

## Communication

# New Education Policy 2020: Missing Wood & Implementation Issues

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### Introduction

A nation, according to Swami Vivekananda, is advanced in proportion to the education and intelligence spread among the masses. Through education comes faith in one's self. The education which does not help the common mass to equip themselves for the struggle of life, which does not bring out strength of character, a spirit of philanthropy, and courage of a lion-it is not worth its name. Real education is that which enables one to become self-reliant. India is known for its education system and was considered an educationally most advanced country of the world in making contribution in the development of man's knowledge and culture. Various committees and commissions had been appointed for laying down the education policy in line with the changing times. Government recently has approved Education Policy 2020 laying down its salient features. The present paper discusses the salient features of the Education Policy 2020 and also a brief re-

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view of earlier commissions and committees.

Consequent to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted by India in 2015, to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and to promote lifelong learning opportunities for all by 2030, the Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) aims to pave the way for transformation reforms in school and higher education in India. It contains observations as:

- Rapid changes in the knowledge would lead to increasing demand for skilled workforce, particularly involving mathematics, computer science and data science having multi-disciplinary abilities in areas like, sciences, social sciences and humanities.
- Children should not only learn, but more 'importantly learn how to learn,' how to think critically and solve problems, how to be creative and multi-disciplinary, how to innovate, adopt and absorb new material in novel and changing fields.

- Education must be based on the principle, that it not only develops ‘cognitive capacities’—‘fundamental capacities’ and capacities of critical thinking and problem solving’ – but also social, ethical and emotional capacities and disposition.
- Teacher must be at the centre of fundamental reforms, must be a respected essential member of the society, best and brightest be recruited and be ensured livelihood, respect, dignity and autonomy.
- A good education institution is one in which every student feels welcomed and is cared for, where a safe and stimulating learning environment exists, where a wide range of learning experiences are offered, and where good physical infrastructure and appropriate resources conducive to learning are available to all students.
- The policy aims to increase government spending -both by states and the union government- on education to 6 percent of the GDP, against the current spending of 4.43 percent; to achieve 100 percent Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in School education by 2030, and to 50 percent GER for higher education by 2035.

The NEP 2020 replaces the 34 year old Policy of 1986, modified in 1992; is spread over 27 chapters and is remarkable for three main reasons;

- The policy reflects, in depth, on school education covering crucial aspects like, child care & education, curricu-

lum & pedagogy, teachers’ recruitment & deployment, governance, regulation accreditation of schools

- Discusses in detail, aspects relating to faculties, teaching, governance in state-level universities and colleges where the majority of students’ study.
- The policy reviews and recommends changes at all levels of education, from early childhood to university level covering regulation, setting standard, accreditation, and funding.

### **NEP 2020:Major Highlights**

School Education:

- The current 10 + 2 system is replaced by a new 5 + 3 + 3 + 4 curriculum covering ages 3-18 years. NEP 2020 has Four phases as:
- **Foundation Stage** of first 5 years: It is a critical stage— first three years for Anganwadi/Pre-schooling- followed by — Primary Classes 1 and 2. In other words, a child will be admitted at the age of 3 year to have a strong base of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) which is aimed at promoting better overall learning, development, and well-being. It is recognised globally that over 85% of a child’s cumulative brain development occurs prior to the age of 6, indicating the critical importance of appropriate care and stimulation of the brain in the early years in order to ensure healthy brain development and growth

- **Preparatory Stage** - classes 3 - 5 (age 9 - 11)
- **Middle Stage** – Classes 6 – 8 (age 12 – 14)
- **Secondary Stage** – classes 9 -12 (age 15-18)

Thus, under the New Policy, a child will have twelve years of schooling plus three years of pre-schooling or Anganwadi

Main feature of the policy is that, there will be no rigid separation among ‘curricular’, ‘extracurricular’, or ‘co-curricular’; among ‘arts’, ‘commerce, and ‘sciences’, or between ‘vocational’ or ‘academic’ streams. Students will be given increased flexibility and choice to study, particularly in secondary school - including subjects in physical education, the arts and crafts, and vocational skills – so that they can design their own paths of study; vocational education to start from class 6 with internships

Three languages learned by children will be of the choice of the state, regions and students; of these at least two languages are native to India i.e. mother tongue /regional tongue. No language will be imposed on any student.

### **Higher Education: Main features**

The undergraduate education (UG) will be multi-disciplinary with flexible curricula, different combination of subjects and integrating vocational education. It will be of 3 or 4 years duration having multiple entry and exit points with

appropriate certification. Similarly, post graduate programs will be of 1-2 years duration. In addition, there can be integrated 5 years bachelors/masters program. M Phil will be discontinued. There will be the facility of transfer of credits by having established Academic Bank of Credits.

**Higher education must form the basis for knowledge creation and innovation, and development of an enlightened society thereby contributing to a growing national economy.**

Higher education must form the basis for knowledge creation and innovation, and development of an enlightened society thereby contributing to a growing national economy. The policy recognises major current problems and challenges faced by the higher education, which include less emphasis on development of cognitive skills and learning outcomes, a rigid separation of disciplines with early specialisation leading to narrow areas of study, limited teacher and institutional autonomy, lesser emphasis on research, suboptimal governance and leadership of HEIs, ineffective regulatory system, large affiliating universities resulting in low standards of undergraduate education.

### **Governance Issues**

Higher education has been subjected to heavy regulation with little achievement. “The mechanistic and disempowering nature of the regulatory

system has been rife with very basic problems, such as heavy concentration of power within a few bodies, conflicts of interest among these bodies, and a resulting lack of accountability. The regulatory system is in need of a complete overhaul in order to re-energize the higher education sector and enable it to thrive". The Policy recommends to have Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) as an umbrella body for entire higher education, excluding medicinal and legal education. HECI will have following four independent verticals, same for public and private higher education institutions:

- a) *Regulation i.e. National Higher Education Regulatory Council (NHERC)*. There will be a single regulator for all higher education working under a self-disclosure based transparent system for approvals in place of numerous 'inspections', capping fees within a broad regulatory framework.
- b) *Accreditation i.e. National Accreditation Council (NAC)*. At present hardly 1.3 percent of colleges are affiliated, this has to speed up and all colleges will have to be affiliated over a period of fifteen years.
- c) *Funding i.e. Higher Education Grants Council (HEGC)*. HEGC will be entrusted with the disbursement of scholarships and developmental funds for launching new focus areas and expanding quality program offerings at HEIs across disciplines and fields on transparency criteria.

d) *Setting Standards i.e. General Education Council (GEC)*. The GEC will frame expected learning outcomes for higher education programs, also referred to as 'graduate attributes'. A National Higher Education Qualification Framework (NHEQF) will be formulated by the GEC and it shall be in sync with the National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF) to ease the integration of vocational education into higher education.

Regulation: i.e. National Higher Education Regulatory Council (NHERC)

- NEP provides for allowing foreign universities to set-up campuses in India, necessary law would be enacted to facilitate the top 100 foreign universities to operate in India.
- Performance Assessment and Review System is recommended to test knowledge application and not rote learning. It is proposed to set up a National Assessment Centre, PARAKH a standard-setting body under MHRD that fulfils the basic objectives of setting norms, to reduce importance and stress on examination, it should be conducted twice a year and should be in two parts- objective and descriptive.
- Curriculum content for each subject will be reduced to make space for critical thinking and more holistic, inquiry-based, discovery-based, discussion-based, and analysis-based learning. The content will focus on key concepts, ideas, applications, and

problem-solving. Teaching and learning will be conducted in a more interactive manner.

- As regards teachers, the NEP observed that, to prevent the large amounts of time spent currently by teachers on non-teaching activities, teachers will not be engaged any longer in work that is not directly related to teaching; i.e. strenuous administrative tasks, so that they may fully concentrate on their teaching-learning duties. Further, teachers will be given continuous opportunities for self-improvement and to learn the latest innovations and advances in their professions by participating in workshops as well as online teacher development modules; and every teacher will be expected to participate in at least 50 hours of opportunities every year for his/her own professional development. Despite increase in compensation level, or professional development opportunities, faculty motivation in terms of teaching; research, and service in HEIs remains far lower than the desired level. Excellence will be further incentivized through appropriate rewards, promotions, recognitions, and movement into institutional leadership. However, faculty not delivering on basic norms will be held accountable

By 2040, all higher education institutions (HEIs) shall aim to become multidisciplinary institutions of global standards and shall aim to have larger student enrolments preferably in thousands, for optimal use of infrastructure

and resources. Since this process will take time, all HEIs will firstly plan to become multidisciplinary by 2030, and then gradually increase student strength to the desired levels. The policy aims to promote multilingualism in both schools and higher education. For that purpose, National Institute for Pali, Persian and Prakrit, will be set up. In order to improve and reach the levels of integrity and credibility required to restore the prestige of the teaching profession, the regulatory system shall be empowered to take stringent action against substandard and dysfunctional teacher education institutions (TEIs) that do not meet basic educational criteria, after giving one year for remedy of the breaches.

Today, the criticality of research is more than ever before, for the economic, intellectual, societal, environmental, and technological health and progress of a nation; so the nation will require a significant expansion of its research capabilities, as against investment of only 0.69 percent of GDP at present; as compared to 2.8 percent in the United States of America, 4.3 percent in Israel and 4.2 percent in South Korea.

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The underlying principle will be that of a faceless and transparent regulatory intervention using technology. Strict com-

pliance measures with stringent action, including penalties for false disclosure of mandated information, will be ensured so that HEIs are conforming to the basic minimum norms and standards. HECI itself will be resolving disputes among the four verticals. Each vertical in HECI will be an independent body consisting of persons having high expertise in the relevant areas along with integrity, commitment, and a demonstrated track record of public service. HECI itself will be a small, independent body of eminent public-spirited experts in higher education, which will oversee and monitor the integrity and effective functioning of HECI. Suitable mechanisms will be created within HECI to carry out its functions, including adjudication.

The regulatory system will have multiple mechanisms with checks and balances, will combat and stop the commercialization of higher education. All education institutions will have similar standards of audit and disclosure as a 'not-for-profit' entity. Surpluses, if any, will be reinvested in the educational sector. There will be transparent public disclosure of financial matters with recourse to grievance-handling mechanisms to the general public.

Private HEIs will have a transparent mechanism for fixing fees for their programs depending upon their accreditation. Private HEIs will be encouraged to offer freships and scholarships in significant numbers to their students. All fees and charges set by private HEIs will be transparent and fully disclosed, and there shall be no arbitrary increases in these

fees/charges during the period of enrolment of any student. This fee determining mechanism will ensure reasonable recovery of cost while ensuring that HEIs discharge their social obligations.

As regards funding, the policy identifies key long term thrust areas for financing, in addition to onetime financial need for infrastructure, there should be appropriate smooth timely flow and utilisation of funds avoiding any high volume of unspent balances.

### **Historical Perspective & Evolution of Education System**

As we know, India was known as the educationally most advanced country in the world. The *Brahmanical*, the *Buddhist* and *Jaina Paths* were three broad trends of education in India. 'Takshila' and 'Nalanda'. in North India and *Brahmanical Ghatikas* in southern India, were centres of higher education. Panini and Kautilya were leading world renowned teachers (Dhameja, 2015).

Education system in the nineteenth century was largely influenced by the British Model, where Lord Macaulay proposed **education policy in 1835** to promote European learning through English with the objective to produce a class of intermediaries between the rulers and the ruled. After Independence, with the 42<sup>nd</sup> Amendment of the Constitution in 1976, education was made a concurrent subject, empowering the Central Government to co-ordinate and determine standards in institutions of higher education, research and scientific and technical in-

stitutions. The coordination between the Union and the states was brought about through the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE). Subsequently, a number of Committees/Task Forces were appointed to review the education system, approximately one committee every fifteen years without any implementable outcome; and a number of draft bills were in the offing, the outcome of all this is more confusing than offering any solution (Dhameja, 2015).

It was believed that technological advances and a shift in demographic profile in India provided a window of opportunities to productively engage its huge pool of human resources and become a leader in both the rapidly expanding services and manufacturing sectors; this would, however, require revamping the higher education sector (Agarwal, 2009). It was necessitated as ranking of many institutions had dropped, only 1.7 percent of the institutions ran PhD programs. NASSCOM survey found that only 25 percent of the technical graduates are employable in IT industry. Does it not reflect low quality of education? (Anamika, Aug. 11, 2020).

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Accordingly, the government appointed National Knowledge Commission (NKC) lead by Sam Pitroda in 2005, the Commission observed that there was a 'quiet crisis' in higher education; and ar-

gued for the establishment of an Independent Regulatory Authority in Higher Education (IRAHE) to take over the approval, recognition and regulatory functions of the UGC, AICTE, NCTE, MCI, and DEC leaving UGC to focus on the funding function.

Subsequently, the Yashpal (YP) Committee (2009) on 'Renovation, and Rejuvenation of Higher Education', constituted by the MHRD, argued on similar lines that of NKC that "the multiplicity of regulatory authorities with overlapping and conflicting mandate have resulted in a compartmentalisation of knowledge" that has been detrimental to higher education. The Committee argued that all universities to become multi-disciplinary, focussed on the need for autonomy and funding of institutions and recommended the establishment of an overarching National Commission for Higher Education and Research (NCHER); the five bills introduced in the Parliament later lapsed.

Following instance of a leading IIT in India illustrates the need to focus on autonomy and financing of educational institution (Khetarpal, October 3, 2020). According to the director of one leading IIT: "One cannot run these institutions like another department in the government which is currently the case. My biggest challenge today is we have created IITs, but there is no financial model to run them". He explained that the investment for these premier institutions depends on budget decided by the Ministry of Human Resource Development, which is not linked to either the number of students in the campus, the research require-

ment, or the number of papers published.” I don’t know how much money I will receive next year.” The Director continued that the premier institutes in the US get one-third of their revenues from fees, another one-third from the endowment fund and the next one-third from research fund. Among IITs in India, all three revenue means are absent. The Director further continued: “We need Rs. 700 crore every year to run the institute, and fees constitute only 5 percent of the total budget. The concerned IIT recently, launched its global alumni fund but the point of concern is all funds received by the institute become government money.” The above IIT case may not be a lone instance and it highlights the importance of autonomy and financing.

Another key challenge is the overarching regulations required while taking decisions. Regulations are certainly required for the higher education sector to ensure quality education, equity and social justice, as well as to prevent unfair practices. But the sector has been over-regulated since Independence (Khetarpal, 2020). In this regard, the Brookings report “Reviving Higher Education in India” reports that there are 14 regulatory bodies in the higher education sector in India across general education, technical education and professional education (Khetarpal, 2020).

Flowing from the above IIT autonomy and financing case, there is a need to emphasize the significance of endowment fund for educational institutions. The Higher Education Funding

Council (HEFC) of the UK found that the best ranked universities of the world are also those who lavishly fund higher education. Examples include, Stanford with 11,000 students in 2008 had an operating budget of \$ 3.2 billion and an endowment of \$ 12.6 billion; the University of California system in 2009 had an operating budget of \$ 20.84 billion for 2.26 lakh students; and Caltech in 2008 had an operating budget of \$ 2.35 billion for 2,135 students (Fuqan Qamar, 2011).

Accordingly, there is a need to encourage and incentivise institutions to build their endowment funds. Sources of revenue for institutions normally comprise government grants; earnings from research and consultancy and earnings from endowment funds. Tuition fees are very little; they as per the recommendations of the NKC should contribute upto 20 percent of total expenses. Any surplus after that, both by private and government institutions should not be required to be surrendered or taxed, rather be allowed to be apportioned towards endowment funds say, as:

- Endowment Fund → 30 percent
- Infrastructure/building Fund → 30 percent
- Faculty development Fund → 20 percent
- Students Scholarship/Sport Fund → 20 percent

Thus, any income from such endowment funds accumulated over the years would be a source of income for the institution. As a normal practice, at present,

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surplus, if any, is spent towards modernisation and expansion of real estate and buildings to ward against the tax aspect; rather the surplus should mandatorily be required to be apportioned, as mentioned above, towards endowment funds for the development of students, faculty, building infrastructure and others. In addition, the institutions should be encouraged and incentivised to build their endowment funds by attracting contributions from their alumni or business houses. In fact, many universities/institutions, abroad and in India, have 'adopted such practices and named parts of their buildings or wings after the names of business houses, a strategy to attract funds and to build endowment funds. This, perhaps would necessitate certain requisite regulatory changes.

As regards autonomy, governance, and political inference in education, according to Nayyar (2017), political intrusion in universities is not new. It began almost five decades ago, has gathered momentum in the past 25 years, and has now reached a stage that could be the edge of the precipice for public universities in India. For that it is essential that the political class and the ruling elite have an understanding of the critical role of universities in society and democracy.

"It is a serious mistake to think of universities as campuses or classrooms

that teach young people to pass examination, obtain degrees, and become employable, where research is subsidiary or does not matter. Universities are about far more. For students, there is so much learning outside the classroom that makes them good citizens of society. For faculty, apart from commitment to their teaching and their research, there is a role in society as intellectuals who can provide independent, credible, voice in evaluating governments, parliament, legislatures, or the judiciary, as guardians of society. This role is particularly important in a political democracy" (Nayyar, 2017)

Need of the hour is to go for good governance, provide autonomy for the functioning of the institutions/universities. Appointment of the CEO should be on merit and be devoid of political interference. Autonomy should also percolate down to departments and sections. In this regard, Nayyar (2017) has suggested: "Structures of governance in universities must be conducive to autonomy. The best model would be a board of governors, to which governments could nominate at the most one-third the total number. The other members, two-thirds or more, should be independent, of whom one-half should be distinguished academics while one-half should be drawn from industry, civil society or professions. The chairman should be an eminent academician with administrative experience. Members of the board should have a term of six years, with one-third retiring every two years. The VC, to be appointed by the board with a six-year tenure, would be an ex-officio member. Except for nomi-

nees of governments, the board should decide on replacements for its retiring members”.

Similar, could be the format of governance structure for private institutions/universities, that are normally managed by a trust and professional board; and members on the Board of Governance are persons of academic excellence.

The above governance structure format being essential for autonomy should also be given due focus in the education system in the country.

It would be relevant to look into the experience and the point view of Ravi J Matthai, the first full time director, IIMA (1966 - 74), who is known as an institution builder, and has been acknowledged in making that institution as of par excellence and of world repute. After completing his first term of six years, Ravi Matthai did not accept a second term; he was of the view that he would be repeating whatever he had done in the first term. For purposes of institution building, he opined that, some other person would be better, as the latter would have some new ideas. His convictions were that:

- In an academic institution, excellence cannot be ordered. It springs forth when people are given the space to grow and to express themselves freely. Academic activities can flourish only when faculty are given the fullest freedom.
- To have a faculty-governed institute, decision-making rests primarily with

the faculty and not with the director or the board.

Matthai announced his decision to step down and stay on as professor; two reasons he put forth are worth noting:

First, leaders of academic institutions tended to use their positions for career advancement at adverse costs to the institutions.

Second, it was important to establish the principle that the director’s position is not hierarchical; he is only first among equals.

Since then IIMA has been following the same governance principle of single term for a director. How far the experience and point of view of Ravi J Matthai is relevant for academic institution building and should be a point of consideration for education system?

Corporate sector, for purposes of leveraging the various levels of management and to motivate the lower and younger members, is required to disclose in its Annual Report:

- Ratio of the remuneration of senior most functionary to the median remuneration of the employees for the financial year.
- Percentage increase in remuneration of senior functionaries during the financial year.
- Percentage increase in the median remuneration of employees in the financial year.

- Key parameters for any variable component of remuneration availed by the senior functionaries

**The objective of the above disclosure is to introduce the principle of transparency and to have good governance in the remuneration policy and financial system.**

The objective of the above disclosure is to introduce the principle of transparency and to have good governance in the remuneration policy and financial system. Adoption of the same in academic institutions, would be a measure to motivate faculty and to strengthen the governance practice.

NEP 2020, no doubt, is a detailed, and well researched theoretical document, it provides a framework that highlights the importance and development of education, re-emphasizes the multi-disciplinary education system, encourages professional, vocational education, promotes multi-language, flexibility on entry and exit points, promotes review and examination, reduction in curriculum to make room for critical thinking, focusses more on concepts, problem solving, rather than rote learning, improve teacher quality. It may be mentioned that the Second Education Commission of 1968, had similar recommendations towards radical reconstruction of education system and had re-emphasized such aspects as science education, work experience and vocational education as a part of education system. Also such were the recommendations of other commissions/committees such as

Dr. Triguna Sen Report 1967, National Knowledge Commission (NKC), and the Yashpal Committee on Renovation, Rejuvenation of Higher Education.

Even after decades, we have the same issue of multiple regulatory authorities with conflicting mandates. As such, in our education system, there had been no lack of regulatory bodies, to iterate, as a reform measure, a number of committees had been appointed, approximately one committee every fifteen years without any implementation outcome, and co-ordination among various regulatory bodies that are supposed to deliver but they don't (Khetarpal, 2019). Despite the above, issues of concern are:

- Raionalization and unification of four verticals as part of the NEP 2020: How soon the existing regulatory bodies, say, UGC, AICTE, etc. would be integrated with the proposed four verticals? Perhaps, people in the existing system would be the manpower for the four verticals, in that case, what improvement do we expect? ( Khetarpal, 2019).
- If four verticals are independent of each other, as has been the experience for decades, what purpose will they really serve? Need of the hour is systemic cleaning and serious accountability to be put in place rather than creating more institutions (Khetarpal, 2019)
- The NEP 20, though a detailed one, makes big promises calling for the overhaul of the entire education scheme, perhaps, is a repletion of the

recommendations of the earlier commissions, is “an old wine in the new bottle” (Khetarpal, 2019)

- Governing structure of an institution should have autonomy. Nayyar (2017) has given one model to ensure broad-based and continuing structure having independent and qualified professionals; Ravi J Matthai of IIMA is another example. This aspect needs re-emphasis in the education policy, including the tenure and term of the chairman and members of the Governing Council.
- Time frame and road map to operationalize the recommendations of the education policy. Recommendations of earlier commissions and committees have remained unattended for decades, so there should be a road map and time frame for the implementation of the recommendations; as has been the case in Bibek Debroy (2015) Committee for Restructuring of Railways.
- Financing of educational institutions. Education is normally funded by the exchequer; the Higher Education Grant Council (HEGC), one vertical of HECI, entrusted with the task of ‘disbursement of scholarships and development funds’. Will that vertical also be involved with the function of disbursement of grants to colleges and universities, the function at present handled by UGC?
- Further, there should be a system to encourage and incentivise the educational institutions to strengthen their financial system and to have

their own finances by building-up and developing a system of endowment funds from their surpluses.

To sum up, NEP 2020, though is a detailed one, as it emphasizes that there should be flexibility in offering of courses—academic, co-curricular, vocational, promote multi-language, multi-disciplinary, and also flexibility in exit points; system of appraisal should test knowledge application rather than rote learning, the curriculum contents should be reduced to make room for critical thinking, and holistic focussing more on key concepts, idea application, problem solving. As regards aspects of autonomy and accountability or good governance, institutions should be devoid of politics; role of private sector, foreign universities, revamping of regulatory system has been debated and discussed by the earlier commissions, and committees, primarily by the Second Education Commission (Kothari Commission 1968), and NKC, and YPC; main issues of concern relate to implementation of the recommendations. In fact, a number of committees have been appointed, approximately one committee every fifteen years without any implementation outcome, and there has been lack of effective implementation and coordination among various regulatory bodies that are supposed to deliver but they don’t. However, issues of concern include autonomy, accountability, and good governance structure; implementation of recommendations; integration of the proposed four verticals with the existing multi-regulatory authorities, also manning of the four verticals; strengthening of the financing of institutions by encouraging

and incentivising creation of the endowment funds; re-emphasizing of the recommendations of the earlier commissions.

As a management principle, for policy-change-implementation to be effective, first and foremost requirement is that the management should accept it, involve middle and lower level management (Dhameja, 2004). Similarly, as per that management principle, decade-old recommendation of having an independent regulatory authority say, IRAHR (proposed by Sam Pitroda), or NCHER (suggested by Yash Pal), or HECI (NEP20) should see the light of the day sooner.

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