National Education Policy to Transform the Education System of 21st Century: Prospects and its Implementation

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ABSTRACT

Higher education plays a very important role in the development of an academic progression of a student in order to foster for career advancement and enrichment. For the purpose of creation and transmission of knowledge and information among students and researcher, higher education plays a very key role. NEP-2020 is the first education policy of the 21st century and it reinstates the thirty four year old National Policy on Education - NPE, 1986. NEP is formed on the fundamental principles of access, equity, quality, affordability and accountability, this policy is designed on 2030 Agenda for sustainable development goals. It aims is to transform India into a vibrant knowledge society and global knowledge superpower by making higher education more holistic, flexible, and multidisciplinary. NEP-2020 focuses on quality higher education for all by imparting of skills and values that is required for holistic development of a student at each stage of learning. The NEP-2020 is a major step towards the direction which focuses on the holistic development of students by ensuring access, relevance, equity, quality and strong fundamental learning. National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 objective is to transform education system by keeping the learner at the centre. This paper traces out the impact of new education policy 2020 on higher education system and to determine the factors that effect on higher education system and to find out the solutions to overcome the challenges of national education policy system.

Keywords: Higher Education, National Education Policy, Holistic, Multidisciplinary, Skill Development, ICT- Information and Communication Technology

The NEP-2020 has outlined an ambitious task of nearly doubling the GER in higher education from 26.3 per cent (2018) to 50 per cent by 2035 while improving quality of Higher Education Institutions (HEI) and positioning India as a global education hub. The focus is on providing a flexible curriculum through an interdisciplinary approach, creating multiple exit points in what would be a four-year undergraduate programme, catalyzing research, improving faculty support and encouraging internationalization. One of the paradigmatic shifts will be the setting up of the Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) for the entire higher education segment. The HECI will act as a single regulator and several functions, including accreditation, funding and academic standard setting, will be carried out by independent verticals. These entities will eventually replace other regulatory bodies like the University Grants Commission (UGC) or the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE).

Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of study is to find out the impact of New Education Policy 2020 on higher

education. This paper outlines the salient features of National Education Policy 2020 and analyses how they affect the existing education system.

Research Methodology

This research is a descriptive study. The data and information have been collected from the various publications of Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, National Council of Educational Research and Training, National University of Educational Planning and Administration, University Grants Commission and other valuable publication. The information will gather through different books, articles, journals, reports and from published dissertation as well as thesis. Various websites have also been used for the collection of data and information. The data is analyzed and assessed to arrive at the inferences and conclusions.

National Education Policy (NEP), 2020

National Education Policy 2020 has been announced on 29.07.2020 after detailed consultation with stakeholders. National Education Policy 2020 envisions an education system rooted in Indian ethos that contributes directly to transforming India, that is Bharat, sustainably into an equitable and vibrant knowledge society, by providing high-quality education to all, and thereby making India a global knowledge superpower. On the completion of one year of NEP, 2020, Hon'ble Prime Minister in a virtual event organized on 29.07.2021 launched various initiatives of School and Higher Education viz. setting up of Academic Bank of Credit; Multiple Entry/Exit in Institutions of Eminence (IOEs); First year teaching of Technical Courses in Regional Languages; Vidya Pravesh – School Preparation Module; Indian Sign Language as a subject; NISHTHA 2.0; Structured Assessment for Analyzing Learning Levels (SAFAL); Artificial Intelligence website for public awareness; National Digital Education Architecture (NDEAR) etc. In order to deliberate on state-wise initiatives taken, best practices adopted by States, challenges and strategy for implementation and to come out with a consolidated Report Concept Paper, various workshops at Zonal and Regional level on three themes i.e. 'Access', 'Quality' and 'Future Readiness'

were organized covering the entire gamut of the NEP, 2020. The outcomes of these Zonal and Regional workshops are to be discussed in the forthcoming proposed Conference of Chief Secretaries. To review the progress of implementation of NEP-2020, various meetings/workshops have been held with States/UTs, Ministries, Departments, Implementation Committee & Review Committee. The National Education Policy 2020 proposes various reforms in school education as well as higher education including technical education. A number of action points/activities for implementation in school education as well as higher education are mentioned in the National Education Policy 2020.

Overview of National Education Policy 2020: Higher Education

Recognizing, Identifying, and Fostering the unique capabilities of each student, by sensitizing teachers as well as parents to promote each student's holistic development in both academic and non-academic spheres.

The highest priority is to achieving Foundational Literacy and Numeracy by all students **flexibility**, so that learners have the ability to choose their learning trajectories and programmes, and thereby choose their own paths in life according to their talents and interests;

No Hard Separations between arts and sciences, between curricular and extra-curricular activities, between vocational and academic streams, etc. in order to eliminate harmful hierarchies among, and silos between different areas of learning.

Multidisciplinary and a Holistic Education across the sciences, social sciences, arts, humanities, and sports for a multidisciplinary world in order to ensure the unity and integrity of all knowledge;

Emphasis on Conceptual Understanding rather than rote learning and learning-for-exams.;

Creativity and Critical Thinking to encourage logical decision-making and innovation;

Ethics and Human & Constitutional Values like empathy, respect for others, cleanliness, courtesy, democratic spirit, spirit of service, respect for public property, scientific temper, liberty, responsibility, pluralism, equality, and justice; **promoting multilingualism and the power of language** in teaching and learning; **life skills** such

as communication, cooperation, teamwork, and resilience

Focus on Regular Formative Assessment for Learning rather than the summative assessment that encourages today's 'coaching culture'; extensive use of technology in teaching and learning, removing language barriers, increasing access for Divyang students, and educational planning and management; respect for diversity and respect for the local context in all curriculum, pedagogy, and policy, always keeping in mind that education is a concurrent subject; full equity and inclusion as the cornerstone of all educational decisions to ensure that all students are able to thrive in the education system; synergy in curriculum across all levels of education from early childhood care and education to school education to higher education; teachers and faculty as the heart of the learning process – their recruitment, continuous professional development, positive working environments and service conditions; a 'light but tight' regulatory framework to ensure integrity, transparency, and resource efficiency of the educational system through audit and public disclosure while encouraging innovation and out-of- the-box ideas through autonomy, good governance, and empowerment; outstanding research as a corequisite for outstanding education and development; continuous review of progress based on sustained research and regular assessment by educational experts; a rootedness and pride in India, and its rich, diverse, ancient and modern culture and knowledge systems and traditions. Education is a public service; access to quality education must be considered a basic right of every child; substantial investment in a strong, vibrant public education system as well as the encouragement and facilitation of true philanthropic private and community participation.

Moderation Introduced by NEP-2020

The National Education Policy 2020 (NEP-2020), launched on 29 July 2020, outlines the vision of India's new education system. NEP-2020 focuses on five pillars: Affordability, Accessibility, Quality, Equity, and Accountability – to ensure continual learning. It has been crafted consistent with the needs of the citizens as a demand for knowledge in society and economy called for a need to acquire new skills on a regular basis. Thus, providing quality education and creating lifelong learning opportunities for all, leading to full and productive employment and decent work as enlisted in United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 2030, forms the thrust of NEP-2020. The new policy replaces the previous National Policy on Education, 1986 and forms a comprehensive framework to transform both elementary and higher education in India by 2040.

NEP-2020 has introduced 5+3+3+4 education structure where the first five years of education are foundational, promoting multilingualism, emphasizing vocational education and skills training, introducing common entrance exams for university admissions, and leveraging technology to enhance learning outcomes. The NEP-2020 calls for key reforms in both school and higher education that prepare the next generation to thrive and compete in the new digital age. Thus, there is much emphasis upon multidisciplinarity, digital literacy, written communication, problem-solving, logical reasoning, and vocational exposure.

The National Education Policy 2020 envisages the following key changes to the prevailing system:

1. Moving towards multidisciplinary universities and colleges, with more HEIs across India that offer medium of instruction in local/Indian languages;

2. Moving towards a more multidisciplinary undergraduate education;

3. Moving towards faculty and institutional autonomy;

4. Revamping curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, and student support

5. Reaffirming the integrity of faculty and institutional leadership positions

6. Establishment of a National Research Foundation

7. Governance of HEIs by independent boards having academic and administrative autonomy;

8. "Light but tight" regulation by a single regulator for higher education;

9. Increased access, equity, and inclusion

Impact of NEP-2020 on the Higher Education System

Institutional restructuring and consolidation: this move will have a significant impact on the volume of HEIs in the country, by reducing them to nearly one-third. This will create a less fragmented higher education system in the country.

Focus on multidisciplinary education: the NEP-2020 is working towards creation of large multidisciplinary universities called Multidisciplinary Education and Research Universities (MERUs), like those in the U.S. and the U.K.

Enhanced equity and inclusion: The NEP-2020 mentions "Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups" (SEDGs), which includes SC, ST, OBCs and Minorities. In the context of higher education, the Policy states "higher education can raise individuals and communities out of cycles of disadvantage.

Improving access and equity through Open Distance Learning and online programmes: around 40 lakh learners or 11 per cent[1] of the total higher education enrolments in India are through ODL. This is likely to see a significant increase in the coming few years to help double India's GER.

NEP-2020 focuses on Promoting excellence through internationalization. Internationalisation reforms proposed by the NEP would lead to a greater attraction of international academia to participate in the Indian education system. Collaboration with foreign universities by Indian HEIs will aid in integration of global skills in Indian curriculum, thereby creating an international education system for Indian students and faculty in India.

Improved Governance, Efficiency and Accountability: NEP-2020 emphasizes on formation of a single regulatory body and provides recommendations to have a Board of Governors consisting of highly qualified and competent individuals in order to improve governance and accountability. By public disclosure of academic and financial information, the tracing of data, auditing and information systems both at the state and the institutional level made accessible which ultimately assist in improving the overall accountability.

[1]*AISHE 2018-19 and UDISE, Ministry of Human Resource Development, "KPMG in India analysis".*

Transforming the 21st Century Education System through NEP-2020

Regulatory system of higher education will ensure that the distinct functions of regulation, accreditation, funding, and academic standard setting will be performed by distinct, independent, and empowered bodies. These four structures will be set up as four independent verticals within one umbrella institution, the Higher Education Commission of India (HECI).

The first vertical of HECI will be the National Higher Education Regulatory Council (NHERC). It will function as the common, single point regulator for the higher education sector including teacher education and excluding medical and legal education.

The second vertical of HECI will, be a 'meta-accrediting body', called the National Accreditation Council (NAC). Accreditation of institutions will be based primarily on basic norms, public self-disclosure, good governance, and outcomes, and it will be carried out by an independent ecosystem of accrediting institutions supervised and overseen by NAC.

The third vertical of HECI will be the Higher Education Grants Council (HEGC), which will carry out funding and financing of higher education based on transparent criteria. o The fourth vertical of HECI will be the General Education Council (GEC), which will frame expected learning outcomes for higher education programmes, also referred to as 'graduate attributes'. A National Higher Education Qualification Framework (NHEQF) will be formulated by the GEC.

The functioning of all the independent verticals for Regulation (NHERC), Accreditation (NAC), Funding (HEGC), and Academic Standard Setting (GEC) and the overarching autonomous umbrella body (HECI) itself will be based on transparent public disclosure, and use technology extensively to reduce human interface to ensure efficiency and transparency in their work. The professional councils, such as the Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR), Veterinary Council of India (VCI), National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE), Council of Architecture (CoA), National Council for Vocational Education and Training (NCVET) etc., will act as Professional Standard Setting Bodies (PSSBs).

The separation of functions would mean that each vertical within HECI would take on a new single role which is relevant, meaningful, and important in the new regulatory scheme. The NEP policy is based on the pillars of "access, equity, quality, affordability, accountability" and will transform India into a "vibrant knowledge society".

Critical Analysis of NEP-2020

The National Education Policy 2020 has been subject to critical analysis and evaluation. One aspect that has been examined is the impact of the policy on the higher education sector. Boruah and Mohanty highlight the influence of neoliberal notions of individual and institutional agency in promoting English medium education in India under the NEP-2020. This emphasizes the focus on economic success and the role of communication skills in empowering students to pursue further studies or enter the workforce, as outlined in the NEP-2020 and the UGC's draft National Higher Education Qualifications Framework. Another aspect that has been scrutinized is the emphasis on digital education. The post-National Education Policy 2020 regime places a significant emphasis on digital education in the higher education sector. This push towards digital education may lead to increased collaboration between Edtech companies and publicly funded universities in India, potentially fueling the growth of the Edtech industry. Furthermore, the NEP-2020 also places a strong emphasis on value-based education and the revival of the traditional Indian education system.

This focus on holistic development and knowledge-based learning aims to create a value-based society. Overall, the National Education Policy 2020 has been subject to a critical analysis that highlights both opportunities and challenges associated with its implementation.

The formation of a common regulating authority, the Higher Education Commission of India, to govern both public and private higher education institutions is seen as a potential opportunity to streamline the functioning of the higher education sector and ensure uniformity in quality standards.

However, challenges such as the promotion of English medium education and the dependency on digital education also have their drawbacks.

The promotion of English medium education may perpetuate inequality and marginalize those who are not proficient in English. Additionally, the heavy reliance on digital education may exclude students who do not have access to reliable internet or technological resources. Furthermore, the emphasis on value-based education and the revival of the traditional Indian education system raises questions about the adaptability and relevance of such an approach in a rapidly changing globalized world. The NEP-2020 opens up avenues for collaboration between Edtech companies and publicly funded universities in India, which can contribute to the growth of the Edtech industry. However, there are concerns about the commercialization of education and the potential influence of profit-driven motives on the quality of education provided by these collaborations. Overall, the National Education Policy 2020 has both positive and negative implications. On one hand, it seeks to address important issues such as value-based education and the need for a holistic approach to student development.

Challenges and Opportunities in Implementing NEP-2020 Future Prospects of NEP-2020

The National Education Policy 2020 is a progressive policy and its main purpose is to address significant issues of our prevailing education system. The NEP is expected to put India to attain Goal of the 2030 agenda for sustainable development by ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education for all and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all in the next coming decade. It is essential to signify the initiatives and implement the NEP in a gradual manner. The policy proposes the revision and revamping of all aspects of education structures, including regulation and governance. The success of NEP requires cooperation from both at the Central and the State level, with significant involvement of private sector stakeholders in close consultation with educational institutes, trainers, technology partners and industry.

Higher Education System in India: A way forward

Higher education plays an extremely important role in promoting human as well as societal wellbeing

and in developing India as envisioned in its Constitution - a democratic, just, socially conscious, cultured, and humane nation upholding liberty, equality, fraternity, and justice for all.

Higher education significantly contributes towards sustainable livelihoods and economic development of the nation. As India moves towards becoming a knowledge economy and society, more and more young Indians are likely to aspire for higher education.

Given the 21st century requirements, quality higher education must aim to develop good, thoughtful, well-rounded, and creative individuals. It must enable an individual to study one or more specialized areas of interest at a deep level, and also develop character, ethical and Constitutional values, intellectual curiosity, scientific temper, creativity, spirit of service, and 21st century capabilities across a range of disciplines including sciences, social sciences, arts, humanities, languages, as well as professional, technical, and vocational subjects. A quality higher education must enable personal accomplishment and enlightenment, constructive public engagement, and productive contribution to the society. It must prepare students for more meaningful and satisfying lives and work roles and enable economic independence.

For the purpose of developing holistic individuals, it is essential that an identified set of skills and values will be incorporated at each stage of learning, from pre-school to higher education. At the societal level, higher education must enable the development of an enlightened, socially conscious, knowledgeable, and skilled nation that can find and implement robust solutions to its own problems. Higher education must form the basis for knowledge creation and innovation thereby contributing to a growing national economy. The purpose of quality higher education is, therefore, more than the creation of greater opportunities for individual employment. It represents the key to more vibrant, socially engaged, cooperative communities and a happier, cohesive, cultured, productive, innovative, progressive, and prosperous nation.

Some of the major problems currently faced by the higher education system in India include:

❏ A severely fragmented higher educational ecosystem;

❏ Less emphasis on the development of cognitive skills and learning outcomes;

❏ A rigid separation of disciplines, with early specialization and streaming of students into narrow areas of study;

❏ Limited access particularly in socio-economically disadvantaged areas, with few HEIs that teach in local languages;

❏ Limited teacher and institutional autonomy;

❏ Inadequate mechanisms for merit-based career management and progression of faculty and institutional leaders;

❏ Lesser emphasis on research at most universities and colleges, and lack of competitive peer reviewed research funding across disciplines;

❏ Suboptimal governance and leadership of HEIs;

❏ An ineffective regulatory system; and

❏ Large affiliating universities resulting in low standards of undergraduate education.

The national education policy 2020 envisions a complete overhaul and re-energizing of the higher education system to overcome these challenges and thereby deliver high-quality higher education, with equity and inclusion.

The policy vision includes the following key changes to the current system:

❏ Heading towards a higher educational system consisting of large, multidisciplinary universities and colleges, with at least one in or near every district, and with more HEIs across India that offer medium of instruction or programmes in local/Indian languages;

❏ Working towards a more multidisciplinary undergraduate education;

❏ Shifting towards faculty and institutional autonomy;

❏ Reconstructing curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, and student support for enhanced student experiences;

❏ Reemphasize the integrity of faculty and institutional leadership positions through merit appointments and career progression based on teaching, research, and service;

❏ Setting up of a National Research Foundation (NRF) to fund outstanding peer-reviewed

- research and to actively seed research in universities and colleges;

❑ Administration and governance of HEIs by high qualified independent boards having academic and administrative autonomy;

❑ A single regulator for higher education

❑ Increased access, equity, and inclusion through a range of measures, including greater opportunities for outstanding public education; scholarships by private/ philanthropic universities for disadvantaged and underprivileged students; online education, and Open Distance Learning (ODL); and all infrastructure and learning materials accessible and available to learners with disabilities

Professional Education

All independent expert education establishments in any field will mean to become multidisciplinary organizations offering holistic and multidisciplinary education by 2030.

HEIs will be urged to plan experts in farming and veterinary sciences through programs incorporated with general education. HEIs offering agricultural education should zero in on the neighborhood local area and association in setting up Agricultural Innovation Parks in the district to advance innovation hatching and scattering.

Universities/foundations offering law education should like to offer bilingual education for future legal counselors and judges -in English and State language.

Healthcare education system should be coordinated so that all understudies of allopathic clinical education should have an essential comprehension of Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, and Homeopathy (AYUSH), as well as the other way around. More noteworthy accentuation ought to be given in all types of medical services education to preventive medical care and local area medication.

Technical education ought to be presented inside multidisciplinary education establishments and should zero in on freedoms to connect profoundly with different disciplines. The attention ought to be on offering Man-made consciousness (simulated intelligence), three dimensional machining, enormous information investigation, and AI, notwithstanding genomic considers, biotechnology, nanotechnology, neuroscience, with applications to wellbeing, climate, and maintainable living.

More Holistic and Multidisciplinary Education

The NEP-2020 claims that, a holistic and multidisciplinary education would aim to develop all capacities of human beings -intellectual, aesthetic, social, physical, emotional, and moral in an integrated manner. Such an education will help develop well-rounded individuals that possess critical 21st century capacities in fields across the arts, humanities, languages, sciences, social sciences, and professional, technical, and vocational fields; an ethic of social engagement; soft skills, such as communication, discussion and debate; and rigorous specialization in a chosen field or fields.

The NEP-2020 envisions one large multidisciplinary Higher Education Institution (HEI) in or near every district, by 2030. Towards the attainment of such a holistic and multidisciplinary education, the flexible and innovative curricula of all HEIs shall include credit-based courses and projects in the areas of community engagement and service, environmental education, and value- based education. Environment education will include areas such as climate change, pollution, waste management, sanitation, conservation of biological diversity, management of biological resources and biodiversity, forest and wildlife conservation, and sustainable development and living.

Value-based education will include the development of humanistic, ethical, Constitutional, and universal human values of truth (satya), righteous conduct (dharma), peace (shanti), love (prem), nonviolence (ahimsa), scientific temper, citizenship values, and also lifeskills; lessons in seva/service and participation in community service programmes will be considered an integral part of a holistic education.

Effectiveness of any policy depends on its implementation. Such implementation will require multiple initiatives and actions, which will have to be taken by multiple bodies in a synchronized and systematic manner. The implementation of

this policy will be led by various bodies including MHRD, CABE, union and state governments, education related ministries, state departments of education, boards, NTA, the regulatory bodies of school and higher education, NCERT, SCERTS, schools, and HEIS along with timelines and a plan for review, in order to ensure that the policy is implemented in its spirit and intent, through coherence in planning and synergy across all these bodies involved in education.

Implementation will be guided by the following principles:

First, implementation of the spirit and intent of the policy will be the most crucial matter. **Second**, it is important to implement the policy initiatives in a phased manner, as each policy point has several steps, each of which requires the previous step to be implemented successfully. **Third**, prioritization will be important in ensuring optimal sequencing of policy points, and that the most critical and urgent actions are taken up first, thereby enabling a strong base. **Fourth,** comprehensiveness in implementation will be key; as this Policy is interconnected and holistic, only a full-fledged implementation, and not a piecemeal one, will ensure that the desired objectives are achieved. **Fifth**, since education is a concurrent subject, it will need careful planning, joint monitoring, and collaborative implementation between the Centre and States. **Sixth**, timely infusion of requisite resources - human, infrastructural, and financial - at the Central and State levels will be pivotal for the satisfactory implementation of the Policy.

Finally, diligent analysis and review of the linkages between multiple parallel implementation steps will be necessary in order to ensure effective achievement of all initiatives. This will also include early investment in some of the specific actions (such as the setting up of early childhood care and education infrastructure) that will be imperative to ensuring a strong base and a smooth progression for all subsequent programmes and actions.

Subject-wise implementation committees of experts in cooperation and consultation with other relevant Ministries will be set up at both the Central and State levels to develop detailed attainment plans for each aspect of this Policy in accordance with the principles to achieve the goals of the Policy in

a clear and phased manner. Yearly joint reviews of the progress of implementation of the policy, in accordance with the targets set for each action, will be conducted by designated teams constituted by MHRD and the States, and reviews will be shared with CABE. In the decade of 2030-40, the entire policy will be in an operational mode, following which another comprehensive review can be initiated for future course of action.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The National Education Policy 2020 provides the course towards less regulation and more autonomy for higher education institutions through an effective self-regulatory mechanism. Excessive regulation has always been prevalent in higher educational institutions in India unlike the foreign counterparts who practicing self-regulation. NEP-2020 provides gradual autonomy and accreditations to all higher education institutions.

Foreign Universities will be allowed to set up campuses in India. It will promote research and innovations atmosphere by using flexible approach. The foreign universities would bring in programme and institution mobility. The aim of internationalization of higher education is subject to based upon the mobility of students, faculty members, programmes, and institutions across countries.

The NEP-2020 goal is to setting up multidisciplinary institutions offering programmes with high-quality teaching, research, and community engagement. This will definitely benefit students with increased flexibility and choice of subjects across various streams of arts, humanities, sciences, sports, and other vocational and professional subjects. It will not be just academic and theoretical knowledge but a practical implication of knowledge is also a part of academic course curriculum.

The national education policy focuses on online and e-learning. Online education will play an exclusive role to bridge the gap between the students and the institution of higher learning. In education what is complementary today will become core. The virtual world will become more prominent by the application of digital and video centric approaches.

National Education Policy is not just about the degree. It is all about focus on life skills and

vocational courses. It will be student centric approach where affordability and accessibility will be there and where the students can leverage the most out of education. Increased access, equity, and inclusion through open schooling, online education and Open Distance Learning will be promoted.

UGC has been taken several initiatives for the timely and effective implementation of NEP-2020. Some of the key initiatives undertaken by the UGC include Regulations on Academic Bank of Credits, Guidelines for Multiple Entry and Exit in Academic Programmes, Common Universities Entrance Test (CUET), Regulations on Online and ODL Education, Regulations on Credit Framework through SWAYAM, Guidelines for Internship/ Apprenticeship embedded Degree program, Guidelines for Internationalisation of Higher Education, Framework for Global Citizenship Education in Higher Education, Guidelines for the Establishment of Research and Development Cells in HEIs. These initiatives provides for the effective and efficient implementation of national education policy. The implementation of the NEP, 2020 requires combined efforts of the Centre, States, UTs, HEIs, Regulating Agencies and all other concerned stakeholders.

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