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# Impact of Frequent Structural Changes in Higher Education on Teachers' Motivation: Pre-empting NEP Implementation Fallouts

(Dr.) Vijender Singh Chauhan\*

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## Abstract

*In the course of implementation of NEP there are several structural changes in higher education that are being ushered in with brutal pace and enthusiasm. Though the NEP document itself concludes that teacher motivation is one of the prime factors in achieving goals of education, specifically those of higher education, it seems that this 'motivation' itself has completely been ignored by the policy document. This article tries to explain how structural changes in education, if brought about in a rush, may negatively affect motivation of teachers engaged in imparting higher education. It also proposes to inquire about individual motivation and its impact on collective motivation in this rapidly changing structure of higher education.*

## Background

Prima facie, teacher motivation in higher education is one of the prime concerns of the New Education Policy, 2020. In chapter 13 of the document, the policy clearly acknowledges the 'criticality of faculty in achieving the goals of higher education'. Six identifiers and expressions of intent of policy in this regard talk of infrastructure, recruitment, promotion and vertical mobility (NEP, Pg 40) along with academic autonomy which impart a sense of being rightly worded but a closer inspection raises eyebrows. For Instance,

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infrastructure building calls for a fees hike and thus becomes detrimental to the students, teacher's recruitment is shrouded with doubts about the nature of appointment and academic autonomy is a misnomer for inducing colleges and universities to arrange their own finances, again at the cost of students.

There is some literature already which suggest that social systems will not essentially react in intended direction when subjected to some kind of changes. Tutt (1985) suggested as reported by Elton (1988) that unintended consequences is actually a frequent response of social systems. Similarly another study by Williams (1986) attribute such response of social systems to policy formulation flaws. This study is relevant due to its location being higher education itself. Williams states- "Only when the essential mechanism responsible for the functioning of a system are properly understood can we begin to try to apply such theories with any hope to avoiding the unintended consequences which are outcome of most policy decisions". We intend to enquire if such pre requisite is fulfilled in NEP with regard to faculty motivation.

In the context of teacher motivation, what remains unclear is how policy proposes to handle the impact of the NEP on the faculty. The contention is that 'motivation', especially of teachers engaged in imparting higher education is never entirely compensated for by the salaries they are paid, at least some part of it depends on the environment of work. Primarily, we are suggesting that the process of change itself is one of the most important factors that will determine the faculty motivation. There exists ample evidence that such changes bring many unintended consequences (Elton 1988) and that these consequences are not necessarily happy ones. It is believed that these changes interact with the existing social systems within HEIs and Universities and may disrupt the belongingness of the teacher to the system thereby reducing the sense of purpose and motivation. Changes in working conditions and apprehensions about the consequences of these changes as a result of introduction of NEP, specially those with regards to Governing structures, Programme Structures (MEES, FYUP) and Pedagogic Changes (Blended Learning and Online teaching) are at large. In absence of sufficient dialogue of the policy makers with the teacher bodies and their representatives, chaos will prevail.

Such a situation is not conducive for the teaching-learning environment which is the essence of higher education. It must be underlined that teachers not only need to understand and accept the policy changes but also own them, it is only then that the teachers will be able to create that comfort zone for students which is necessary for acclimatizing the students with the process of learning. Evidence suggests that changes in the work sector, that is the higher education sector in this

case, affect job design and work environment thus affecting workers' motivation. (NEP, Paths and destination- Pg 149) It is also important to understand that this relationship of employees with structure and their motivation is not static, neither is it entirely end-product or intention dependent. It is dynamic. From what we observe, it undergoes variation depending on how the changes are brought about to the structure.

### **Analysis of Sentiments of University/College teachers**

The primary objective of this brief article is to show that the pace of change that has been picked up by the NEP is creating a lot of misunderstanding regarding the motives of this change. These misunderstandings may be cleared easily with dialogue, but can get blown out of proportion in absence of it. The arguments for this article are based on consensus we derived from various meetings and discussions among the faculty members of Delhi University. The doubts and contentions of individual teachers and the trade union bodies have been voiced here.

We hypothesise that teachers engaged in imparting higher education, drive motivation from factors other than monetary reimbursements. What we find on analysis is that though salaries are an important factor in drawing in and in retaining talent but the overall environment and the sense of belongingness to the institution are a great deal too. Thereby, any policy decision or implication thereof that makes teachers left out or a decision that is imposed on the teachers will create a sense of disquiet.

We also hypothesize that teachers may not necessarily be reluctant to change at individual level but can very well be reluctant to the dismantling of motivational drivers in the process of change. Our discussions on various fronts show that as teachers we have micro contentions and individual worries that centre on us and our students, for example the proposed 30:70 fee ratio and the possibility of contractual employment. We also are marred with macro dilemmas like the future of our beloved institutions in face of privatisation.

Studies including Wise (1987) suggest that policy changes not connected with classrooms affect the outcome adversely. In fact Eisenhart, Cuthbert, Shrum and Harding (2001) are of the opinion that the decisions of policymakers are based on public pressure, financial legislations and concerns that are executive and legislative in nature. Their understanding, concerns and decisions are different from classroom and staff room needs. We, through this paper, urge the policy makers to understand the need for including teachers and students in the dialogue that ensues before any change is ushered. We assert that policy making is not a ground for conducting experiments. We simply cannot put lakhs of lives and careers in jeopardy, lest we realise our mistakes half a decade later!

### **Conclusions**

Though data is not available at this point of time to empirically prove our point, our endless discussions with the stakeholders, both the students and the faculty collate our contentions. Our never ending surveys on the NEP show that timing for structural



changes should also correspond to a larger ecosystem that enables the change. (Pandemic can hardly be one such time). We usually look for a period of normalcy before structural changes are made and to make these mammoth changes to the education system in times as these make stakeholders uncomfortable. Ushering in changes hurriedly, without sufficient debates and discussions indicate that policy makers are not sure of what they are doing. We request again for a pace of change that is comfortable and a level of dialogue that resolves and not silences the questions.

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