

National Education Policy 2020: Promise and Practice

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Open Access

ARTICLE INFORMATION

Received: September 28, 2025
 Accepted: March 21, 2026
 Published Online: April 30, 2026

Keywords:

National education policy, Indian education reform, Literacy rate, Gender gap, Foundational literacy and numeracy (FLN), Global benchmarks, 21st century skills

ABSTRACT

Background: National Education Policy 2020 is one of the most radical changes in the Indian system of education in the twenty-first century. It seeks to revolutionize the education system through holistic learning, interdisciplinary knowledge, vocational integration, and digital innovation, and reinforce basic literacy and numeracy. The inclusive policy will also focus on inclusivity, multilingual education, social-emotional development, as well as conserving the cultural and intellectual traditions of India. The policy aims at providing equitable and quality education to all learners by aligning it with other global education systems like Sustainable Development Goal 4.

Purpose: This essay is a critical analysis of NEP 2020 commitments and implications in Indian education. It tries to examine the philosophical underpinnings, policy agenda, and transformational opportunities of the reform and determine the structural and institutional obstacles that can influence its effective execution.

Method: The research takes a conceptual and analytical approach through an extensive literature review of academic literature, policy documents, and secondary sources on education reform in India. Government reports, international policy frameworks, comparative education studies, and empirical results of organisations like UNESCO and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2019), NITI, are the key sources. It is also through analysis that international education systems like Finland, Singapore, and Japan have been compared and insights into the system have been provided.

Results: The results indicate that NEP 2020 provides a paradigm shift with its foundation of literacy, experience-based learning, vocational experience, the introduction of technology, and cross-disciplinary education. The study, however, finds that there are major problems of implementation such as teacher readiness, infrastructural differences, digital divide, language policy issues, and coordination among states.

Conclusion: NEP 2020 has great potential to transform Indian education into a more inclusive, flexible, and globally competitive system. However, it will require long-term investment, capacity building on the part of teachers, institutional preparedness, and joint working of policymakers, teachers, and communities to change policy vision into effective practice in the classroom.

DOI: [10.15415/iie.2025.132004](https://doi.org/10.15415/iie.2025.132004)

1. Introduction

Education has played a very important role in the social, economic, and intellectual development of a country. The development of educational policy in India shows how the country strives to strike a balance between outdated knowledge structures and current scientific, technological, and vocational knowledge. In 1968, the National Policy on Education (NPE) emphasized the basis of a basic school system by building on equality of educational opportunity and the three-language

formula. In 1986, the NPE, which was revised in 1992, made additional demands to universalize elementary education, expand adult literacy programs, and promote vocational and technical education. Nevertheless, after these processes, some major obstacles still remained, such as high rates of dropouts, learning by rote, incomplete emphasis on creativity, and lack of orientation to a globalized, knowledge-based economy.

National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emerged in line with these issues and the rapidly emerging

requirements of the 21st century. The policy was developed in consultation with a vast number of educators, students, parents, policymakers, and other experts in 676 districts, 6,600 blocks, and 2.5 lakh gram panchayats, which defines a participatory and inclusive approach to education reform (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2020). NEP 2020 is aimed at changing India into a knowledge society, with a focus on flexibility, independence of learners, holistic development, and lifelong learning. The policy is backed by global organizations like the Education 2030 Agenda of UNESCO that aims at promoting inclusive, equitable, and quality education that can be accessed by all people (UNESCO, 2015).

At its core, NEP 2020 is founded on a perspective that is balanced between Indian culture and global capabilities. The guiding principle emphasizes mother tongue teaching in lower schools, experiential learning, learning by doing, integration of arts and vocational training, and learning grounded in values such as ethics, awareness and responsibility towards the environment, and social responsibility. Focusing on the character of cognitive, emotional, social, and ethical dimensions of education, NEP 2020 aims at creating well-rounded individuals who can solve creative problems, think critically, and learn continuously.

1.1. Indian Education in Ancient Times

The educational history of India is a vast field of historical development, and it has evolved through different periods. The Gurukul system of education in ancient times stressed the overall development of personality and incorporated an education system that encompassed knowledge (vidya) with the spiritual, moral, and physical discipline of students. In education, it was practical, and students would learn through observation, dialogue, memorization, and imitation. Simple values such as discipline, love for nature, community life, and ethical reasoning were introduced in the study process. Intellectual disciplines such as philosophy, mathematics, astronomy, literature, and ethics were integrated and developed critical and creative problem-solving abilities.

Islamic madrasas and pathshalas or temple schools were medieval institutions that were dedicated to the teaching of religious, cultural, and practical subjects. Education was oral, and learning was a part of local culture and the traditional mode of life. While these

systems preserved tradition, they were often closed to marginalized communities, thereby continuing historical imbalances.

The colonial period brought formal Western-style education that was geared towards encouraging literacy and bureaucratic skills to serve the needs of the colonial government. Although it expanded literacy, rote memorization and examination-dominated teaching processes often came at the cost of creativity, critical thinking, and local knowledge systems. After gaining independence, India adopted the National Policy on Education (1968), which emphasized equity, access, and science education. The NPE 1986 (revised in 1992) further aimed to promote universal elementary education, adult literacy, and technological education. Irrespective of these reforms, issues such as high dropout rates, rigid curricula, and low focus on life skills persisted and became challenges for the education system.

1.2. NEP 2020 Rationale and Philosophy

NEP 2020 was formulated in response to rapid globalization, technological change, demographic diversity, and socio-economic disparities. Since more than 65 percent of the Indian population is below 35 years of age, a system of education that goes beyond academic knowledge is essential, along with life skills, employment preparation, creativity, ethics, and entrepreneurship. The policy is aligned with Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), which seeks inclusive and equitable quality education for all, irrespective of culture, gender, or religion.

The philosophy of NEP 2020 combines learner-centered instruction, holistic development, an interdisciplinary approach, and a foundation in traditional and cultural values. It emphasizes early childhood education, mother tongue instruction, integration of arts, vocational exposure, ethical education, and digital literacy. This holistic approach enables students to develop into better thinkers, problem-solvers, creative individuals, socially responsible citizens, and globally competent learners, as their cognitive, social, emotional, ethical, and physical abilities are nurtured.

1.3. Vision and Objectives

The strategy attempts to ensure access to education from early childhood. Primarily, it focuses on equity

and inclusion among underprivileged groups, including girls and students with disabilities. A key objective of NEP 2020 is the integration of academic, vocational, and practical education. According to the policy, by Grade 3, children are expected to be able to read and perform simple arithmetic operations. Another primary objective of NEP is the preservation and promotion of Indian languages, arts, culture, heritage, and values. It emphasizes creativity, critical thinking, teamwork, and socio-emotional skills, and promotes holistic assessment.

2. Assurances of NEP 2020

The promises of NEP 2020 are connected to the establishment of a radical educational environment that will prepare learners with the knowledge, skills, and values they will need in the contemporary world. One of the most relevant requirements of the policy is holistic and multidisciplinary education. NEP 2020 emphasizes a collection of fields that are usually integrated to assist students not just in enhancing their knowledge, but also their creativity, problem-solving, as well as their collaboration with others (Ministry of Education, 2020). Projects, research, and real-life applications motivate students to take part in practical learning. Moreover, arts, sports, and physical education should be included, as they safeguard balanced development.

Another NEP 2020 benchmark is Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE). To ensure that children aged between 3 and 8 years develop cognitively and emotionally, the policy promotes activity-based and play-based learning methods. ECCE is designed to ensure that children are well prepared to transition to formal learning in the future through a smooth process; they are not only intellectually prepared but also socially and emotionally prepared. The process also emphasizes language development in early years and thus the necessity of mother tongue knowledge, along with the gradual development of multilingual skills.

Flexibility and choice form another elementary aspect of NEP 2020. The mechanism introduces multiple entry and exit options in higher education, which allow students to establish personalized learning paths based on their interests and career objectives. A credit-based system ensures an inclusive and adaptable learning process through cross-disciplinary flexibility. In addition, NEP 2020 emphasizes the use of technology in education by encouraging the use of digital tools in

learning, internet facilities, and teacher development to ensure the complete utilization of technology in teaching. The collective goal of these features is to establish a future-ready, inclusive, and dynamic education system.

Learning should take a holistic and multidisciplinary approach, integrating diverse perspectives and understanding multiple elements related to the subject under consideration (Curran, 2006).

2.1. Holistic and Multidisciplinary Learning

Learning should be based on a multidisciplinary and holistic approach, incorporating different perspectives and understanding various aspects of the topic in question (Curran, 2006).

NEP 2020 represents a fundamental shift, as it moves from rote-based, single-discipline teaching to a learner-focused, multidisciplinary approach. The curricula in India are often outdated and tend to segregate subjects, thereby promoting disjointed understanding and poor application skills. The new guiding principle of NEP 2020 indicates that science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics (STEAM), along with humanities and vocational training, should all be integrated into education. This would allow students to contribute knowledge across disciplines and apply the same in real-life contexts.

In addition, flexibility in higher education will also be visible under NEP 2020, since various entry and exit options will enable students to receive a degree, diploma, or certificate at different stages. The Academic Bank of Credits (ABC) supports the promotion of lifelong learning and maintains flexibility across institutions and disciplines. Such flexibility makes students better equipped to adapt to a changing job market and build cross-disciplinary experiences, therefore making education more reflective of the demands of a 21st-century knowledge economy.

2.2. Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN)

NEP 2020 also favors Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) on comparable lines, as mentioned earlier. It emphasizes basic literacy and numeracy as essential elements of cognitive and socio-emotional growth through its National Mission on FLN. By means of play-based, activity-based, and experience-based learning, children aged 3–8 are

taught how to become scientifically literate readers and mathematicians, as well as problem solvers, team workers, and communicators. It has been found that early math and literacy, specifically, are good predictors of academic achievement in the future. According to Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) (2018), students who can read and perform arithmetic are at an advantage.

NEP 2020 also focuses on language development and endorses home language/mother tongue/local language/regional language teaching in the early years,

thereby bridging educational gaps and enhancing conceptual clarity.

There is a socio-emotional and cognitive benefit of early neurodevelopmental interventions. Storytelling, group work, and peaceful play help individuals become less aggressive and more cooperative, empathetic, and improve their development. By laying a solid foundation, NEP 2020 ensures that even currently disadvantaged children are well equipped in their environment to successfully transition to the next phases of education, leading to a lifelong process of learning.

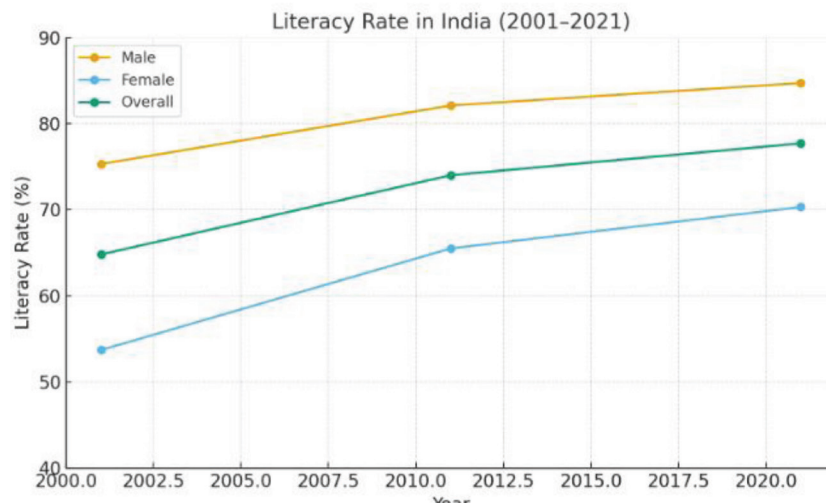


Figure 1: Literacy Rate Trends in India (2001–2021), Highlighting Gender Disparities

Source: Census of India (2001, 2011), Ministry of Education (2021 estimates)

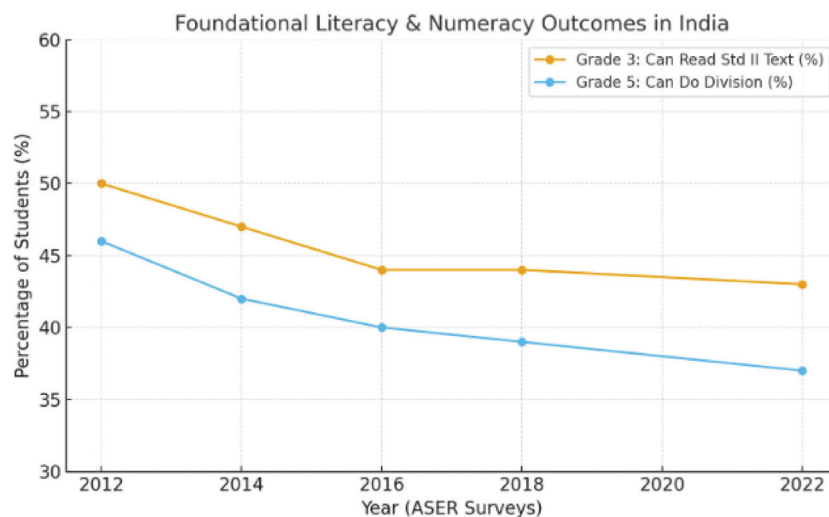


Figure 2: Foundational Literacy and Numeracy Outcomes Among Primary School Children in India, Based on ASER Surveys

Source: Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) Centre (2012–2022)

2.3. Vocational Integration and Flexibility

Since NEP 2020 promises flexibility in curriculum and vocational education, it consequently connects academic knowledge with utility. It includes vocational courses that students can take starting from Grade 6, such as coding, agriculture, carpentry, entrepreneurship, and hospitality. This provides major professional interaction that contributes towards developing practical skills, work-related awareness, and an entrepreneurial approach. The philosophy particularly benefits businesses, start-ups, NGOs, industries, and local projects, as it requires them to provide training, mentorship, and practical learning opportunities.

An example is that of a student who has an interest in sustainable agriculture; such a student may work on a local farm, apply classroom knowledge, and acquire problem-solving and innovation skills. This kind of integration will bridge the divide between formal schooling and real-life applications, making students independent and job-ready.

Vocational experience is highly important for the large population of young Indians who are identified as deficient in terms of employability and skills. NEP 2020 enhances not only employability in the country but also promotes broad-based development and innovation, especially in rural and semi-urban areas, by introducing real-world skills into the traditional curriculum.

2.4. Language and Culture Integration

NEP 2020 considers language significant for intellectual development, cultural identity, and social inclusion; it emphasizes that early education should be delivered in the first language or regional language, as this provides better conceptual understanding and more effective learning. Multilingual education is encouraged to preserve diverse cultural backgrounds while enabling communication with people across the world.

Language, culture, and integration under NEP 2020 include not only the home environment but also broader social contexts, incorporating Indian arts, heritage, and ethical values. Indian knowledge systems such as Sushruta Samhita, Ayurveda, and other traditional sciences are intended to be included in school textbooks. NEP 2020 also recognizes the

diversity of modern contexts while standardizing Indian knowledge in subjects like mathematics. Both students and teachers can relate better to locally relevant content through learning about regional art traditions or traditional methods of water conservation used in their areas.

2.5. Learning Facilitated by Technology

In technology-mediated learning, technology facilitates learning by providing a learning environment that promotes ease of understanding (Mayer, 2005). NEP 2020 emphasizes the potential of technology to transform education by providing easier access, engagement, and use of learning materials. In diverse socioeconomic settings, digital platforms like DIKSHA, SWAYAM, virtual laboratories, and adaptive learning systems powered by AI provide personalized learning experiences to students.

The integration of technology supports blended and hybrid learning, which proved vital during the COVID-19 pandemic, ensuring continuity of education. Assistive technologies also enable students with disabilities to participate fully. Individualized learning is encouraged, and teacher-learner interaction is strengthened through digital assessment tools that allow continuous evaluation and adaptive feedback.

In addition, the policy focuses on the capacity development of teachers through online professional development programmes, thereby promoting digital pedagogy, innovative teaching methods, and effective classroom management skills. Technology, therefore, acts as an agent of adaptive, inclusive, and modern education in accordance with holistic ideals.

3. Challenges with Legislation

Despite the fact that NEP 2020 has set a grand vision for how Indian education should be transformed, its enforcement still faces severe challenges. One of the most crucial issues is teacher training and professional development, since a great number of educators do not possess the competencies to apply child-centred, experiential, and technology-enabled teaching methods. According to a recent study, the majority of teachers are aware of NEP 2020; yet a significant percentage of them are not ready to apply its principles to classroom practices, especially in aligning them with the curriculum. This highlights the need for sound professional development

programmes that include inclusive teaching techniques, emotional intelligence, digital literacy, and pedagogical excellence (International Journal of Research in Academic World, 2025).

There are also difficulties with the language policy; despite its theoretical soundness, mother tongue instruction in the early years is not widely accepted, particularly in big cities where English is regarded as a key to international competitiveness. Besides, the lack of well-qualified teachers who know local languages and can teach them, along with the need to incorporate local contexts into the curriculum, does not ensure uniformity in the quality of educational outcomes across states, resulting in varied educational results.

Another significant challenge is infrastructure and resource constraints. Many schools in rural and semi-urban areas lack laboratories, libraries, internet access, and digital resources needed for modern teaching, and this digital gap is further worsened by financial limitations; India's education spending is still lower than the 6% of GDP benchmark (Economic Survey, 2021). Also, governmental coordination is a complex factor; since education is a concurrent subject, collaboration between central and state authorities is essential. States like Tamil Nadu and Kerala have been able to implement policy reforms more efficiently due to better infrastructure and governance, as compared to other regions, thereby increasing educational disparities. Lastly, gender inequality and lack of community participation are additional problems that hamper equal access to quality education, requiring targeted campaigns to eliminate sociocultural barriers.

3.1. Professional Development and Teacher Training

Teacher preparedness is one of the major challenges in the implementation of NEP 2020. Numerous teachers are not well trained in child-centred, experience-based, and interdisciplinary teaching methods and still rely on rote learning and assessment-based approaches. As a result, educators need continuous professional development focusing on the integration of technology in the classroom, development of project-based learning, and enhancement of socio-emotional skills. Studies have shown that unless teacher training is well organized, innovative programmes are unlikely to be effectively implemented.

NEP 2020 addresses this by proposing teacher learning initiatives and mentorship programmes using

digital platforms such as NISHTHA and DIKSHA, and Teacher Learning Communities (TLCs). However, several obstacles remain, such as resistance to change, high teacher-student ratios, and inconsistent access to professional development opportunities.

3.2. Language Strategy

Mother-tongue teaching is pedagogically sound, but there are practical impediments:

- Parental preference for English in urban and semi-urban regions is based on concerns about global employability.
- Teachers who are competent in local languages are in short supply.
- Schools often lack instructional resources that are linguistically and culturally relevant.

Unless properly addressed, these challenges can increase educational inequalities and hinder the consistent implementation of early learning programmes. To overcome these hurdles, strong community engagement and targeted teacher training are essential.

3.3. Infrastructure and Resource Limitations

Rural, remote, and low-income urban areas face major infrastructural challenges.

- Many schools do not have sufficient laboratories, libraries, computers, stable electricity, or internet access.
- The implementation of vocational courses, online learning technologies, and project-based instruction requires significant investment in both physical and digital infrastructure.
- These problems are further aggravated by financial constraints. Schools need adequate funding to train teachers, reform curricula, and procure technology and classroom resources.

3.4. Governance and Federal Cooperation

The education system in India is a complex issue in which the federal structure requires coordination between the central and state governments. Nonetheless, the implementation of policies at the ground level remains challenging, and many policies collapse at the institutional level. States with weak institutional capacities may not be in a position to:

- Customize school curriculum to local or regional demands.
- Hire and train teachers who have sufficient teaching competence.
- Equip individual schools with digital infrastructure without bias or delay.

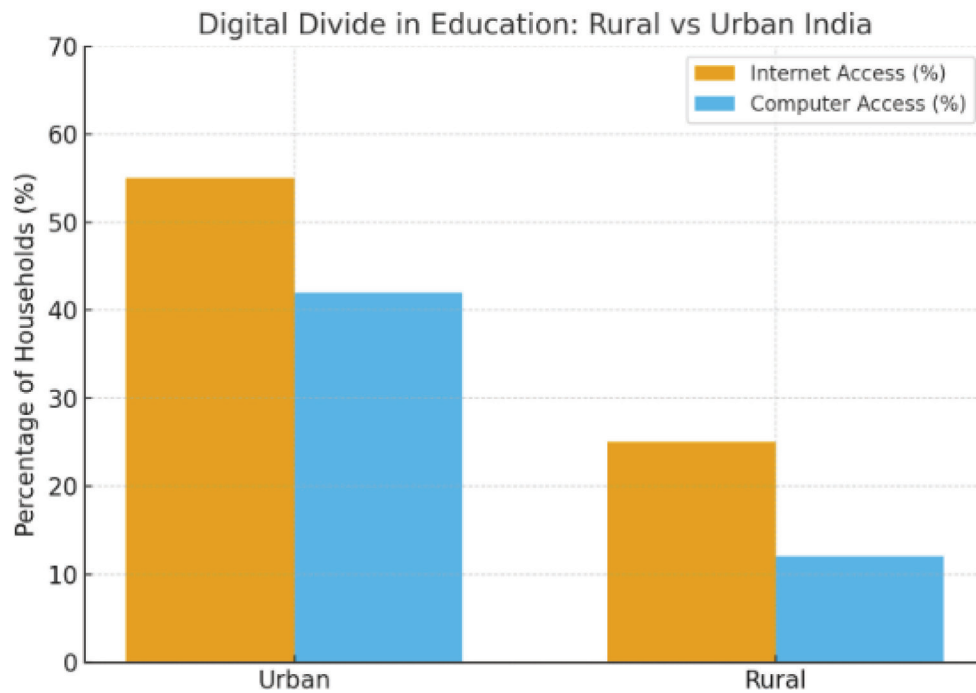


Figure 3: Disparities in Internet and Computer Access Between Rural and Urban Households in India

Source: National Sample Survey Office (NSSO), 75th Round (2017–18); Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) Reports

3.5. Socio-Cultural Barriers

Socio-cultural impediments have become a significant challenge in India over the past few years. Inequality between the sexes, caste differences, parental ignorance, and community disapproval are some of the barriers that pose an added burden to student development. Girls, especially, and children from disadvantaged groups such as SC or ST communities face issues in accessing early education, digital equipment, or professional training.

The framework of NEP 2020 underlines the importance of community involvement, awareness, and culturally sensitive pedagogy to overcome these barriers; however, in reality, there is limited engagement. The involvement of local stakeholders, parents, and NGOs enhances policy acceptance, promotes equality, and improves the social relevance of education.

4. Pragmatic Methods and Creativity for NEP 2020 Execution

The gap between the NEP 2020 vision and its implementation can be reduced through various practical methods and innovations. Interdisciplinary curricula help students acquire critical thinking and

problem-solving skills by connecting knowledge across different subjects. For example, STEAM education integrates science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics, thereby fostering creativity and innovation. Project-based learning and community engagement further enable students to apply theoretical knowledge to real-life situations. Interdisciplinary teaching also improves learning outcomes and enhances teamwork and problem-solving skills among students.

Vocational education and industry linkages are crucial for employability and skill development. Early exposure to applied skills, internships in local firms, and hands-on programmes help students gain practical experience and develop entrepreneurial mindsets. These approaches bridge the gap between academic education and labor market requirements, ensuring that students are future-ready.

Lastly, community and stakeholder engagement enhances policy adoption. Active involvement of parents, NGOs, and local communities in school governance promotes social responsibility, awareness, and culturally relevant educational practices. Awareness campaigns about the benefits of mother tongue education, vocational training, and inclusive

education—key elements of NEP 2020—help strengthen societal support for policy implementation.

4.1. Interdisciplinary Curriculum and Education

A key feature of NEP 2020 is interdisciplinary learning, which integrates multiple subjects to promote holistic understanding. This approach fosters real-world problem-solving skills, critical thinking, and creativity by encouraging students to make connections between concepts across disciplines. For example, a water conservation project may integrate science (hydrology, environmental studies), geography (watersheds and climate), economics (resource allocation), and arts (awareness campaigns and cultural representation).

Pedagogical improvements include project-based learning, experiential learning, flipped classrooms, and group work. These methods shift the focus from memorization to active classroom engagement, encouraging students to apply theoretical knowledge in practical contexts. Teachers across subjects collaborate to co-plan and co-teach lessons, thereby strengthening interdisciplinary integration.

Furthermore, this approach develops skills such as emotional intelligence, teamwork, empathy, communication, and leadership. Research indicates that project-based learning increases student engagement and reduces dropout rates, while enhancing cognitive and metacognitive skills.

4.2. Vocational Education and Industry Partnerships

From Grade 6 onwards, NEP 2020 emphasizes vocational education, helping students acquire real-world skills alongside academic knowledge. Early exposure to vocational training enhances life skills, entrepreneurial attitudes, and career readiness.

Schools are encouraged to establish partnerships with businesses, firms, non-governmental organizations, and start-ups to provide internships, mentorship, and practical learning opportunities. Students interested in agriculture, for instance, may work on local farms to learn sustainable practices, business strategies, and crop management. Similarly, technology-oriented students may engage with IT companies for coding projects or robotics labs, directly linking theory with practice.

Vocational integration, especially for youth in rural areas, helps address skill gaps in the Indian

labor market and promotes self-reliance, economic empowerment, and employment. Studies show that students with early skill exposure tend to be more motivated, confident, and practically competent, thereby bridging the gap between formal education and real-world application.

4.3. Comprehensive Evaluation Techniques

NEP 2020 supports the use of continuous and comprehensive assessment (CCA) instead of traditional high-stakes examinations. Holistic assessment evaluates creativity, critical thinking, practical skills, socio-emotional abilities, and ethical reasoning, providing a more complete understanding of student learning beyond academic performance.

Assessment methods include experiential learning reports, portfolios, peer review, self-assessment, and project outcomes. For example, a student involved in a community project may be evaluated based on research skills, collaboration, communication, and practical impact, in addition to written examinations.

Holistic evaluation promotes lifelong learning, encourages self-reflection, and reduces stress associated with exam-centric systems. Teacher training programmes are essential to equip educators with competency-based assessment techniques, updated feedback mechanisms, and digital evaluation tools. Well-trained teachers can effectively implement interdisciplinary curricula, project-based learning, and holistic assessment practices. Incentive and support programmes are also necessary to encourage teachers to adopt innovative teaching approaches and move beyond traditional methods.

5. Critical Analysis of Implementation Capacity of NEP 2020

Although the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 offers a comprehensive and progressive vision for changing India's educational system, its success primarily rests on the nation's ability to successfully carry out the suggested reforms. A number of interconnected elements, including adequate finance, teacher preparation and education, and the viability of language policy at the local level, influence implementation capability. When these characteristics are critically examined, it becomes clear that there is a significant disconnect between the goals of policy and the actual situation on the ground.

- **Financial and Resource Limitations:** Inadequate and inconsistent funding is one of the most enduring issues with NEP 2020 implementation. Although the policy restates the long-standing proposal to devote 6% of GDP to education, governmental spending on education in India has consistently fallen short of this standard. A number of fundamental reforms, including digital integration, vocational education, infrastructure development, and ongoing teacher training, remain challenging to implement without significant financial investment.

The focus on technology-enabled learning, Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN), and Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) necessitates large investments in digital connectivity, teaching-learning resources, and physical infrastructure. However, basic amenities such as internet connection, reliable electricity, and libraries are frequently absent in schools in rural, tribal, and economically disadvantaged areas. Instead of reducing already existing educational disparities, this unequal resource allocation runs the risk of worsening them.

Additionally, NEP 2020 proposes flexible, decentralized governance that gives states and local entities more authority. Given the federal structure of Indian education, states with greater financial and administrative resources are better positioned to execute reforms, while those with fewer resources may struggle.

- **Teacher Education and Professional Preparedness:** Although teachers play a crucial role in implementing policies, teacher readiness remains one of the weakest links in the implementation chain. NEP 2020 promotes learner-centered, experiential, multidisciplinary, and competency-based pedagogy as an alternative to rote-based instruction. Teachers must have strong conceptual knowledge, pedagogical flexibility, digital literacy, and assessment competence to undergo this shift; however, many have not received formal training in these areas.

Pre-service teacher education programs often face issues such as outdated curricula, limited practical exposure, and weak integration of modern pedagogical approaches. In-service teachers encounter challenges such as high student-teacher ratios, administrative burdens, limited access to professional development, and resistance to pedagogical change.

Although platforms like NISHTHA and DIKSHA aim to bridge these gaps, the quality, consistency, and reach of these programs vary significantly across

regions. Additionally, teachers' ability to collaborate across disciplines and engage with real-world contexts is essential for the success of interdisciplinary education and vocational integration. Without continuous mentoring, institutional support, and incentives, there is a risk of superficial compliance rather than meaningful transformation. The ambitious vision of NEP 2020 must therefore be supported by sustained investments in professional autonomy, reflective practice, and teacher capacity building.

- **Ground-Level Feasibility and Education Policy:** The NEP 2020 language strategy is pedagogically sound and supported by cognitive science, especially the recommendation to use the mother tongue or regional language as the medium of instruction in the early grades. Learning in one's native language improves early literacy outcomes, emotional development, and conceptual understanding. However, there are significant logistical and socio-cultural challenges in its implementation.

Due to perceptions of employability, global mobility, and social prestige, parents continue to prefer English-medium schooling in metropolitan and semi-urban areas. This creates resistance to mother-tongue instruction, even when its educational benefits are evident. Furthermore, there is a shortage of qualified teachers who are proficient in both regional languages and modern teaching methodologies, particularly in linguistically diverse states.

The lack of quality textbooks, digital content, and assessment tools in regional languages further complicates implementation. Without systematic investment in multilingual resources and teacher training, the language policy may be implemented unevenly, potentially widening gaps between public and private education systems. Therefore, although NEP 2020 promotes linguistic inclusivity, its success depends on careful planning, community engagement, and phased implementation that considers regional diversity.

- **Synthesis: Institutional Readiness vs Policy Vision:** A critical analysis of NEP 2020 indicates that while the policy is forward-looking and aligned with global educational aspirations, institutional readiness remains uneven. The combined effects of financial constraints, limited teacher capacity, and language-related challenges may hinder effective implementation. NEP 2020 risks remaining a normative framework rather than a transformative reality if these structural issues are not addressed.

Implementation must be viewed as a continuous process rather than a one-time reform to bridge this gap. Collaborative federalism sustained financial investment, strong political commitment, and context-sensitive strategies are essential. Above all, communities and educators must be recognized as active participants in educational reform rather than passive recipients of policy directives.

6. Case Studies from Worldwide Viewpoints

Several Indian states have initiated projects that demonstrate the effectiveness of reforms aligned with NEP 2020. Kerala has successfully integrated digital classrooms and achieved high literacy levels. Community schools in Rajasthan emphasize mother tongue instruction and community participation. Digital platforms such as DIKSHA have enabled scalable digital education across the country, providing resources for both teachers and students. Vocational education initiatives in Himachal Pradesh, including coding, agriculture, and business at the school level, illustrate early exposure to applied skills and real-world learning.

NEP 2020 also aligns with global educational practices:

- Finland emphasizes strong teacher education, learner-centered pedagogy, flexible curricula, and holistic assessment (Sahlberg, 2021).
- Singapore focuses on STEM education, vocational skills, and digital learning with real-world applications (Tan *et al.*, 2016).
- Japan emphasizes moral education, ethics, collaborative learning, and socio-emotional development among students.

India can adopt context-specific innovations inspired by these countries, combining modernization with cultural preservation to enhance global competitiveness.

7. Conclusion

NEP 2020 represents a significant framework for educational reform in India, emphasizing inclusivity, flexibility, interdisciplinary learning, and holistic development of learners. Its ambitious vision aims to equip students with essential 21st-century skills, including cognitive, socio-emotional, ethical, and practical competencies.

However, implementation challenges such as teacher training, language policy, infrastructure

limitations, governance complexities, and socio-cultural barriers require systematic planning, adequate resource allocation, and continuous evaluation. Strategies such as interdisciplinary curricula, vocational integration, holistic assessment, and teacher empowerment can facilitate effective translation of policy into classroom practice.

NEP 2020 provides a pathway toward building a future-ready, inclusive, and culturally grounded education system. Its success depends on the collective efforts of all stakeholders teachers, students, parents, policymakers, and communities and sustained processes of innovation, adaptation, and evaluation. Through this approach, India can develop a generation of creative, critical thinkers who are socially responsible and globally competent, thereby promoting sustainable national development and equitable access to quality education.

Acknowledgement

The author expresses sincere gratitude to the faculty of the School of Education, Lovely Professional University, for their academic support and guidance. Appreciation is also extended to peers, family, and all scholars whose work contributed to this study. Any errors remain the sole responsibility of the author.

Authorship Contribution

Umang Raj Gupta: Conception and design of the study, review of literature, data collection and analysis, and drafting of the manuscript.

Sonali Jaiswal: Academic supervision, refinement of the research design, critical review of the manuscript, and overall guidance throughout the study.

Funding

This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Ethical Approval

This study is based on a review and analysis of existing literature and policy documents. It does not involve human participants, animals, or any primary data collection requiring ethical approval. Therefore, formal ethical clearance was not required.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Declarations

The authors declare that this work is original, has not been published or submitted elsewhere, and adheres to ethical research standards. There are no specific declarations to be made regarding this article.

Data Availability Statement

The authors confirm that the data supporting the conclusions of this study are included within the article and/or its supplementary materials. This study is based on secondary data obtained from publicly accessible sources such as official policy documents, government publications, and peer-reviewed articles. No primary dataset was generated. All sources used in the study have been appropriately cited in the manuscript.

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