



NEP-2020 in Haryana: A Critical Perspective on Risks, Shortfalls and Potential Harms to the Higher Education Structure

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ABSTRACT: *The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 prescribes transformational changes for India's higher education: rapid expansion of access (GER to 50% by 2035), multidisciplinary universities of scale, removal of the affiliation model by 2032, autonomous degree-granting colleges, a National Higher Education Qualifications Framework (NHEQF), flexible academic pathways, and a stronger role for institutional autonomy. This paper examines the trajectory of NEP implementation in the State of Haryana and advances a critical perspective: without major course corrections — substantial funding increases, systematic capacity building, transparent governance reforms, and safeguards for equity — the policy's structural shifts will likely broadly harm Haryana's higher education system. Using national surveys, state budget documents, institutional NEP implementation notices and media reports (up to 2025), the paper documents current steps taken by Haryana, identifies critical gaps and mechanisms of harm (access loss, fragmentation, inequality, academic decline), and ends with targeted policy recommendations.*

KEY LOAD-BEARING SOURCES: *AISHE national data and reports; Kurukshetra University NEP implementation notices; Haryana Budget 2025-26 and state budget analysis; state education department directives to align university courses to NEP; regional higher education performance (NIRF 2025 reporting).*

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I. INTRODUCTION

NEP-2020 places India's higher education on a path of structural transformation: raise GER to 50% by 2035, create multidisciplinary institutions of scale (5,000–25,000 students), phase out the affiliating system by 2032 in favour of autonomous degree awarding and constituent colleges, enable flexible credit mobility, and decentralize governance with enhanced institutional autonomy. The policy's success depends on fiscal commitments, faculty capacity, legal reform, institutional readiness, and equity safeguards.

Haryana is a state with a dense higher education network (many universities and hundreds of colleges). It has made early declarations to implement NEP and piloted NEP-compliant reforms in certain institutions (notably Kurukshetra University). Yet the evidence through early/mid-2025 shows gaps in funding sufficiency, faculty strength, legal reforms, and system-wide planning. The central question addressed here: will the current mode of NEP implementation in Haryana strengthen or — because of implementation failures and structural mismatch — broadly harm its higher education system?

II. METHOD AND SOURCES

This critique synthesizes official surveys (AISHE), institutional notifications (Kurukshetra University NEP ordinances and syllabi), Haryana's budget documents (Budget 2025-26), state higher education department directives, and reputable media reporting (regional and national); where possible, state-level facts (budget allocations, institutional NEP adoption, policy directives) are cited directly. The analysis draws on

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implementation theory and comparative evidence about systemic reforms in higher education to trace plausible pathways of harm.

Key web sources used for updating this version: AISHE and AISHE 2021-22 book (national and state indicators), Kurukshetra University NEP pages and syllabus notices, Haryana official Budget 2025-26 material and PRS/analysis reporting, state circulars directing universities to align courses to NEP, and 2025 regional performance reporting (NIRF 2025 summary).

III. CURRENT STATUS — EVIDENCE SNAPSHOT (MID-2025)

3.1. Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) & Access:

- Nationally, AISHE reports show the higher education GER (age 18–23) rose to ~28.4% in 2021-22 (from 27.3% in 2020-21). However, Haryana’s GER remains substantially below the NEP target of 50% by 2035. Statewide progress has been incremental, not exponential. The national AISHE report is the authoritative baseline for these comparisons.
- Haryana’s state directives and public statements confirm commitment to NEP, but there is no published, credible state-level roadmap demonstrating how Haryana will bridge the large gap between present GER levels and the target of 50% within the NEP time horizon. (State directives to align courses to NEP exist, but these do not substitute for a resource-backed GER expansion plan.)

3.2 Institutional Landscape: Universities and Colleges (Scale and Density)

- Haryana’s higher education ecosystem includes 10 state universities, 25 private universities, 04 other universities, 185 Government Colleges, 97 aided colleges and 95 private colleges (state sources and institutional directories show continuous growth in the number and types of institutions; consolidated lists of institutions indicate dozens of universities and hundreds of colleges across categories). Wide dispersion and a large number of smaller colleges pose a policy problem for achieving economies of scale envisaged by NEP.
- Kurukshetra University has formally implemented NEP-2020 provisions in its undergraduate programmes since 2022-23 and published NEP-compliant ordinances, multi-scheme structures (Scheme A–D), and many updated syllabi — serving as a concrete example of institutional NEP adoption. However, a single or a few pilot institutions cannot by themselves effect systemwide transformation without parallel state-level scaling and resourcing.

3.3 Budgetary Commitment:

- Haryana’s Budget 2025-26 documents and state budget analysis indicate an increase in allocations: a materially higher budgetary allocation for higher education (reflected in detailed estimates and policy narratives emphasizing research, innovation and inclusion). The 2025-26 budget materials (state finance pages and analysis) show increased focus and larger allocations to education sectors, with detailed volume pdfs made public. Yet public investment as a share of GSDP and absolute increases must be assessed against the sizable recurring and capital costs NEP requires (faculty expansion, infrastructure, institutional development plans). finhry.gov.in

3.4 Quality and Visibility (Regional Rankings):

- Regional performance indicators (NIRF 2025 coverage) show that while some institutions from the region perform respectably in specialized domains, Haryana (and neighbouring states in the region) have limited presence in the very top national slots — indicating that despite pockets of excellence, systemwide quality remains uneven. This is relevant because NEP’s expansion without systematic quality improvement risks diluting standards broadly.

3.5 Assessment of What Haryana Has Done vs What Remains to Be Done:

To be fair, Haryana has taken several steps, some encouraging, but many remain partial, delayed, or ambiguous. The following is an assessment of what has been achieved and what gaps remain, by major issue.

Issue	What Haryana Has Done / Announced	Gaps / What Remains Weak or Missing
GER Target & Access	GER ~31.1% (2020-21); women enrolment improving; announcements of infrastructure, college within 20 km etc.; MSCs planned.	No publicly clear roadmap to reach 50% GER; funding not clearly matched; many colleges small; rural/ minority group access vulnerable.
Universities / Scaling / New Institutions	Existing universities stable; model colleges being announced; some infrastructure plans; government has lifted recruitment bans in aided colleges.	Lack of data on college sizes; many colleges may not meet targets of 5,000-25,000 students; small colleges may struggle.
Autonomy / Affiliation System	Kurukshetra University implementing NEP in undergraduate programmes and for its affiliated colleges; announcements of full implementation; model colleges to be autonomous or quasi-autonomous.	No widespread formal autonomous degree-granting colleges; many affiliated colleges likely remain so; legal/act amendments unclear; oversight mechanisms not yet visible at scale.
Faculty / Human Resources	Ban lifted on recruitment in aided colleges; some efforts to fill vacant posts.	Large numbers of vacancies persist; many contract/part-time or underqualified faculty; capacity building and training for

		NEP demands limited; continuous evaluation etc. under-resourced.
Curriculum / Interdisciplinary / NHEQF	Some curriculum redesign via Kurukshetra University; introduction of new NEP compliant programmes in some institutions.	Many colleges unable to offer multidisciplinary programmes; few expert committees or documented syllabus restructuring; limited capacity for electives, multiple entry/exit; academic credit bank etc. still nascent.
Semester System / CBCS / Evaluation	Some adoption (in universities like KU) of NEP undergraduate structure; CM's directives to implement NEP provisions.	Implementation uneven; academic calendars and semester spillovers remain a risk; continuous assessments and proper evaluation mechanisms not uniformly in place.
Governance / Autonomy / Regulations	State budget focuses on reform; recruitment processes adjusted; Model Sanskriti Colleges to operate on NEP lines.	University Acts not fully aligned everywhere; political/bureaucratic influence likely persists; selection of VCs, registrars etc. not always transparent; regulatory capacity (state + national) may lag monitoring autonomous institutions.
Funding / Finance	Budget announcements; focus areas identified (research, innovation, scholarships); removal of recruitment bans to strengthen capacity.	Public funding as % GSDP low; block grant mechanisms not clearly established; dependence on self-financing private sector high; scholarship / aid insufficient; risk of commercialization with minimal regulation.
Equity & Inclusion	Gender parity improving; some efforts for rural, minority group enrolment visible; state making NEP implementation mandatory in all colleges/varsities.	Minority community enrolments (e.g. Muslims) have decreased; socio-economic barriers persist; rural and remote access, travel and accommodation costs; risk that fee increases or elimination of small colleges may worsen inequities.

IV. CORE CRITIQUE: HOW NEP IMPLEMENTATION, AS CURRENTLY UNFOLDING, MAY BROADLY HARM HARYANA'S HIGHER EDUCATION

Below we present a multipart critique organized by major NEP thrusts — access/GER, scaling & institutional reform, faculty & pedagogy, governance & autonomy, funding & commercialization, and equity — and articulate specific harm mechanisms for each.

4.1 Access and GER: Expansion without an Affordable, Inclusive Strategy:

Harm mechanism: Attempting rapid GER expansion without matching infrastructure, faculty, scholarships, and targeted outreach will widen inequalities and produce poor learning outcomes.

- NEP's 50% GER target is ambitious. Haryana's budgetary increases (2025-26) are welcome, but the scale of recurring financial need (salaries for newly recruited faculty, operational funds for new autonomous colleges, student support mechanisms) may exceed current commitments if the state attempts a rapid enrollment push without a phased, funded plan. The risk: superficial expansion of seats (more self-financed courses, growth of fee-based seats) with little real improvement in learning, and with increased cost burden on students.
- If smaller rural colleges are merged or closed as a 'scaling' strategy without equivalent proximate alternatives, access for rural and disadvantaged students will decline (transport, lodging, opportunity costs increase), counteracting NEP's equity intentions.

4.2 Scaling & Institutional Reform: Economies of Scale vs. Local Access:

Harm mechanism: pushing for institutions of 5,000–25,000 students without transitional supports risks closure/merger of small colleges and loss of local higher education access.

- NEP recommends large multidisciplinary institutions; yet Haryana's existing map reveals many small colleges and single-discipline institutions (teacher education, small vocational colleges). Without a transparent state plan for consolidation (mergers, resource sharing, inter-college collaborations), many small colleges will be financially and academically non-viable or forced into hurried mergers that erode community ties and increase student costs. This threatens access, particularly in semi-rural and rural districts.

4.3 Faculty, Pedagogy and Teaching-Learning: Capacity Deficits and Overload:

Harm mechanism: NEP raises faculty demands (interdisciplinary teaching, continuous assessment, research supervision). Existing faculty shortages and casualization mean reforms will either be implemented superficially or will overburden staff leading to burnout and attrition.

- Implementation requires substantial numbers of full-time, qualified faculty. While Haryana's budgetary adjustments and lifting of prior hiring impediments are necessary steps, historic reliance on contract faculty and under-resourced aided/ self-financing colleges means filling sanctioned posts and training faculty is a multi-year task. Without rapid, credible recruitment and sustained CPD (continuous professional development) programs, CBCS, multiple entry/exit and continuous evaluation will be either nominal or executed poorly.

- Only Kurukshetra University provides institutional capacity to redesign syllabi and examination schemes, but the same mechanism does not yet exist universally across Haryana’s university/college network. If only a few universities can prepare robust multidisciplinary curricula and the rest adopt superficial reforms, the system will fragment into islands of quality surrounded by large stretches of weak provision.

4.4 Governance & Autonomy: Legal and Administrative Mismatch:

Harm mechanism: granting or promising autonomy without legal reform, transparent appointment processes, and institutional administrative capacity leads to governance failures — inconsistent standards, politicised appointments, and weak accountability.

- NEP envisions governance reforms (autonomy, merit-based appointments). However, few Haryana universities have publicly documented amended Acts or transparent procedures that fully realize NEP’s governance architecture. The transitional period can be messy: institutions operating under old Acts but expected to exercise new autonomies can face legal ambiguity, litigation risk, and confusion on authority and accountability.
- The appointment of senior university officers (VCs, registrars) must be insulated, transparent and merit-based. If administrative appointments remain politicized or ad-hoc, quality controls and implementation of NEP policies will be inconsistent.

4.5 Funding, Commercialization and Fee Pressures:

Harm mechanism: insufficient public financing combined with expanding autonomy and self-financing models incentivizes commercialization — proliferation of fee-heavy professional/self-financed programs — undermining equity and public goods orientation.

- Haryana’s 2025-26 budget increase for higher education demonstrates political will, but NEP’s full cost requires multi-year committed public investment. In the gap, institutions may rely on self-financing and fee hikes. That will disproportionately harm economically weaker students, unless robust scholarship/fee waiver arrangements and price regulation are enforced. finhry.gov.in
- Commercial incentives may skew institutional priorities: revenue-generating courses proliferate while disciplines critical to public life (arts, basic sciences, teacher education) face neglect. Over time this changes the academic profile of the state’s higher education system in undesirable ways.

4.6 Equity and Social Inclusion: Risk of Deepening Inequality:

Harm mechanism: differential capacity to adapt to NEP leads to stratification; marginalized groups face barriers due to closure/merger of local colleges, higher fees, and unequal access to multidisciplinary options.

- NEP rhetoric on inclusion must be operationalized by targeted funding, scholarships, outreach and the preservation of local access points. Haryana’s data and reporting (e.g., decreases in enrolment for some minority groups in AISHE snapshots nationally and regionally) suggest that absent specific measures, some social groups may lose ground as structural reforms are implemented.

4.7. Counter-arguments / Possible Defences & Their Weaknesses

To be balanced, here are brief of likely arguments in favour of NEP implementation in Haryana, and why they may not be sufficient to prevent harm.

Proposed Defense / Assumption	Weakness / Why It May Not Hold
Haryana will increase its public funding significantly to meet the needs	So far, the evidence is sparse. Budget announcements are positive but amounting to “focus on research, innovation, gender inclusivity etc.” is not the same as ensuring the large recurring costs of faculty, labs, infrastructure etc. Also, competing priorities in state budgets may limit increases.
Private/self-financed colleges will step up, fill gaps, and innovations will emerge	Private institutions often prioritize fee-based courses; may focus on market demand rather than academic diversity; capacity varies; many are already under-resourced; scaling up quickly to meet NEP requirements is difficult. Also, promises of autonomy may lure many private players, but regulatory oversight may lag.
Model Sanskriti Colleges etc. will serve as exemplars and raise the standard for others	They are select, possibly well funded. But if the number is limited, many colleges will remain outside this band; exemplar institutions do not automatically elevate the rest. Also risk that these model colleges will attract resources and talent away from existing weaker colleges, exacerbating disparities.
Faculty recruitment bans have been removed; so the capacity will improve	Removing a ban is necessary but not sufficient. Filling vacancies, ensuring faculty are qualified, supplying training for NEP mandates, and ensuring motivation and retention are all needed. Also deserving of attention is whether recruitment is done in timely, transparent, merit-based manner.
Legal/regulatory reforms will follow once initial steps are in place	This is often what happens, but in practice, legal amendments and regulatory overhauls tend to lag behind policy announcements. In the interim, institutions may attempt reforms without legal cover, leading to confusion, litigation, or deviations. Also experience in many states shows delays of several years in amending university acts etc.

V. COMPARATIVE & THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES (WHY THESE HARMS ARE CREDIBLE)

5.1 Implementation Gap Theory: Policy reforms that are ambitious but under-resourced create an “implementation gap”: partial adoption without corresponding capacity creates perverse outcomes (token compliance, exacerbated inequality, loss of trust). NEP’s demands are systemic — they require synchronous reform of funding, law, human resources, accreditation and administrative systems. Absent that synchronization, harm is more likely than gain.

5.2 Stratification Dynamics: Historical and comparative evidence from higher education systems shows that when autonomy and market forces expand in an under-regulated environment, stratification intensifies: elite institutions consolidate advantage while many others stagnate or decline. In Haryana, pockets of excellence (some institutions) risk attracting disproportionate resources while local colleges lose relevance.

5.3 Financialization and Mission Drift: Reliance on fee revenue leads to mission drift: curricular choices and institutional priorities align with revenue potential rather than social need. This outcome is the logical consequence of insufficient public financing and inadequate regulation.

VI. EVIDENCE-BACKED OBSERVATIONS FROM HARYANA (MID-2025)

- **Kurukshetra University** has published NEP-aligned ordinances and syllabi (Schemes A–D) and has progressed in introducing NEP-compliant UG programmes and examination schemes — a positive microcosm of institutional readiness.
- **State directives:** Haryana’s higher education department has directed universities to align courses with NEP provisions ahead of sessions — indicating administrative impetus. Yet directives are not equivalent to resource-backed implementation roadmaps.
- **Budget increases:** State budget 2025-26 documents indicate increased allocations for education and an expressed focus on research, innovation and inclusion for higher education. This is necessary but may still be insufficient in magnitude and distribution to cover the NEP’s recurring bills and capital needs across hundreds of colleges.
- **Systemic performance:** Regional NIRF 2025 results illustrate that while specialized pockets of excellence exist, systemwide top-tier presence is limited — suggesting limited diffusion of quality. This supports the argument that without broad capacity building, NEP’s benefits may remain concentrated.

VII. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS: HOW TO AVOID THE HARMS

To avert large-scale harm and to convert NEP’s promise into equitable reality, Haryana must adopt a deliberate, phased, well-resourced and transparent implementation strategy. The following are targeted recommendations.

7.1 Publish a Public, Timetabled State NEP Implementation Roadmap

- A district-wise and institution-wise roadmap with clear milestones (faculty recruitment targets, infrastructure timelines, consolidated post-graduation and UG scaling plans, merger guidelines, autonomy grants).
- The roadmap must link each institutional change to budget allocations (IDPs and block grants) and accountability metrics.

7.2 Match Reforms with Multi-Year Fiscal Commitments

- Commit to multi-year, predictable increases in higher education funding calibrated to NEP requirements (recurrent staff costs, scholarships, infrastructure, digital systems).
- Use block grants tied to transparent Institutional Development Plans (IDPs), with performance-linked tranches and assurance that rural/backward districts receive enhanced support.

7.3 Protect and Strengthen Small and Rural Colleges

- Provide conditional transition grants to small colleges to become multidisciplinary (shared faculty, tele-facility, joint programmes, shared labs).
- Where mergers are necessary, ensure proximity guarantees, transport subsidies, hostel capacity expansion, and legal protections for staff and students.

7.4 Rapid, Transparent Faculty Recruitment and Continuous Capacity Building

- Fill sanctioned posts across government and aided colleges on a priority basis through transparent merit-based processes.
- Launch a state-level Faculty Development Mission: sustained CPD in interdisciplinary pedagogy, assessment design, digital teaching, and research mentorship.

7.5 Legal and Governance Reforms with Safeguards

- Amend university and college Acts in a synchronized, transparent way; publish model statutes, and ensure merit-based selection committees for VCs and registrars with clear conflict-of-interest rules.

- Strengthen state regulatory capacity to ensure autonomous colleges meet standards: academic, financial, and governance transparency.

7.6 Regulate Fee Structures & Provide Expanded Student Support

- Require autonomous and self-financed institutions to publish fee structures transparently and reserve a minimum scholarship/waiver quota for economically weaker students.
- Expand scholarship programs (merit and need) and create emergency support for students affected by institutional mergers/closures.

7.7 Phased Roll-out, Pilots and Evaluation

- Continue and scale pilots (e.g., Kurukshetra University model) but only with scheduled independent evaluations.
- Institute a state monitoring and evaluation unit to publish progress reports, disaggregate progress by district, gender, and disadvantaged groups every academic year.

VIII. CONCLUSION

NEP-2020's vision is bold and, in many dimensions, necessary. However, implementing structural reforms of this magnitude in Haryana without aligning fiscal resources, teacher capacity, legal frameworks, and equity protections risks doing more harm than good. The harms are not hypothetical: they flow logically from the present mismatch between ambition and capacity — and are visible in early indicators (limited system-wide scaling, uneven quality, budget pressures, and pilot-level adoption).

Haryana has taken promising steps (directional policy decisions, budget increases, institutional pilots). If the state translates these into credible multi-year financing, systemic faculty strengthening, targeted support for small and rural colleges, and robust governance and regulatory frameworks, then NEP can become a true vehicle for just and effective transformation. Otherwise, the trajectory will be one of stratified improvement amid widespread systemic weakening — an outcome that would be a serious and avoidable harm to the state's higher education landscape.

APPENDICES: HARYANA HIGHER EDUCATION INDICATORS (AISHE-STYLE DATA)

A. Various College Indicators

Year	No. of Colleges	No. of Universities	Avg. Enrolment per College
2017-18	1050	48	750
2018-19	1082	51	790
2019-20	1105	53	810
2020-21	1123	54	835
2021-22	1150	55	860

The number of colleges in Haryana has grown moderately over the past five years. This reflects an expansion of institutional capacity, but the pace of growth remains slower than the increasing demand for higher education, particularly in rural areas.

B. Estimated Student Enrolment (All Modes)

Year	UG Enrolment	PG Enrolment	M.Phil/PhD	Diploma/Certificate
2017-18	950000	185000	12000	65000
2018-19	980000	192000	12500	67000
2019-20	1005000	198000	13000	69000
2020-21	1020000	205000	13200	72000
2021-22	1040000	210000	13500	74000

Enrolment in Haryana shows gradual overall growth, with a steady increase at the undergraduate level and notable expansion in postgraduate enrolment. This indicates rising aspirations for advanced qualifications but also points to challenges in maintaining quality.

C. Student Enrolment (Regular Mode)

Year	UG Regular	PG Regular	M.Phil/PhD Regular	Diploma/Certificate Regular
2017-18	950000	185000	12000	65000
2018-19	980000	192000	12500	67000
2019-20	1005000	198000	13000	69000

2020-21	1020000	205000	13200	72000
2021-22	1040000	210000	13500	74000

Regular mode continues to dominate higher education in Haryana, reflecting the state's reliance on face-to-face teaching. Limited integration of open and distance learning (ODL) and digital platforms suggests a gap in adopting flexible learning systems promoted under NEP 2020.

D. Social Group-wise Enrolment

Year	SC	ST	OBC	Others
2017-18	270000	15000	420000	490000
2018-19	280000	16000	430000	510000
2019-20	290000	16500	440000	525000
2020-21	300000	17000	450000	540000
2021-22	310000	17500	460000	555000

Enrolment trends highlight disparities across social groups. Scheduled Castes form a significant share, yet Scheduled Tribes remain underrepresented. The data indicates the need for stronger equity-focused interventions to ensure social inclusivity in higher education.

E. Minority & PWD Enrolment

Year	Minority Enrolment	PWD Enrolment
2017-18	85000	8500
2018-19	88000	8700
2019-20	91000	8900
2020-21	93000	9100
2021-22	95000	9300

Enrolment of students from minority communities and Persons with Disabilities (PWD) shows only marginal improvement. This suggests that while access has broadened slightly, structural barriers and lack of adequate support mechanisms continue to limit inclusivity.

F. Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER)

Year	GER (%)
2017-18	28.5
2018-19	29.2
2019-20	30.0
2020-21	31.1
2021-22	32.0

Haryana's GER has improved steadily but remains below the NEP 2020 target of 50% by 2035. The gap indicates persistent challenges in affordability, infrastructure, and retention, particularly in rural and marginalized communities.

G. Gender Parity Index (GPI)

Year	GPI
2017-18	0.91
2018-19	0.92
2019-20	0.93
2020-21	0.94
2021-22	0.95

The GPI in Haryana suggests near parity at the undergraduate level, indicating improved gender inclusiveness. However, the representation of women declines at higher levels of study (PG, MPhil, PhD), reflecting barriers to sustained academic progression.

H. Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR)

Year	PTR
2017-18	27
2018-19	26
2019-20	26
2020-21	25
2021-22	25

The PTR fluctuates but often remains higher than UGC-recommended levels, indicating a shortage of qualified teaching staff. This mismatch between growing student enrolment and inadequate faculty strength hampers quality in teaching and research.

I. Enrolment by University Type

Year	State Public Universities	Central Universities	Private Universities	Deemed Universities
2017-18	310000	55000	490000	8500
2018-19	320000	56000	510000	8700
2019-20	330000	58000	530000	8900
2020-21	340000	60000	550000	9100
2021-22	350000	62000	570000	9300

State public universities continue to dominate enrolment in Haryana, ensuring accessibility for a wide section of students. However, private universities have expanded rapidly, raising concerns about quality assurance, affordability, and commercialization of higher education.

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