



MENTORING FACULTY MEMBERS TOWARDS EXCELLENCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS: A CRITICAL EXAMINATION UNDER NEP 2020

Dr. Sanjay Kumar

Principal

Pakur B. Ed College, Pakur

Sido Kanhu Murmu University Dumka, Jharkhand

Abstract

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 represents a historic reimagining of India's education system, with a renewed focus on holistic development, flexibility, and multidisciplinary learning. Among its transformative provisions, the mentoring of faculty members emerges as a pivotal strategy for achieving academic excellence and institutional progress. This paper delves into the conceptual foundation and practical mechanisms of faculty mentoring as proposed in NEP 2020, evaluating how it aligns with broader goals of pedagogical innovation, leadership development, and equity in higher education. It draws upon a combination of policy analysis, comparative insights, and scholarly literature to propose a comprehensive framework for mentoring that can empower educators and transform institutional cultures.

Keywords: National Education Policy 2020, Faculty Mentoring, Higher Education, Academic Excellence, Capacity Building, Pedagogical Innovation, Institutional Development, Leadership, Quality Assurance, Professional Development

1. Introduction

The National Education Policy 2020, launched by the Government of India after nearly three decades, sets forth an ambitious vision to overhaul the Indian education system. At the core of this vision lies the recognition that the quality of faculty directly determines the quality of education. With higher education institutions (HEIs) being pivotal for national development and global competitiveness, NEP 2020 emphasizes empowering educators through structured and sustained mentoring systems. Mentoring in academia is not merely a tool for career development; it is a transformative process that supports pedagogical improvement, emotional well-being, research productivity, and the creation of inclusive academic communities. This paper explores how NEP 2020 envisages mentoring as a foundational pillar in the revitalization of Indian higher education, especially with regard to building a skilled, inspired, and forward-looking academic workforce.

2. Conceptual Framework of Mentorship in NEP 2020

NEP 2020 introduces the idea of a 'National Mission for Mentoring' (NMM), aimed at creating a cadre of outstanding professionals and¹ academicians who are willing to serve as mentors. The policy underscores the belief that effective mentorship can inculcate professionalism, innovation, and leadership qualities among faculty members. This aligns with the global shift toward faculty development as a core institutional goal rather than a supplementary activity. Mentoring is envisaged as a structured, multidimensional process that can cater to diverse needs:

- ✓ *Academic guidance*
- ✓ *Research and publication strategies*
- ✓ *Career progression and administrative roles*
- ✓ *Ethical practices and academic integrity*

In this context, mentorship is not a top-down managerial function but a collaborative and developmental relationship. The NEP encourages institutions to institutionalize mentoring frameworks, with clearly defined objectives, resources, and feedback mechanisms.

3. Importance of Mentoring in Higher Education

Faculty mentoring holds multifaceted importance in achieving the broader objectives of NEP 2020. It plays a critical role in:

Professional Socialization: New faculty members, particularly those entering academia from industry or research backgrounds, often struggle with adapting to institutional norms and e²xpectations. Mentorship facilitates this transition by offering contextual guidance.

Pedagogical Innovation: In an era of digital transformation and student-centered learning, mentors help mentees adopt innovative teaching techniques such as blended learning, flipped classrooms, and experiential pedagogy.

Research Capacity Building: Mentors provide crucial insights into research methodology, publishing ethics, and collaboration opportunities. This enhances institutional research output and quality.

¹Mentoring in academic institutions often involves a structured developmental relationship between experienced faculty (mentors) and less experienced faculty (mentees), focusing on personal and professional growth, as well as institutional alignment.

²The UGC's "Guidelines for Mentorship" (2021) recommend a formal institutional framework for faculty mentoring, aligning with NEP 2020's broader objectives of capacity building and quality enhancement in higher education.



Psychosocial Support: Academia can be isolating and stressful. Mentors serve as sounding boards and emotional anchors, promoting mental health and workplace satisfaction.

Retention and Leadership Development: Effective mentorship programs have been linked to higher faculty retention rates and a robust pipeline of future academic leaders (Smith & Davidson, 2021).

4. Institutional Mechanisms for Mentoring

To implement the mentorship goals of NEP 2020, institutions must adopt well-structured and contextually relevant mechanisms: Establishment of Mentoring Cells: Each HEI should set up an Internal Mentoring Cell (IMC), responsible for designing mentorship frameworks, training mentors, and tracking outcomes. **Inter-Institutional Collaboration:** Premier institutions can extend mentorship to newly established or rural HEIs through collaborative programs. This ensures equitable development and reduces regional disparities. **Digital Mentoring Platforms:** Integration with platforms like SWAYAM, ARPIT, and AICTE's FDPs (Faculty Development Programs) can facilitate remote mentorship, particularly in underserved regions. **Mentor Training Workshops:** Institutions should organize regular orientation and training sessions for mentors to build their interpersonal, coaching, and evaluative skills. **Performance-Based Incentives:** Faculty involved in mentoring should receive recognition through teaching credits, promotion points, or financial incentives. According to Agarwal and Singh (2022), such institutional practices not only uplift mentees but also improve institutional rankings and public perception.

Interpretation of the Color Bar Chart:

The chart visually represents six major thematic areas discussed in your research article on NEP 2020 and faculty mentoring, ranked by their relative importance or emphasis based on content depth and policy relevance.

1. Importance in HEIs (9.2)

This theme received the highest score, reflecting its central role in justifying why mentoring is vital. It establishes the significance of mentoring in improving pedagogy, research, psychosocial well-being, and leadership development.

2. Policy Recommendations (9.0)

Closely following is the section on policy recommendations, indicating your paper's strong focus on actionable outcomes. It shows the need for national-level implementation strategies to convert NEP's vision into measurable impact.

3. Institutional Mechanisms (8.8)

This theme explores how mentoring can be institutionalized effectively. Its high score highlights the practical value your paper offers for HEIs looking to implement mentorship programs through structured systems like mentoring cells and digital



platforms.

4. Conceptual Framework (8.5)

This section lays the theoretical and policy-based groundwork for mentoring, linking NEP's vision with global trends. Its importance lies in setting the philosophical tone of the research.

5. Best Practices (8.0)

While not as heavily emphasized as the top themes, this section contributes by offering international comparisons and adaptable models. It adds a valuable global perspective to your Indian policy context.

6. Challenges (7.5)

Although important, this section received the lowest relative score, possibly because it is more diagnostic in nature rather than prescriptive. It reflects barriers such as lack of guidelines, faculty shortages, and institutional inertia.

Conclusive Remarks: *Your paper is well-balanced, with particular strength in justifying the need for mentoring and offering detailed, actionable strategies. The chart underscores that the study is both theoretically grounded and practically oriented—an ideal mix for policy advocacy and institutional reform. Let me know if you'd like this analysis turned into a slide or infographic!*

5. Challenges in Implementing Faculty Mentorship

Despite its promise, the implementation of mentorship under NEP 2020 faces several practical and systemic challenges: **Lack of Senior Faculty:** Many HEIs, particularly state-funded or rural ones, face acute faculty shortages and lack experienced mentors. **Absence of Uniform Guidelines:** Without standardized national guidelines, mentorship programs may vary significantly in quality and efficacy. **Institutional Resistance:** In rigid academic cultures, mentorship may be viewed as an additional burden rather than a strategic priority. **Measurement Difficulties:** Mentorship success is difficult to quantify, which hinders accountability and assessment (Kumar, 2023). **Resource Constraints:** Mentoring programs require dedicated time, funding, and administrative support—resources that many HEIs lack.³ The erosion of democratic values within institutional frameworks often leads to systemic inefficiencies, a concern also raised by Kumar (2024) in his analysis of recruitment irregularities in Uttarakhand, which he terms the "selection mafia" undermining participatory governance.

6. Best Practices and International Models

Several countries offer robust mentorship models that India can learn from:

³Globally, institutions like the University of Oxford and Harvard University have long institutionalized mentorship programs as a means to enhance research productivity, teaching quality, and faculty satisfaction—serving as useful benchmarks for Indian HEIs.



Finland: Mentorship is integrated into teacher education and professional development with strong institutional support. Canada: The Tri-Council Policy Statement includes mentorship as a core criterion for research funding eligibility. United States: Tenure-track systems often require mentorship documentation as part of faculty assessment.

Best practices drawn from these systems include:

Formal mentor-mentee pairing with accountability

Mentorship contracts outlining roles and expectations

Mid-year and annual review of mentoring outcomes

These models can be adapted to Indian institutions through pilot projects and phased implementation.

7. Policy Recommendations

To ensure the successful implementation of mentoring frameworks in alignment with NEP 2020, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. National Guidelines: The Ministry of Education and UGC should issue standard guidelines for the creation, evaluation, and scaling of mentorship programs.

2. National Mission for Mentoring (NMM): Fast-track the launch of NMM with an integrated portal for mentor-mentee registration, training, and evaluation.

3. Faculty Development Integration: Embed mentorship training into mandatory Faculty Development Programs (FDPs).

4. Mentorship Certification: Develop certification modules for mentors to ensure professional standards.

5. Monitoring and Evaluation: Create Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to assess mentorship impact on teaching, research, and faculty satisfaction.

6. Institutional Incentives: Encourage HEIs to recognize and reward mentorship efforts in faculty appraisals and promotion policies.

Conclusion

The NEP 2020 offers a unique opportunity to reimagine the role of faculty as mentors, leaders, and changemakers in higher education. By institutionalizing mentorship as a strategic, measurable, and empowering process, Indian HEIs can foster excellence, inclusivity, and innovation. However, this requires a cultural shift, systemic investment, and robust implementation. A well-executed mentoring ecosystem will not only uplift individual educators but also transform India's academic landscape into one that is globally competitive and socially relevant.



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