteria and key performance indicators show that the vision of providing students with quality support services may not fructify as envisaged. There are obvious stakeholder beneficiality and, political acceptability for these provisions but the extent of the financial burden on the exchequer and lack of administrative readiness due to other pressing priorities may render appointing career practitioners a low priority task. There are also unintended consequences if quality people are not engaged. Moreover, as Taylor (1997) points out, if policy texts are open to differing interpretations by practitioners, then this can be a roadblock to effective implementation. As evident, there exist different interpretations of various proposals of NEP as well. Counsellor associations need to engage in advocacy work so that provisions pertaining to delivery of quality career support services do not become peripheral and career practice gains greater visibility. Career practitioners need to keep themselves informed of the changes that are happening in their contexts so that they can intervene appropriately. At the same time, counsellors, counsellor trainers, and their associations need to look for, identify and leverage the spaces for formal engagement with institutions that are responsible for implementing this policy with the aim of making a deeper and long-term impact.

About the author

Sachin Kumar holds an M Phil in Counselling Psychology and a doctoral degree in Green Livelihoods. His interests include, culture-career interface, career policy, career development services in higher education, green career development, and livelihood planning perspectives. Currently the President of IACLP and the National Correspondent to the IAEVG, he is working as an Associate Professor in a government college in Himachal Pradesh, India.

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Appendix A
National Education Policy, 2020: Highlights
Source: Adapted from Press Release of Ministry of Education. Posted On: 14 SEP 2020 4:41PM by PIB Delhi (Release ID: 1654058)

- Ensuring Universal Access at all levels of schooling from pre-primary school to Grade 12;
- Ensuring quality early childhood care and education for all children between 3-6 years; New Curricular and Pedagogical Structure (5+3+3+4);
- No hard separations between arts and sciences, between curricular and extra-curricular activities, between vocational and academic streams;
- Establishing National Mission on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy;
- Emphasis on promoting multilingualism and Indian languages;
- The medium of instruction until at least Grade 5, but preferably till Grade 8 and beyond, will be the home language/mother tongue/local language/regional language.
- Assessment reforms - Board Exams on up to two occasions during any given school year, one main examination and one for improvement, if desired;
- Setting up of a new National Assessment Centre, PARAKH (Performance Assessment, Review, and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development);
- Equitable and inclusive education - Special emphasis given on Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs);
- A separate Gender Inclusion fund and Special Education Zones for disadvantaged regions and groups;
- Robust and transparent processes for recruitment of teachers and merit based performance;
- Ensuring availability of all resources through school complexes and clusters;
- Setting up of State School Standards Authority (SSSA);
- Exposure of vocational education in school and higher education system;
- Increasing GER in higher education to 50%;
- Holistic Multidisciplinary Education with multiple entry/exit options;
- NTA to offer Common Entrance Exam for Admission to HEIs;
- Establishment of Academic Bank of Credit;
- Setting up of Multidisciplinary Education and Research Universities (MERUs);
- Setting up of National Research Foundation (NRF);
- 'Light but Tight' regulation;
- Single overarching umbrella body for promotion of higher education sector including teacher education and excluding medical and legal education- the Higher Education Commission of India (HECI)-with independent bodies for standard setting- the General Education Council; funding-Higher Education Grants Council (HEGC); accreditation-National Accreditation Council (NAC); and regulation- National Higher Education Regulatory Council (NHERC);
- Expansion of open and distance learning to increase GER.
- Internationalization of Education
- Professional Education will be an integral part of the higher education system. Stand-alone technical universities, health science universities, legal and agricultural universities, or institutions in these or other fields, will aim to become multi-disciplinary institutions.
- Teacher Education - 4-year integrated stage-specific, subject- specific Bachelor of Education
- Establishing a National Mission for Mentoring.
- Creation of an autonomous body,the National Educational Technology Forum (NETF) to provide a platform for the free exchange of ideas on the use of technology to enhance learning, assessment, planning, administration. Appropriate integration of technology into all levels of education.
- Achieving 100% youth and adult literacy.

- Multiple mechanisms with checks and balances will combat and stop the commercialization of higher education.
- All education institutions will be held to similar standards of audit and disclosure as a 'not for profit' entity.
- The Centre and the States will work together to increase the public investment in Education sector to reach 6% of GDP at the earliest.
- Strengthening of the Central Advisory Board of Education to ensure coordination to bring overall focus on quality education.
- Ministry of Education: In order to bring the focus back on education and learning, it may be desirable to re-designate MHRD as the Ministry of Education (MoE).

Appendix B
National Education Policy, 2020: Timelines

2019

- The Rashtriya Shiksha Aayog (National Education Commission) is established; the Ministry of Human Resource Development is re - designated as Ministry of Education.

2020

- A Rajya Shiksha Aayog is constituted in each state as well as state school regulatory authority.
- National Higher Education Regulatory Authority (NHERA) is set up; the University Grants Council and other regulatory bodies are converted into Higher Education Grants Council (HEGC) and Professional Standard Setting Bodies (PSSBs). A General Education Council is constituted.
- Early childhood education is integrated with school education: the RTE Act is extended to cover children between ages 3 and 18.
- A National Council of Educational Research is established; an autonomous National educational Technology Forum is set up to facilitate reviews of initiatives related to technology in education; a National Repository of Educational Data is also set up. The National Council of Educational Research and Training develops National Curriculum Framework for all stages of school.

2021

- State Councils of Educational Research and Training develop state curricular frameworks aligned with the national curriculum frame work. A new assessment paradigm is established

2022-28

- A comprehensive plan for the development of infra structure and delivery of early childhood education in each state is developed by 2022 and fully implemented by 2028

2023

- Processes for teacher recruitment / management change: a school quality assessment and accreditation system are formulated.
- School complexes are formed; certificate examinations of central and state boards redesigned.
- All academic and non-academic posts in universities and colleges filled
- A national higher education qualifications framework outlining the learning out comes associated with certification is developed.
- All undergraduate programmes, including professional and vocational ones. redesigned to offer liberal education programs with specialization through a multidisciplinary approach.
- The complete rollout of four-year B.Ed. courses, available only in multidisciplinary institutes, overhauls teachers' education entirely.

2025

- At least one high quality higher education institute is set up in each district

2030

- All accrediting colleges and universities have complete administrative, academic and financial autonomy.

2032

- NAAC builds a comprehensive accreditation system.

2035

- A significant number of high-quality higher education institutes are distributed equitably across the country with special emphasis on disadvantaged districts, to achieve an enrolment rate of 50 percent.

Appendix C
Agencies responsible for implementation of National Education Policy, 2020

1. Ministry of Education (MoE).
2. National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT).
3. States & UTs.
4. National Assessment Centre – PARAKH.
5. Department of Higher Education, MOE.
6. Higher Education Institutions & IGNOU.
7. National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA).
8. Ministry of Women and Child Development (MoWCD).
9. Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA).
10. Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (MSJE).
11. National Committee for the Integration of Vocational Education (NCIVE).
12. National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE).
13. National Higher Education Regulatory Council (NHERC).
14. National Testing Agency (NTA).
15. Boards of Assessment (State Boards).
16. Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE).
17. National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) 98.
18. Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan (KVS) and Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas (JNV).
19. Central Tibetan Schools Administration (CTSA).
20. Pandit Sunderlal Sharma Central Institute of Vocational Education (PSSCIVE).
21. Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI).
22. State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT).
23. District Institute of Education and Training (DIET)

Appendix D
Proposed Changes in the Academic Structure

Source: Ministry of Education, 2020, p.6