

National Education Policy 2020 and the Transformation of Higher Education: A Framework for Multi-Disciplinary Learning and Research Excellence in India

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ABSTRACT

The NEP 2020 is considered a historic development in the history of India's higher education transformation. The present research work aims to discuss how NEP 2020, provides high-quality education amongst every learner by promoting the knowledge, skills, and values needed for their overall growth and development. Although, this policy marks an important move towards the creation of an inclusive and effective education system that emphasizes equal opportunities, academic excellence, meaningful learning, and a strong educational foundation. "NEP also encourages the all-round development of students, helping them to grow intellectually, socially, and ethically throughout their educational journey." This policy also equips students with the knowledge and competencies needed to adapt to changing societal needs, technological advancements, and the demands of an increasingly inter-connected global economy. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, attempts to reshape the Indian education system, with an objective to put the learner at the center of teaching-learning activities. It emphasizes multidisciplinary education and outstanding research, to enable the learners to engage in studies covering various subject areas thus, gaining more knowledge about them.

KEY WORDS: *Education system, Technological advancements, Historic development, Academic excellence, National Education Policy.*

INTRODUCTION

Education plays a vital role towards the development in helping individuals realize their abilities, contributing to a fair and inclusive society as well as; through supporting the overall progress of the nation. It ensures that everyone in the society has the access to high-quality opportunities which is essential for India's sustained growth and its emergence as a global leader. Strong foundations of education system promote economic prosperity, social inclusion, equal opportunities, scientific innovation, national unity, and the protection of the country's rich cultural heritage. The national education policy (NEP) 2020 introduces wider-ranges of reforms aimed to modernize India's higher education sector. They seek to replace traditional, highly structured learning approaches with a more adaptable and inter-disciplinary system that encourages innovation, critical thinking, and academic flexibility. According to Prakash. (2025), NEP 2020 strives to create a world-class educational environment that, equips students with diverse knowledge, practical skills, and the ability to compete successfully in a rapidly changing global landscape. National Education Policy lays greater emphasis on harnessing the distinctive capabilities and creative potential of each individual learner. The policy takes into consideration the fact that education must not only include the learning of basic subjects but, also involve the all-round development of individuals. Therefore, besides equipping learners with skills like-reading, writing, reasoning, and analysis, the National Education Policy aims at developing the social consciousness, moral, emotional, and responsible behaviors of the learners. NEP 2020 envisions a highly ambitious target of raising the Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) for higher education from 26.5 percent in 2018 to 52 percent by 2035. The present study also leads to introduce on the other hand how, it aims to improve the quality of the education imparted in institutes of higher education and providing better educational opportunities to students whereas on the other hand, it seeks to make India more attractive for higher education. These policies aim to make learning amongst children fairer, complete and open for all. Aithal & Aithal. (2020),

mentioned “New Education Policy 2020 is an important plan to bring changes in the Indian education system at all levels like- giving more students a chance to study through making education better for them, and supporting of new ideas and research.” Furthermore, the policy emphasizes the importance of multidisciplinary learning, academic, co-operation and research. Through promoting innovation, flexibility, and integration of knowledge the NEP 2020 will ensure that research achieves excellence and equips the learners for future academic and professional life.

LITERATURE REVIEW

India possesses a rich and enduring legacy of higher learning, which can be traced back to famous ancient institutions like- Nalanda, Vikramshila and Taxila. Eventually, these above-mentioned centers of knowledge highlight the country's deep-rooted academic traditions. After gaining independence, higher education in country like India expanded considerably, with a steady increase in universities, colleges, and student enrolment. In the present times, India is among the leading nations in higher education participation and has one of the largest student communities globally, surpassed only by China and the United States. The higher education system in India has expanded tremendously over the years with the help of many universities, research organizations, and professional institutions producing talented students and researchers annually. Through, understanding the significance of education for the development of the country the Government of India has made several efforts to enhance its educational sector especially, the higher education sector. Halder. (2023), stated “National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 was launched on 29th of July 2020, following through discussions and suggestions from different stakeholders.” The major objective of the policy is to formulate an education system, which reflects India's values and culture but also caters to the requirements of the present-day society as well. This reform in the education sector strives towards the creation of a balanced and vibrant knowledge economy in India through accessible high-quality education for all. Country like India aims to become a major knowledge center across the globe through this new policy. The policy of the National Educational Policy 2020 highlights how, “the Government of India aims to change the current higher education system by incorporating multi-disciplinary education, innovation, flexibility, and research culture to attain excellence in education.” Kalyani. (2020), asserted NEP 2020 is considered a significant revision of the previous educational policies which were formulated in the years 1968 and 1986, in light of the emerging requirements and concerns of modern-day India. It seeks to develop an education system which would provide good educational opportunities amongst all the learners while; integrating the latest concepts and advancements with the wisdom accumulated by the ancient Indian knowledge systems.

According to Aithal & Srinivasan. (2024), this policy stresses the importance of assisting students towards maintaining their connection to their culture, appreciating constitutional values, and instilling a sense of duty among them to contribute towards making the world sustainable. An important aspect of NEP 2020 includes the implementation of an organized 5+3+4+4 curriculum for developing the early child education process and contributing to overall child development. Furthermore, the policy also highlights the importance of providing equal access to education for socially and economically disadvantaged groups by making better use of technology. Yenugu. (2022), acknowledged students of higher education are availed with multiple exit options based on the duration of their study through the introduction of a more flexible under-graduate structure by offering programmes and courses that can extend up to four years. Learners may receive a certificate after the completion of one year, a diploma after two years, and a bachelor's degree after three years. Those who choose to continue for a fourth year are able to pursue a research-focused programme, which could help to strengthen their academic and research skills and prepares them for advanced studies and professional opportunities.

According to Kumar. (2021), the multiple entry-exit model would be especially useful in a country such as India where many learners leave the school or dropout without completing their prescribed course of study. In such conditions, students will still receive their certificates which will help them to find jobs

according to their qualifications. Furthermore, this system will decrease the percentage of college dropouts as, students will be granted credits based on their progress at the end of every academic year. Regardless of the background or circumstances it, also aims to ensure that learners from different marginalized communities can benefit from quality educational opportunities and resources. One of the major objectives of the National Education Policy 2020 is to raise the Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) in higher education, to fifty percent by the year 2035 which would mean better accessibility for students. The policy suggests an entirely new system of higher education institutions which include research-intensive universities, teaching-intensive universities, and autonomous degree-granting colleges. Another aspect of such policy includes flexible programs for under-graduates that last for either three or four years. Banodha & Sharma. (2024), acknowledged that amongst the students of higher education NEP 2020 encourages, the adoption of a flexible curriculum that allows them to study subjects from different disciplines and explore a wide-range of academic interests. This multidisciplinary approach provides learners with greater freedom in choosing courses while; also enabling them to develop in-depth knowledge in their chosen field of specialization. Furthermore, the policy promotes the inclusion of credit-based courses and practical projects related to community participation, social service, environmental awareness, and ethical values. In addition, environment education plays an important role and focuses on issues like-climate change, environmental pollution, waste disposal and management, sanitation and public health, natural resource conservation, biodiversity protection, forest and wildlife conservation, and the concept of sustainable development living. Therefore, the idea behind this approach is to foster environmentally conscious citizens. Altogether, this is what the NEP 2020 seeks to achieve through this strategy by enhancing higher education, fostering excellent research, and with creation of viable solutions in today's problems. Such comprehensive approaches allow learners to develop broader knowledge, critical thinking skills, creativity, and problem-solving abilities, making higher education more relevant to modern academic and professional needs. Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) should be persuaded to offer vocational courses independently or, in collaboration with industry and non-government organizations. This policy encourages the provision of vocational education programs using open and distance education systems. Through, encouraging the introduction of job-oriented and skill-focused courses in all undergraduate programs to help students develop practical abilities and improve their career opportunities the NEP 2020 provides significant importance to vocational education as a part of higher education. Inclusion of the vocational education in the learning process helps students of higher education to acquire practical skills while preserving India's traditional knowledge and occupational practices. Dixit & Ravichandran. (2023), mentioned National Educational Policy 2020 is designed to improve vocational education within the school system through increased collaboration between the institution and polytechnic colleges, Industrial Training Institutes (ITs), and local enterprises. Vocational training courses are to be planned taking into account the skill gaps and job opportunities available in the locality. These transformation in NEP 2020 supports the development of a skilled and capable workforce that can meet the needs of a changing economy.

The policy also aims to ensure that by 2026, at least half of all learners receive some form of vocational training, enabling them to gain valuable skills which support both employment and entrepreneurship. At present, it is been observed that according to some of the reports only a small portion of India's young workforce has received vocational training and skill-based education. This figure remains considerably lower than that of several developed countries where, a much larger share of the population has access to vocational training. By recognizing this gap, the National Educational Policy 2020 places greater emphasis on vocational education and practical skill development to improve employability and workforce readiness in India. Government of India currently offers free and compulsory education for children aged between the 6 to 14 years through various initiatives such as-Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. Despite, so many different policies there are children who remain outside the formal education system. Introduction of the Information and Communication technology (ICTs) through many innovations in the assessment process allows to move away from examinations that emphasize memorization. Ali & Bhattacharyya. (2025),

asserted NEP 2020 advocates to nurture critical thinking, problem-solving skills, creativity, and application of knowledge among students. Technology plays a crucial role in making of higher education more easily accessible for learners. The NEP policy encourages the use of modern teaching methods using technology including-online courses, e-books, educational apps, virtual learning environments, and digital libraries. Sreelatha & Atmakuri. (2024), mentioned that by the year 2040, this new policy of education aimed to make all the higher educational learning institutions multi-disciplinary making it, easier for students to have access to quality education. The above-mentioned reforms when combined together are designed to strengthen and transform India's higher education system to make it more flexible, inclusive, and responsive to the changing needs of learners and society. These approaches offer greater flexibility in learning and enable students to select courses which suits their capacity, interests and future aspirations. As a result, learners will be able to enjoy a broader educational experience and acquire various forms of knowledge and skills. In addition, this approach also helps learners to develop a deeper understanding of the vast range of knowledge which is acquired through the study of multiple subjects in combination. According to Roy & Sharma. (2024), The learner is able to be equipped with skills that will be useful for many different professions in the future through transcending the limitations imposed by conventional educational systems. Learner of higher education moves beyond the confines of subject-oriented education through such an effort thereby, acquiring skills and knowledge which will enable him/her to pursue any career path in the future. In line with the NEP 2020, the policy welcomes renowned international institutions of learning and foreign universities to set up their campuses in India. These initiatives will ensure that learners have greater access to top-notch global education opportunities without moving out of the country. This will make quality education affordable as well as cost-effective. Proper implementation may also prevent student migration to foreign countries in search of higher quality education.

From the review of the prevailing literature, it can be argued that in relation to higher education, many learners would like to pursue their higher education in another country, although with 5 million tertiary learners migrating overseas for higher education. Higher quality of education and more specialization opportunities might become pull factors for Indian students opting to study abroad. Through, aiming to strengthen partnerships with international educational institutions and promoting cooperation with universities and organizations across the world the National Education Policy 2020 seeks to make India's higher education system more globally connected and competitive. The policy strives to create a higher education framework which meets global standards while providing students and researchers with greater international exposure and opportunities. Khare (2021) stated students from different countries are encouraged to choose India as a destination for higher education through the above discussed policy while; also supporting Indian students who wish to study overseas. In addition, the policy supports the establishment of campuses of well-known foreign universities in India and encourages respected Indian institutions to expand their academic presence and collaborations at the international level. Figure 1 presents major findings from the literature and discussion. As per the National Education Policy 2020, teachers of higher education also play an essential role in towards improving the standards of education. Sharma. (2022), mentioned NEP 2020 provides teachers with greater academic freedom thus, availing them the authority to decide on matters related to course content and teaching methodology.

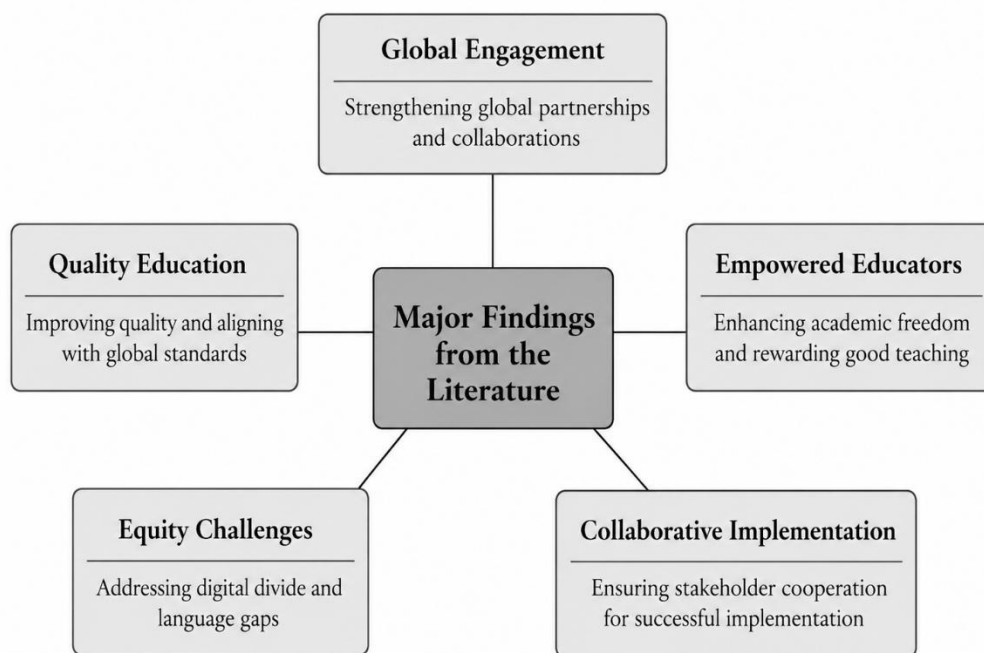


Figure 1 Major Findings from Literature

The policy stresses the necessity of rewarding good teaching practices to further motivate teachers to help students learn more effectively. By providing educators and teachers with greater academic independence, the above discussed policy enables them to make informed decisions about the teaching and learning practices, encouraging a stronger commitment towards student development and academic achievement. Altogether, the changes introduced under the policy seek to improve the quality, relevance, and effectiveness of education while aligning it with global standards. Another important aspect mentioned in the NEP 2020 also highlights conducting the Common University Entrance Test (CUET). Such suggestions or recommendations is considered essential because it helps students to avoid the need to appear for many entrance examinations. Moreover, at the same time this allows the most talented students to continue their education at prestigious universities. However, this approach may also create certain challenges which will be discussed below. Major concern regarding the implementation of NEP 2020 is difference in language learning opportunities between both government and private schools. English is introduced at a later stage in many government schools of India, students studying in these institutions may have fewer opportunities to develop English language proficiency compared to those students in private schools where, English is often; taught from the early years. This situation could create challenges among some learners of higher education and competitive environments where strong communication skills in English are often advantageous. Although, according to Baidya & Das. (2025), the emphasis on digital education and e-learning under NEP 2020 is a modern and necessary step its implementation may face certain challenges. Because still significant portion of India's population has limited access to smartphones, computers and reliable internet services. Therefore, as a result many learners particularly those from rural and economically disadvantaged backgrounds may find it difficult to fully benefit from digital learning opportunities which could widen existing educational in-equalities. Consequently, effective implementation of the National Education Policy 2020 requires strong co-operation between the central and state governments. At the same time, teachers, parents, policymakers, students, academic leaders, and educational administrators all have an important role in ensuring the success of this policy. By working together, and actively supporting its objectives, these mentioned stakeholders like-teachers, parents, curriculum framers, students can contribute to improving higher

education and building a knowledge-driven society. Such collective effort could help to create stronger education system and support the country's long-term growth and development.

CONCLUSION

The present research work concludes that National Education Policy 2020 is a landmark policy aimed to reform and modernize the higher education system of India. Major objective of the discussed policy is to develop and create a more adaptive, inclusive, multidisciplinary, and research-based education system which meets the needs of the twenty-first century. This policy promotes academic freedom, skill enhancement, technical education, technology adoption, international co-operation, and innovative teaching practices as well as learning methodologies. NEP 2020 seeks to produce holistic individuals that possess both theoretical and practical knowledge through multidisciplinary learning and quality research. Through elevating India's position academically around the globe this study also addresses issues related to greater access to education, equality and quality education. Despite obstacles such as digital divide, language barrier, and implementation, the effective implementation of this policy can significantly improve educational outcomes. Overall, NEP 2020 has the potential to transform higher education in India and contribute towards the creation of a vibrant, knowledge-based society.

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