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Implications of NEP 2020 For Teachers, Students and Institutions in India

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ABSTRACT

The New Education Policy (NEP) 2020 introduces comprehensive reforms in the Indian education system, with far-reaching implications for its key stakeholders. From the teachers' perspective, the policy emphasizes professional development, academic freedom, and the adoption of innovative pedagogies, which empower them to shift from rote-based teaching to competency-driven instruction. For students, NEP 2020 offers a learner-centric framework with multiple entry and exit options, vocational training, digital integration, and flexibility in subject choices, thereby encouraging creativity, critical thinking, and employability skills. Institutions, on the other hand, are expected to adopt multidisciplinary structures, enhanced research orientation, and autonomy in governance to build inclusive and globally competitive learning environments. While these reforms provide significant opportunities, challenges such as infrastructure readiness, teacher training, and bridging the digital divide remain. By analyzing these perspectives, this paper highlights how NEP 2020 can reshape the educational landscape if implemented effectively and inclusively.

Keywords: *NEP 2020, Indian Education, Teachers, Students, Educational Institutions, Policy Implementation, Higher Education, School Education, Digital Learning, Skill Development.*

Introduction

In order to make Indian education more comprehensive, multidisciplinary, research-oriented, and in line with the demands of the twenty-first century, NEP 2020 lays forth an ambitious path. In addition to proposing systemic reforms (such as the Academic Bank of Credits, four-year teacher preparation, National Professional Standards for Teachers, and a reorganized regulatory architecture), the policy places a strong emphasis on teachers as key change agents and seeks to increase the autonomy and research focus of institutions. This essay examines the tangible effects that these innovations have on educators, learners, and institutions.

Methodology

The key policy papers (NEP 2020 and government summaries), framework and guiding documents (NPST, National Mission for Mentoring), and assessments by international organizations and policy think tanks are all cited in this policy-analytic research. Sources have been chosen to reflect official intentions and provide well-informed assessments of the viability of implementation. Qualitative synthesis of the findings yields conclusions and suggestions.

Core NEP Provisions Relevant to Stakeholders

- Teacher professionalization: NPST, strengthened teacher preparation pathways (four-year integrated programs), and focus on Continuous Professional Development (CPD).

- Student-centered flexibility: multidisciplinary curriculum, multiple entry–exit with the Academic Bank of Credits (ABC), emphasis on vocational skills and research exposure.
- Institutional reform: move towards large multidisciplinary HEIs, phased reduction of affiliating college model, creation of HECI, and establishment/strengthening of research funding mechanisms (e.g., NRF).

Implications for Teachers

Professional Standards, Career Structure, and Teacher Identity

The National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST) are one of the most important consequences of NEP 2020 for educators. From inexperienced instructors to senior academic leaders, NPST aims to create nationally articulated competency-based prerequisites for educators. Traditionally, training, years of experience, and research output have created teacher identities in India, particularly in higher education, with little clarity on pedagogical competency or professional roles. By outlining exactly what teachers should know, do, and express at every point of their careers, NPST seeks to address this disparity.

For higher education faculty, this shift implies:

- More precise descriptions of positions that incorporate curriculum development, research, mentorship, quality of teaching, and institutional engagement
- Competency-based appraisal systems, where performance evaluation goes beyond seniority or publication counts and includes classroom effectiveness, innovation in pedagogy, student engagement, and contribution to institutional goals.
- Stronger linkage between career progression and demonstrable professional capabilities, ensuring that promotions and leadership roles are earned through sustained professional growth and impact.

By seeing teaching as a specialized, skilled, and constantly changing profession, this framework enhances teachers' sense of self as professionals. Additionally, as instructors are expected to integrate their practices with nationally specified standards, it adds additional responsibility. Although this can improve the standing of the teaching profession, it also necessitates open processes for assessment and institutional support for avoiding excessive bureaucratization

Empowering Educators and Continuing Professional Growth

Integrated teacher preparation and lifetime professional development are given unprecedented focus in NEP 2020. The policy requires ongoing capacity building throughout a teacher's career because it recognises that the quality of education cannot exceed the quality of trainers.

- **Integrated Teacher Preparation**

For new entrants into the profession, NEP advocates for rigorous, multidisciplinary, and practice-oriented teacher education programs. This approach ensures that teachers are not only subject experts but also skilled pedagogues capable of addressing diverse learner needs.

The emphasis on integration implies:

  - Stronger alignment between theory and classroom practice.
  - Early exposure to experiential learning, inclusive education strategies, and educational technology.
  - Development of ethical, social, and professional values alongside academic competence.

- **Continuous Professional Development (CPD)**

For in-service teachers, NEP 2020 mandates continuous professional development (CPD), making periodic upskilling an essential professional obligation rather than an optional activity. Teachers are expected to engage in regular training through workshops, online courses, peer learning, and institutional programs.

Key areas of CPD focus include:

  - Digital pedagogy and educational technology, particularly in response to blended and online learning models.

- Inclusive teaching practices, addressing the needs of students from diverse socio-economic, linguistic, and learning backgrounds.
- Formative and competency-based assessment, moving away from rote evaluation toward continuous feedback and learning outcomes.
- Research-based instruction, encouraging teachers to integrate scholarly inquiry into teaching practices.

The National Mission for Mentoring, another major initiative under NEP 2020, reinforces collaborative learning among teachers. Senior faculty and experienced educators are expected to mentor junior colleagues, fostering a culture of shared expertise, reflective practice, and professional support.

While these measures enhance teaching quality and adaptability, they also demand significant time, effort, and motivation from teachers. Institutions must therefore ensure that CPD requirements are meaningful, accessible, and aligned with actual classroom realities rather than becoming formal compliance exercises.

Pedagogical Practice and Workload

These strategies enhance the quality and flexibility of instruction, but they also require teachers to invest a great deal of time, energy, and optimism. Therefore, rather than becoming formal compliance, institutions must make sure that CPD requirements are relevant, accessible, and in accordance with real classroom realities.

Perhaps the most visible implication of NEP 2020 for teachers lies in its call for a fundamental transformation of pedagogical practices.

- **Shift in Teaching–Learning Methods**

NEP 2020 urges teachers to move away from lecture-dominant, content-heavy instruction toward:

- Learner-centered pedagogy
- Competency-based education
- Experiential and inquiry-driven learning
- Interdisciplinary and flexible curriculum design
- Blended learning models combining face-to-face and digital instruction

Instead of only imparting knowledge, teachers are supposed to serve as mentors, co-learners, and facilitators. Educators now have more latitude to create, contextualize content, and adapt to the needs of their students, which enhances professional agency. But it also necessitates that educators revise their lesson plans, implement fresh approaches to assessment, and update their methods of instruction on an ongoing basis.

- **Increased Responsibilities and Workload**

While pedagogical innovation enriches teaching, it also expands the scope of teachers' responsibilities. Faculty members are now expected to:

- Develop interactive and digital learning resources.
- Design outcome-based curricula and assessments.
- Engage in mentoring, advising, and student support services.
- Participate in institutional planning, accreditation, and quality assurance processes.
- Balance teaching excellence with research, publication, and community engagement.

Without adequate institutional mechanisms, these expanded roles can lead to workload intensification, role stress, and burnout. NEP 2020 therefore implicitly calls for:

- Workload rationalization, ensuring fair distribution of academic and administrative responsibilities.
- Institutional support systems, including teaching assistants, instructional designers, and digital infrastructure.
- Recognition and incentives for innovative teaching and mentoring efforts.

Effective implementation depends on whether institutions can translate policy intent into supportive organizational practices rather than placing disproportionate pressure on individual teachers.

Implications for Students

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 represents one of India's most ambitious education reforms in decades. With its focus on flexibility, multidisciplinary learning, employability, and inclusion, the policy aims to transform the student experience in higher education. As of 2025, we can already observe notable policy rollouts, empirical data, and real-world examples that illustrate both progress and ongoing challenges

- **Flexibility and Academic Mobility**

A central pillar of NEP 2020 is providing students with greater flexibility in how, when, and where they complete their studies. Two mechanisms—Academic Bank of Credits (ABC) and Multiple Entry–Exit pathways—are key to this transformation.

Academic Bank of Credits (ABC)

The ABC is a digital repository that allows students to store, retrieve, and transfer academic credits earned from different institutions throughout their educational journey. It makes education modular and mobile, reducing the rigidity of traditional degree pathways.

By the end of 2025:

- Over 4.56 crore students have registered with the Academic Credit framework and created unique lifelong academic identities (APAAR IDs).
- Universities across Gujarat have uploaded data for more than 14.3 million students into ABC systems, generating 5.47 million student IDs and tens of thousands of ABC accounts.

This large-scale digitization shows how credit portability can help students transition between institutions, pursue interdisciplinary learning, and rejoin academic programs even after interruptions due to employment or personal reasons.

Multiple Entry–Exit Pathways

Multiple entry and exit options allow students to leave a program early with a certification, diploma, or degree and re-enter later without losing academic progress. For example, Delhi University implemented a flexible pathway in 2025 where:

- Students can exit after 1 year with a certificate,
- After 2 years with a diploma,
- After 3 years with a bachelor's degree, and
- After 4 years with an honours or integrated degree.

This flexibility particularly benefits students who may need to work, take care of family responsibilities, or adapt to changing socioeconomic circumstances.

Example: A student who works for two years after completing the second year of a degree in business administration can re-enroll later without losing previous credits—a substantial shift from the conventional "one-track" degree model.

Employment Potential and Multidisciplinary Education

NEP 2020's emphasis on multidisciplinary learning aims to break down the traditional silos between academic disciplines and integrate practical skills.

- **Access to Multidisciplinary Programs**

According to implementation reports, nearly 90% of surveyed higher education institutions now offer multidisciplinary curricula, often with embedded vocational exposure such as internships and project-based modules.

Example: At Banaras Hindu University (BHU) in 2025, new programmes like "Odia Studies" were introduced as part of multidisciplinary curricula that combine language, culture, and communication skills—helping preserve regional heritage while enhancing student competencies in communication and research.

- **Improving Employability**

Multidisciplinary education is also tied to rising employability. Through internships, industry partnerships, and real-world project exposure:

- Students develop practical skills alongside academic learning,
- They strengthen adaptability in rapidly changing job markets,
- And they become capable of integrating knowledge across fields—an increasingly sought-after competency in sectors like management, technology, and research.

For instance, engineering programs are apparently creating "minor degrees" that incorporate humanities, management, and AI classes, extending their career prospects and improving their ability for innovation.

Equity and Inclusion: Progress & Ongoing Challenges

NEP 2020's vision is inclusive, but its success depends on addressing persistent structural inequities.

- **Digital Divide and Accessibility**
  - While digital platforms like ABC and online instruction expand access, they also highlight the digital divide:
  - Students in rural or economically disadvantaged areas may lack internet access or devices,
  - This can limit their ability to participate fully in flexible credit systems or blended learning environments.

So, while millions have created APAAR IDs, real equity requires ensuring that all students can access and benefit from these technologies.

- **Scholarships and Support**

NEP emphasizes scholarships and targeted support to underserved groups (SC/ST, women, minorities). Progress is reported but remains uneven across states and institutions.

Contextual Data on Broader Impact (2025)

- Higher Education Enrolment: India's gross enrolment ratio (GER) in higher education has grown from about 26.3% in 2018 to approximately 30% by 2025, indicating increased access.
- National Initiatives: JEE, NEET, and CUET are now conducted in multiple regional languages to enhance accessibility.

Implications for Institutions

Reforms that promote multidisciplinary education, institutional autonomy, curriculum flexibility, and a strong research ecosystem have profound implications for governance, academic operations, and research orientation. These reforms are not just regulatory changes; they require institutions to redesign their internal systems, educational environment, and strategic priorities. Specific instances from India and globally show how these implications translate into practice. Higher education in India is going through a structural and philosophical shift.

- **Structural Transformation and Governance**

A major implication for institutions is the encouragement to evolve into large, multidisciplinary entities. Traditionally, Indian higher education has been dominated by small, single-discipline colleges affiliated to large universities, often resulting in fragmented governance and limited academic innovation. The policy push aims to consolidate or cluster such institutions into multidisciplinary universities capable of offering arts, sciences, commerce, vocational, and professional programs under one umbrella.

For example, the transformation of Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) and Delhi University toward broader interdisciplinary offerings illustrates how multidisciplinary structures foster intellectual diversity and research collaboration. Internationally, universities such as Harvard University and University College London demonstrate how multidisciplinary governance enables cross-disciplinary problem-solving in areas like climate change, public health, and artificial intelligence.

The Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) proposes governance reforms that replace input-based control with outcome-based regulation. Learning results, graduate employability, research impact, and societal contribution are all expected of institutions. For example, autonomous universities such as IITs and IIMs currently function under performance-based governance, allowing for flexibility in financial management, faculty recruitment, and curriculum design. Their comparative success demonstrates how autonomy can improve institutional performance when it is accompanied by effective leadership and accountability processes.

However, this autonomy also places responsibility on institutions to build internal capacity. Governing boards, academic councils, and administrative units must adopt professional management practices. Without such capacity-building, autonomy may result in governance inefficiencies or strategic drift.

Curriculum Redesign and Academic Operations

Curriculum redesign is a central implication of higher education reforms. Institutions are required to move toward flexible, modular, and competency-based curricula that allow students multiple entry and exit options and seamless credit mobility. The Academic Bank of Credits (ABC) exemplifies this shift, enabling students to accumulate and transfer credits across institutions.

For example, Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) has long practiced credit-based modular learning, allowing learners to pause and resume education. Similarly, universities implementing the Choice Based Credit System (CBCS), such as Savitribai Phule Pune University, provide students with electives across disciplines, reflecting growing flexibility.

Assessment systems are also undergoing transformation. Traditional end-semester examinations are being supplemented with continuous and formative assessments such as projects, presentations, internships, and case studies. Institutions like Ashoka University and Azim Premji University emphasize continuous evaluation, writing-intensive courses, and critical inquiry, demonstrating how assessment reform enhances learning depth and student engagement.

Another critical academic implication is the integration of vocational education and experiential learning into undergraduate programs. For instance, Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) embeds fieldwork and community engagement into its curricula, ensuring students gain real-world exposure. Similarly, engineering institutions collaborating with industries for internships and live projects—such as IIT Madras' industry-sponsored labs—illustrate how academic operations can align with employability and skill development.

However, implementing such reforms requires extensive faculty training. Teachers must transition from lecture-based teaching to mentoring, interdisciplinary instruction, and outcome-based assessment. Institutions that invest in faculty development programs, such as IIT Bombay's Teaching Learning Centre, are better positioned to operationalize curriculum reforms effectively.

Research Ecosystem and Funding

The strengthening of the research ecosystem through the establishment of a National Research Foundation (NRF) has profound implications for HEIs. The NRF aims to promote high-quality research across disciplines and strengthen university–industry linkages through competitive funding mechanisms. This marks a departure from fragmented and limited research funding in many Indian institutions.

Institutions such as Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru, already demonstrate how sustained research funding, interdisciplinary collaboration, and global partnerships can create a vibrant research culture. Internationally, organizations like the National Science Foundation (NSF) in the USA offer a model of how competitive funding drives innovation and academic excellence.

To benefit from NRF funding, institutions must develop coherent research strategies, identify thrust areas, and invest in infrastructure. For example, universities focusing on renewable energy, biotechnology, or social innovation can align research priorities with national development goals. Without such strategic alignment, many institutions risk being excluded from competitive funding opportunities.

Another significant implication is doctoral training. Future scholars and academic leaders will be developed if PhD programs are strengthened. Effective doctoral education is modeled by establishments such as IITs and Central Universities, which have structured doctoral curriculum, publication requirements, and worldwide exposure. Initiatives like Undergraduate Research Opportunities Programs

(UROP), which are carried out at universities like MIT, demonstrate how early exposure to research encourages creativity and critical thinking at the undergraduate level.

Collaboration among academia and business further transforms the research ecosystem. Research can support economic growth through partnerships for knowledge transfer, patents, and applied research, such as IIT Delhi's partnerships with PSUs and startups. However, with the goal to preserve academic integrity and long-term knowledge generation, universities must strike a balance involving commercial research and fundamental and social science research.

Key Opportunities and Risks

The ongoing transformation of the higher education system presents a balanced mix of opportunities and risks for institutions, teachers, and learners. While reforms aim to modernize teaching practices, enhance student agency, and align Indian higher education with global standards, their success depends on effective implementation, institutional capacity, and equitable resource distribution. A critical assessment of these opportunities and risks is essential to understand the long-term implications of reform.

Key Opportunities

One of the most significant opportunities is the **professionalization of teaching**. Reforms emphasize continuous faculty development, outcome-based pedagogy, and research-informed teaching practices. Teachers are encouraged to adopt innovative instructional methods, interdisciplinary approaches, and formative assessment techniques. This shift enhances teaching quality and strengthens the academic identity of educators as facilitators of learning and knowledge creators rather than mere content deliverers.

Another major opportunity lies in **increased student agency and employability**. Flexible curricula, multiple entry and exit options, and credit mobility empower students to design personalized learning pathways. Competency-based education, internships, and vocational integration equip graduates with practical skills, critical thinking abilities, and adaptability, improving their employability in a dynamic labor market. Students gain greater ownership of their education, fostering lifelong learning and entrepreneurial mindsets.

The move toward **multidisciplinary, research-rich institutions** further strengthens higher education outcomes. Large, multidisciplinary universities encourage cross-disciplinary collaboration, innovation, and holistic learning. Integrating research into undergraduate education nurtures inquiry, creativity, and problem-solving skills from early stages. A strong research culture, supported by competitive funding mechanisms, enhances institutional reputation, attracts talent, and contributes to national development.

Reforms also create **better alignment with global higher-education norms**. Outcome-based accreditation, interdisciplinary curricula, and international research collaboration position institutions to compete globally. Alignment with global standards facilitates student and faculty mobility, international partnerships, and recognition of Indian degrees worldwide, enhancing the global standing of the higher education system.

Key Risks

Despite these opportunities, several risks threaten effective reform implementation. A major concern is uneven state-level implementation. Variations in policy execution, administrative capacity, and political priorities across states can result in fragmented outcomes. Well-resourced regions may advance rapidly, while others lag behind, exacerbating regional and institutional disparities.

- **Capacity gaps in Teacher Education Institutions** (TEIs) and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) pose another significant risk. Many institutions lack trained faculty, infrastructure, governance expertise, and digital readiness required to implement competency-based curricula and outcome-driven governance. Without systematic capacity-building, reforms may remain superficial or inconsistently applied.
- **Workload pressures on teachers** are also a critical concern. Continuous assessment, interdisciplinary teaching, research expectations, and administrative responsibilities can significantly increase faculty workload. In the absence of adequate staffing, incentives, and

institutional support, this pressure may lead to burnout, resistance to reform, and declining teaching quality.

- The **digital divide and inequitable access** further threaten inclusivity. Reforms increasingly rely on digital platforms for teaching, assessment, and credit management. Students from rural, economically weaker, or marginalized backgrounds may face limited access to devices, internet connectivity, and digital literacy, undermining equity and widening learning gaps.
- Finally, **fiscal shortfalls for sustained reform** present a structural risk. Transformational reforms require long-term investment in infrastructure, faculty development, research funding, and student support systems. Inadequate or inconsistent funding may stall implementation, compromise quality, and weaken institutional confidence in reform initiatives.

Recommendations for Policy and Practice

The successful transformation of higher education requires not only visionary policy design but also pragmatic, inclusive, and well-sequenced implementation. Given the scale and diversity of India's higher education system, reforms related to teacher education, curriculum restructuring, research enhancement, and institutional governance must be carefully phased and adequately supported. The following recommendations focus on translating policy intent into sustainable practice while ensuring quality, equity, and accountability.

- **Phased Implementation with Capacity Building**

A phased approach to reform implementation is essential to manage systemic complexity and institutional diversity. Rather than mandating uniform and immediate adoption, policymakers should prioritize capacity building in Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs) and selected Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) as demonstration or model centers. These institutions can pilot four-year programmes, multidisciplinary curricula, and innovative assessment practices, generating evidence-based best practices for wider replication.

Phased implementation allows institutions time to strengthen governance structures, upgrade infrastructure, train faculty, and redesign curricula. Rolling out large-scale curricular reforms—such as four-year undergraduate programmes or competency-based frameworks—should be preceded by readiness assessments. This approach minimizes implementation shocks, reduces resistance to change, and ensures that quality is not compromised in the pursuit of speed.

- **Fund Continuous Professional Development (CPD) and Mentoring**

Teachers are the primary agents of reform, and their professional capacity directly determines educational quality. Therefore, dedicated funding for Continuous Professional Development (CPD) must be institutionalized rather than treated as an ad hoc activity. CPD should focus on outcome-based education, interdisciplinary pedagogy, formative assessment, digital teaching tools, and research supervision.

In addition to training, policies must recognize paid professional time for teachers to engage in CPD, curriculum development, mentoring, and research. Without workload rationalization and financial recognition, professional development risks becoming symbolic rather than transformative.

The establishment of a robust National Mission for Mentoring can further strengthen teaching and leadership capacity. Senior faculty, researchers, and institutional leaders should mentor early-career teachers and administrators with clearly defined objectives and performance indicators. Structured mentoring improves pedagogical confidence, academic leadership, and institutional culture while ensuring intergenerational knowledge transfer.

- **Support Equity and Inclusion**

Equity must remain central to higher education reform to prevent the deepening of existing disparities. Targeted investment in digital infrastructure for underserved and rural regions is critical, particularly as reforms increasingly rely on online platforms for teaching, assessment, and credit management. Reliable internet access, digital devices, and technical support systems are prerequisites for inclusive participation.

Financial support mechanisms such as scholarships, fellowships, and fee waivers for Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs) should be expanded and efficiently delivered. Equity-focused funding ensures that flexibility in education pathways does not translate into exclusion.

Additionally, colleges transitioning toward multidisciplinary models require technical and academic support. Curriculum integration, faculty redeployment, and governance restructuring are complex processes, especially for smaller institutions. Dedicated advisory teams and transitional grants can help such colleges adapt without compromising academic quality or institutional stability.

Strengthen Research Pathways

A strong research ecosystem is fundamental to the long-term credibility and global competitiveness of higher education. Policymakers must operationalize National Research Foundation (NRF) funding priorities in a manner that is inclusive and capacity-enhancing. Beyond funding elite research institutions, NRF schemes should support undergraduate research initiatives, enabling students to engage in inquiry-based learning early in their academic careers.

Institutional grants aimed at building research capacity—such as laboratories, libraries, doctoral training programmes, and research management offices—are essential for broad-based research development. These grants should be linked to measurable outcomes but also provide flexibility for institutions to define research priorities aligned with regional and national needs.

Incentives for industry collaboration—including joint research projects, innovation hubs, and technology transfer offices—can strengthen applied research and employability outcomes. However, policies must ensure that such collaborations complement rather than overshadow fundamental and social science research**.**

Monitor and Evaluate Reforms

Continuous monitoring and evaluation are critical for ensuring policy effectiveness and accountability. Governments should establish transparent, time-bound monitoring frameworks supported by state-level digital dashboards that track implementation progress, learning outcomes, equity indicators, and research performance.

Stakeholder feedback mechanisms—engaging teachers, students, institutional leaders, and employers—should be embedded within the evaluation process. Regular feedback loops enable policymakers to identify implementation gaps, unintended consequences, and emerging best practices. Importantly, monitoring should be used as a tool for policy learning and iteration, not merely compliance enforcement.

Conclusion

NEP 2020 offers an innovative strategy for Indian education that can professionalize teaching, expand student options, and establish multidisciplinary, research-driven institutions if it is implemented with consistent funding, capacity building, and affordable protections. NEP 2020 offers both advantages and difficulties for educators. It improves quality of instruction, career pathways, and professional identity, but it also necessitates increased accountability, adaptability, and upskilling. This could result in academics who are globally competitive, enhanced educational results for learners, and establishments that encourage innovation and analytical thinking. NEP 2020 promises pupils a more flexible, inclusive, and skill-oriented educational system. It fosters their mobility across institutions and disciplines, gives students the power to create their own learning paths, and gives them digital and practical skills.

The success of NEP 2020, however, will depend on how well universities execute multidisciplinary curricula, credit transfer, and equitable access to resources. Universities will need to change into dynamic ecosystems where teaching, research, and innovation coexist; those that successfully adapt will become globally competitive, while those with limited resources may struggle with restructuring, accreditation requirements, and digital integration.

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