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Editorial Note

Research is a crucial component in our lives that permeates through the realms of higher education. It aids in the advancement of knowledge, improved pedagogy, the enhancement of institutional reputation, and promotes funding which are crucial to the overall growth of an institution. Within the experience of empirical studies, the researcher, be it student or teacher, finds better scope to hone a wide spectrum of skills. The immense benefits of a consistent and vibrant research environment are the impetus behind the publication of the annual multidisciplinary Dimapur Government College Journal.

Providing a wide platform for the avid scholar, this issue contains twelve papers ranging from topics as diverse as food crops, pre-colonial Naga society, issues of identity, midwives, gender, role of media, different aspects of literature, sexual health of students and the implementation of the NEP 2020 and FYUGP. They have been written by writers across academia. We are confident that readers will find these papers relevant, thought-provoking and practical.

The papers have been thoroughly assessed by qualified reviewers for whose contributions the editorial board remains grateful.

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1. TRANSITIONING TO FYUGP AND THE CHALLENGES OF MULTIDISCLIPLINARY APPROACH: PERCEPTIONS OF COLLEGE TEACHERS IN NAGALAND

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Abstract

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 envisages a forward looking vision for India's higher education system, placing a strong emphasis on the role of teachers in implementing and translating the policy into action. The NEP 2020 mentions "The teacher must be at the centre of the fundamental reforms in the education system". The plan to transition from a three-year to a four-year undergraduate programme has implications on the roles and responsibilities of the teachers. Given the current pace of change within education, adapting to these changes can be challenging for teachers. The pressure to meet high expectations, staying focused and continuing to thrive in one's role as an educator often requires adaptability and resilience. The study is an attempt to gain

insights and also examine the varying perceptions among college teachers regarding transitioning to FYUGP and the challenges thereof.

Keywords: Transitioning, Multidisciplinary Approach,

Four Year Undergraduate Programme (FYUGP), Nagaland

INTRODUCTION

One of the major recommendations of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 was that *"the undergraduate degree will be of either 3 or 4-year duration, with multiple exit options within this period, with appropriate certifications, e.g., a UG certificate after completing 1 year in a discipline or field including vocational and professional areas, or a UG diploma after 2 years of study, or a Bachelor's degree after a 3-year programme. The 4-year multidisciplinary*[1]

Bachelor's programme, however, shall be the preferred option since it allows the opportunity to experience the full range of holistic and multidisciplinary education in addition to a focus on the chosen major and minors as per the choices of the student".

To align with the recommendations of the NEP 2020, the University Grants Commission has formulated a "Curriculum and Credit Framework for Undergraduate Programmes (CCFUP)" incorporating a flexible choice-based credit system, multidisciplinary approach, and multiple entry and exit options. This is envisaged as a

student-centric innovation which will facilitate students to pursue their career path by choosing the subject/ field of their interest. The students are also allowed the flexibility to move from one institution to another and to switch to alternative modes of learning, such as online and hybrid modes.

In line with the UGC curriculum framework, the Nagaland University also drafted its own Curriculum and Credit Framework for Undergraduate programmes which was approved by the 36th Academic Council of the University on 17th May 2023. By this time several rounds of discussion and orientation had already been carried out for teachers and principals of affiliated colleges to prepare them for implementation of the new Four Year Undergraduate Programme (FYUGP). With this, the University has transitioned from the three-year Choice Based Credit System (CBCS) to FYUGP.

The FYUGP marks a significant shift in the way the undergraduate degree programme has been implemented in the past, offering multiple options to students to pursue their undergraduate course. The multi-disciplinary approach offered under the programme gives students the opportunity to pursue varied interests instead of being limited to a singular line of study. Interdisciplinary courses are offered to students with the credits for the core courses distributed among the constituent disciplines so that the students gain core

competence in the interdisciplinary programme. In the case of students pursuing a multidisciplinary programme of study, the credits to core courses will be distributed among the broad disciplines. The University also provides common pools of Skill Enhancement Courses, Multidisciplinary papers and Value Based papers so that students develop a broad range of skills and abilities. Apart from these, all students are required to participate in internship in actual work situations, working with local industry, government or private organizations, business organizations, artists, crafts persons, and similar entities to provide opportunities for students to actively engage in experiential learning.

The FYUGP under Nagaland University is now in its third year of implementation. Queries related to various aspects of implementation, including content, evaluation, pedagogy, internships, creation of Academic Bank of Credits and matters related to obtaining credits through online courses etc. bear investigation. Therefore, a rapid assessment of the status of the FYUGP programme was warranted with the prime objective of understanding the challenges faced in Higher Educational institutions and thereby suggesting suitable measures to yield the best dividends for the coming generations, so that the products of the system will be better equipped to compete with their peers from other parts of the country and beyond.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The new curriculum spanning four years is a part of the NEP 2020.Any new transition brings along the element of uncertainty. Teachers are the main agents responsible for translating curriculum into practice, serving as the crucial link between curriculum and the students. With a transformational shift in educational practices seen in recent times, this study aims to examine teachers' perception towards the FYUGP framework and how they are navigating this leap.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The problem of the present study is stated as "Transitioning to FYUGP and the Challenges of Multidisciplinary Approach: Perceptions of College Teachers in Nagaland."

OBJECTIVES

- To examine the initiatives taken for transition towards FYUGP
- To find out the perception of teachers on the curricular and multidisciplinary aspect
- To identify the advantages of FYUGP
- To highlight the issues and challenges faced in the implementation of FYUGP

METHODOLOGY

The study is qualitative in nature using descriptive technique, data analyzed in terms of percentage and presented in tabular and graphical form.

POPULATION

For the present study all the colleges in the five districts of Kohima, Dimapur, Mokokchung, Chumoukedima and Phek and within it all the teachers comprise the population of the study.

SAMPLE

Convenience sampling technique was used in selecting 13 colleges and within it 169 teachers.

DELIMITATION

The study is delimited to colleges affiliated to Nagaland University located in the five districts of Kohima, Dimapur, Mokokchung, Chumukedima and Phek.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The questionnaires were analyzed on dimensions like Transitioning towards FYUGP, Quality Enhancement through the Four Year Undergraduate Programme (FYUGP), Multidisciplinary Approach, Vocationalization, Credit Mobility, Multiple Entry and Exit System (MEES), Advantages including Issues and Challenge.

Table: 1

Sl. No	Dimensions	Yes	No	To some extent
1.	Transitioning to FYUGP : Provision of orientation	55.62%	44.38%	0%
2.	Quality Enhancement	78.69%	21.30%	0%
3.	Multidisciplinary ensures students with access to broader knowledge base and skills	48.52%	1.77%	49.70%
4.	Integrating multiple disciplines is taxing	33.13%	12.42%	54.43%
5.	Offering multidisciplinary programme is challenging when faced with budgetary constraints	68.63%	4.14%	27.21%
6.	Vocationalization of undergraduate education	42.60%	7.69%	49.70%
7.	Credit mobility from SWAYAM	33.13%	20.71%	46.15%
8.	Multiple Entry and Exit : A welcome provision	43.78%	8.28%	47.92%

Orienting teachers towards the FYUGP is one important indicator of the extent to which they are prepared to meet the challenges of the FYUGP. The table indicates that 55.62% of them have been oriented by Nagaland University, college authorities and experts concerned, while 44.38% are yet to be oriented in the FYUGP. With regard to quality enhancement in higher education through the FYUGP, it is heartening to note that 78.69% of the teachers were positive about the possibilities of FYUGP provided it is implemented properly with adequate resources, manpower, logistical support and learners' commitment. However, due to lack of proper orientation on the FYUGP framework, and with most colleges in the State in dire need of proper infrastructure, manpower and finance to quickly adapt to the requirements of FYUGP, 21.30% of the teachers expressed that it is too early to comment on its effectiveness. Hence, enhancement in quality of higher education remains to be seen. It has been observed that 48.52% of the teachers considered multidisciplinary education as a unique educational approach; a crucial component of the FYUGP framework ensuring students with access to a broader knowledge base and skills, thereby helping them navigate the complexities of life. 49.70 % agreed to some extent and 1.77% of them were skeptical, citing that it depends on the foundation and acumen of the students. It may also lead to generalization and less on specialization. Regarding the integration of multiple disciplines which often requires finding the right balance

and careful planning and coordination among faculty from different departments, 33.13% teachers found it to be burdensome. However, 12.42% of them did not find any issues related to the multidisciplinary programme and 54.43% regarded integration as somewhat taxing. A mixed opinion among the teachers regarding the nature of the multidisciplinary programs requiring investments in resources such as faculty expertise and instructional materials, especially when faced with budgetary constraints can be found with 68.63% teachers affirming that it is indeed challenging, 27.21 % to some extent and only 4.14% of them satisfied with the programme.

Integration and mainstreaming of vocational education and skill development alongside regular academic courses by aligning it with industry requirements is one of the significant highlights of NEP 2020. In this connection, 42.60% of teachers felt skill-based and internship programmes of FYUGP will serve as a gateway for realization of skills among students and maximizing their future prospects. Intent towards vocationalization is visible, no doubt. However,49.70% of the teachers mentioned that in a state like Nagaland where there is prevalence of poor industrial sector, limited capital and knowledge including resource constraints, it is unlikely that vocationalization will be achieved. A revamp in the curriculum has been suggested to make it more practical and skill-oriented. For academic flexibility,

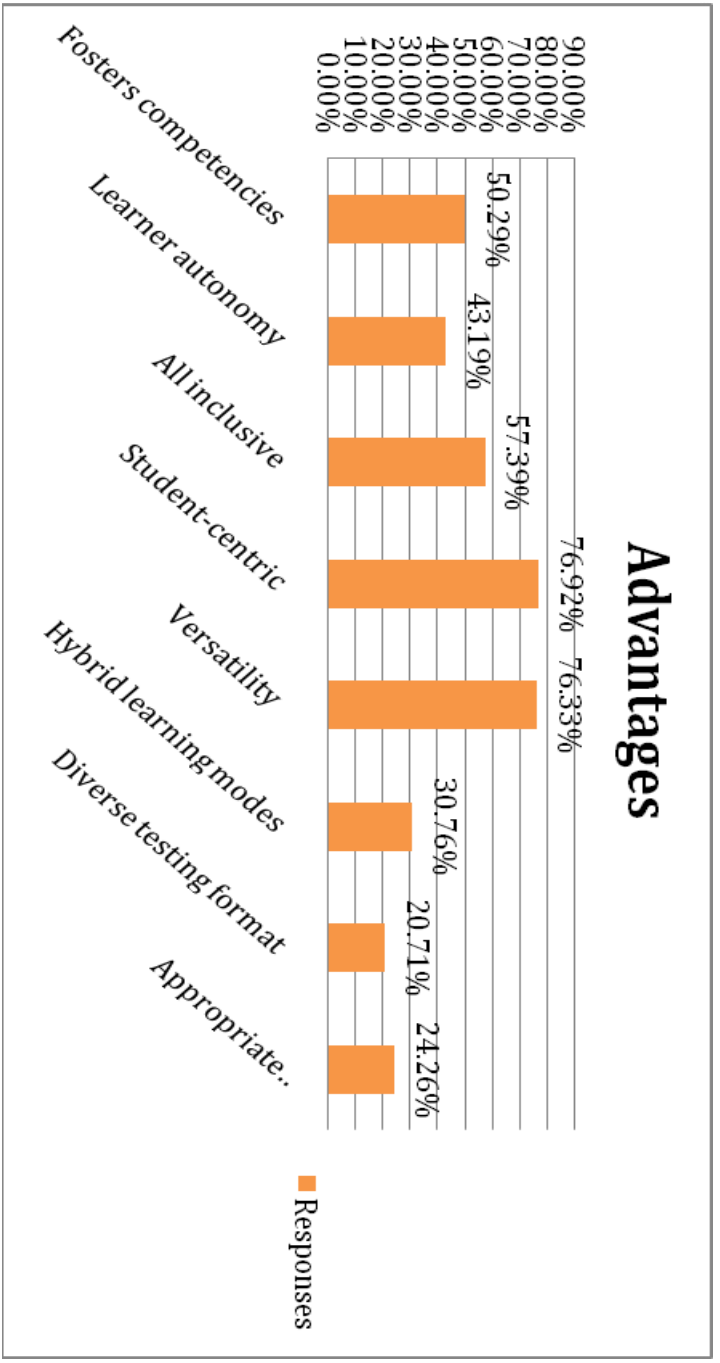
promoting Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCS) offered through the Study Webs of Active Learning for Young Aspiring Minds (SWAYAM) platform allowing 40% of credit transfer to the students' academic records for courses taken, 33.13% of teachers considered it as a welcome provision for enhanced learning outcomes, and that students should not take this platform lightly. However, 46.15% of them were of the opinion that it is appreciated but its practical application remains doubtful, since many students are not properly oriented, hence unable to take advantage of this option. With no clarity and high chances of making errors due to limited tech know-how of students,13.60% of teachers considered this provision as unfeasible, stating that it may overshadow the importance of in-person learning experiences such as hands on and peer interaction.

Commenting on the introduction of the Multiple Entry Exit System (MEES) to support students' pathways in higher education and to remove rigid boundaries of diploma/degree completion years, 43.78% of the teachers considered it as a remarkable initiative. Students can tailor their education according to their circumstances; also work and supplement their education in between. Students have different learning capabilities, and MEES will help cater to students with different academic needs. In the event of exiting between academics, the MEES ensures students do not lose out on anything. Since

students might drop out for many reasons, MEES will be a valuable provision for those who want to continue. Students need not commit to the entirety of the course duration when other opportunities arise. Despite its advantages, 8.28% of the teachers were unconvinced about the credibility of the MEES. Besides, 47.92% of the teachers considered MEES a good provision to some extent, especially for the genuine students but also doubtful that chances of complacency might occur which can compromise the quality of higher education. Concerns were also raised regarding the employability of students exiting after certificate or diploma course.

ADVANTAGES OF FYUGP

Graph: 1



Looking at the advantages of FYUGP, 76.92% of teachers agreed that FYUGP focuses on student-centricity offering varied opportunities to enhance their academic journey, 76.33% on versatility through Inter/Multidisciplinary learning, followed by all-inclusive nature of FYUGP at 57.39%, fostering competencies at 50.29% and learner autonomy at 43.19%. Other merits of the FYUGP include its hybrid learning modes, appropriate certification, diverse testing formats, Core and Minor papers being at par with the rest of the country, multidisciplinary studies allowing for a more comprehensive curriculum covering range of topics and skills, including research and internship initiatives providing platform for the students to maximize their learning outcomes. The advantages can far outweigh the limitations only when institutional, infrastructural and faculty preparedness is prioritized.

ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

Table: 2

Sl. No	**Issues and Challenges**	**Response**
1.	Increase in workload	75.14%
2.	Academic demands	50.29%
3.	No time for professional development	42.01%
4.	Psychologically stressed	40.82%
5.	Lack of infrastructural facilities	66.27%
6.	Difficulty in scheduling of classes time tables	43.19%
7.	Difficulty in procurement of books/ materials	60.35%
8.	Shortage of faculty	51.47%
9.	Difficulty in comprehending the nature of FYUGP	39.05%
10.	Need for clearer guidelines from University	60.94%

Confusion in implementation being one dominant issue, FYUGP though considered as student friendly, more time for its implementation should have been given, the lack of which has left most teachers confused till date, let alone students. 75.14% of teachers have mentioned increase in workload as one of the major challenges faced by them; expressing concerns over the heavy syllabus with limited time per semester resulting in low quality of Teaching- Learning. The challenge pertaining to lack of infrastructural facilities stands at 66.27%, followed by the need for clearer guidelines from the concerned University at 60.94%, difficulty in procurement of books/materials at 60.35% and shortage of faculty at 51.47%. Other pertinent issues include academic demands, scheduling of classes, no time for professional development, psychological stress and difficulty in comprehending the nature of FYUGP. Besides, unequal work distribution, strain on personal time and difficulty in maintaining work-life balance including lesson planning and assessment of multiple courses were some of the factors mentioned. With FYUGP and requirements as mandated by National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), emphasis on timely completion of syllabus, looking after departmental activities, clubs, cells, maintaining every record has become a huge burden on the teachers. Teachers felt they are made to struggle and manage on their own which has impacted their productivity.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION: The changing landscape of education in the present context necessitates multidisciplinarity with flexible curricular structures. In the past, the lack of a multidisciplinary approach to teaching in higher education was a major challenge. Students were forced to choose a subject or stream based on limited options, often not aligning with their interests. (Bashir & Wani, 2024, p.173). Singularity in terms of acquiring knowledge in a particular discipline is often conceived to be narrow with no scope for the creative combination of subjects. The study reveals that multidisciplinary approach can be manageable, provided equal work load is shared among faculty or departments. Engaging course options would help remove the rigid separation in disciplines and create endless possibilities for life-long learning. This requires more faculties which is not feasible especially in private institutions. Addressing the paucity of qualified, trained and experienced faculty is one of the quality criteria that majorly contributes to higher education system and the shortage of faculty which is the main hurdle for achieving excellence. (Ahmad & Nath, 2017, p.11). Faculty members already juggling with teaching loads, research commitments and other administrative responsibilities may experience burn out when asked to engage in additional multidisciplinary teaching activities, requiring them to redesign their courses to align with a multidisciplinary approach, which can be time consuming. It may also become too

confusing for students when given a free hand. Besides, the traditional assessment tools may not adequately capture the interdisciplinary nature of the curriculum. Limited semester period alongside the assessment to be completed hinders the smooth running of the programme. Teachers were of the view that allocation of classes and courses is often difficult, with some heavily taxed while others with relatively light work load. Integration requires regular meetings and collaboration which is time consuming. In disciplines with practicals, finding the right balance becomes a major challenge in terms of scarce resources and manpower. Other pertinent issues include inadequate faculty to cover some of the diverse courses offered under this approach and disciplinary boundaries resulting in barriers to effective teamwork. Lack of student engagement and interest also pose a challenge. It has been observed that challenges are more pronounced in private institutions as the faculty has little say in matters of budget allocation. A study done by Longkumer & Roy(2023) found out that Private colleges' in Nagaland faced concerns relating to resource restrictions and regulatory issues, often requiring focused interventions to prioritize financial stability, adaptability, communication and a balanced approach to rules and regulations. Multidisciplinary programs require more faculty strength, affecting those institutions with less enrolment of students. Besides, many colleges are not fully prepared for FYUGP with teachers overburdened

to take up multidisciplinary courses apart from their own respective subjects, including the procurement of teaching aids and materials at one's own expense. Teachers were also apprehensive that institutions in rural and remote areas will face the brunt of such an approach, maintaining that an institution needs to have the required resources and facilities to meet the demands of multidisciplinary curriculum. According to Ahmad &Nath (2017), "Creation of infrastructure is one of the important parameters that contribute to bridge quality gaps in institutional functioning for achieving the excellence and involves high investments. It is considered as tangible asset and is more vital for academic and research needs, which enable the university / institution to be competitive, creative and productive" (p.12).

Designing a cohesive and flexible curriculum that allows students to take courses from different disciplines without diluting the depth of knowledge in each area can be difficult for teachers. They expressed that it might hamper learning process and academic performance as well. Besides, it has also been observed that there is some kind of uncertainty among students regarding this, with many not aware of such a provision. Some reiterated that students may not be well prepared to navigate multidisciplinary programmes without proper guidance. Teachers maintained that students might take advantage of the loopholes in the system and their entry/

exit at different point of time would disturb the academic quality of students as well as the institution.

CONCLUSION

Changes in the educational policy are largely expected to have a positive impact on higher education in the State, providing platform to the students for holistic learning. Hau (2023) mentions that with unique culture, there is a dynamic interplay between local realities and national objectives about the opportunities and challenges of implementing NEP, 2020 in Nagaland's HEIs. Emphasis on learner-centeredness can attract a large number of students to higher educational institutions by way of offering academic flexibility and skill-oriented courses. Provisions like the Multiple Entry/Exit system can pave way for the students for continuous learning as it encourages continuity of learning by allowing students to re-enter formal education at different life stages thereby promoting autonomy in their studies. By enriching curriculum and integrating online courses into formal education, students can engage in life-long learning and self-directed education which will equip students to be well-rounded individuals and contribute to society positively.

Equally important is the need for orienting teachers by ensuring comprehensive, consistent and informative programmes to enable them transition smoothly into

the FYUGP framework. There is the need of cultivating a collaborative culture, establishing supporting institutional frameworks, and providing chances for professional growth for faculty members. (Singh, 2023)

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