

National Agricultural Education Policy

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In News: India's first National Agricultural Education Policy will bring academic credit banks and degree programs with multiple entry-exit alternatives to the 74 universities focussed on crop sciences, fisheries, veterinary and dairy preparation and research.

What is the National Agricultural Education Policy?

- The Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, had announced the introduction of agricultural education at middle school level in the National Education Policy 2020 (NEP). This National Agricultural Education Policy has been implemented as an effect of the same.
- It is the first of its kind project in India and aims at bringing academic credit banks and degree programs with entry-exit alternatives to Universities focussed on crop sciences, fisheries, veterinary and dairy preparation and research.
- With the entry-exit options available, the National Agricultural Education Policy opens up the opportunity for students to continue with their diploma and advanced diploma as and when they are able to resume their studies and earn themselves a full-time college degree.
- The Universities which have been included as a part of the National Agricultural Education Policy have been divided into 4 parts:
 1. Central Agricultural Universities – comprising three Universities, one each from Imphal, Samastipur and Jhansi
 2. ICAR Deemed Universities – there are 4 Universities in this cadre

3. State Agricultural Universities – includes 63 Universities
4. Central University with Agriculture Faculty – comprises four Universities

Key Points

Agricultural Education Policy to be Aligned with NEP 2020:

Academic Credit Banks:

- These may be a service provider available to a desirable student community.
- It may facilitate the integration of the campuses and distributed learning systems, by creating student mobility within the inter and intra university system.
- It may help in seamlessly integrating skills and experiences into a credit based formal system by providing a credit recognition mechanism.
- It will digitally store academic credits earned from recognised Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and allow for credit redemption in order to be awarded a certificate, diploma or degree.

Experiential Education:

- In India, agricultural education is already ahead of its time, and already aligned with the NEP.
- The NEP wants a shift to four-year undergraduate degrees, and agricultural degrees are already four-year programmes.
- **The NEP mentions experiential education, which has been already mandated in agricultural education since 2016.**
 - Experiential education is a teaching philosophy that informs many methodologies in which educators purposefully engage with learners in direct experience and focused reflection in order to increase knowledge, develop skills, clarify

values, and develop people's capacity to contribute to their communities.

- **The Student READY** (Rural Entrepreneurship Awareness Development Yojana) programme requires all students to undertake a six-month internship, usually in their fourth year, to gain hands-on training, rural awareness, industry experience, research expertise and entrepreneurship skills.
- **One major challenge is to ensure that experiential learning is made available to all students if the multiple entry-exit system gets implemented.**
 - The option of multiple entry and exit provides students with the opportunity to earn a diploma or an advanced diploma, while they are given the choice to re-enter as and when they are able to resume their studies and earn a full college degree.

What is experiential education?

- It is a teaching philosophy in which educators purposefully engage with learners in direct experience and focused reflection in order to increase knowledge, develop skills, clarify values, and develop people's capacity to contribute to their communities.
- The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 mentions it and it has already been mandated in agricultural education since 2016.

Key issues:

- Experiential learning to all the students if the multiple entry-exit systems get implemented.
- The agricultural universities have been set up on the land grant pattern, with an exploration and augmentation, and profound community connections, driven by the philosophy that farmers need holistic solutions to their problems. However, in recent years, several

domain-specific universities in horticulture, veterinary science and fisheries sciences have come up and incorporating humanities and social sciences into these settings could be challenging.

- Though agricultural education is a State subject, the ICAR is responsible for the quality of education across the nation, and hopes to continue in a standards-setting role under the new system of higher education regulation proposed by the NEP. However, it is not clear whether it will continue in its accreditation and grant-making roles under the new regime.