



INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES AND INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES

(Peer-reviewed, Refereed, Indexed & Open Access Journal)

DOI : 03.2021-11278686

ISSN : 2582-8568

IMPACT FACTOR : 8.428 (SJIF 2026)

National Education Policy 2020 and Its Role in Achieving Sustainable Development Goals in India

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DOI No. **03.2021-11278686** DOI Link :: <https://doi-ds.org/doilink/03.2026-47592671/IRJHIS2603036>

Abstract:

(NEP 2020) is a major reform that aims to make the current educational system more flexible, inclusive, and multidisciplinary. Additionally, the policy is in line with international development initiatives like the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDG 4, which focuses on ensuring social justice, empowering people, and advancing socioeconomic development. The National Education Policy 2020 is being implemented in India. This study examines the goals, key components, and potential effects of NEP 2020 on promoting sustainable development in India. It looks more closely at the difficulties encountered during the COVID-19 epidemic, emphasizing how changes in educational policies and digital learning strategies have affected and transformed the educational system. Academic journals, official papers, and the edited book National Education Policy 2020: Meeting Sustainable Development Goals are among the secondary sources of data used in the study. The research evaluates the importance of NEP 2020 in solving important issues including gender equality, educational accessibility, technological integration, and equity in education by analyzing these sources. The results show that although NEP 2020 provides a solid and forward-thinking framework for changing the education system, its success mostly depends on appropriate implementation, sufficient finance, good teacher preparation, and initiatives to close the digital gap. The study comes to the conclusion that, if its goals are carried out in an organized, inclusive, and well-coordinated way, NEP 2020 can significantly contribute to sustainable development in India.

Key Words: National Education Policy 2020, Sustainable Development Goals, Inclusive Education, Digital Learning, Educational Reform, Gender Equality

1. Introduction:

For a country to advance socially, economically, and culturally, education is essential. It gives people the skills, beliefs, and information they need to support economic progress and make significant contributions to society. Education systems must constantly change to satisfy new societal expectations and international norms in a time of globalization and rapid technological advancement. India has strengthened its educational system through a number of educational changes since gaining

independence. The National Policy on Education 1968, the National Policy on Education 1986, and the more current National Education Policy 2020 are significant policy turning points. With its emphasis on holistic development, multidisciplinary approaches to learning, and the incorporation of modern technology, NEP 2020 marks a dramatic shift in the Indian educational system.

Enhancing access, equity, quality, affordability, and accountability at all educational levels is the policy's main goal. Additionally, it seeks to harmonize the Indian educational system with international endeavors like the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As stated by the Ministry of Education in 2020, one of the policy's main goals is to raise the Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) in higher education to 50% and reach a 100% GER in school education by 2030. The policy's emphasis on inclusive growth and gender equality is another important feature. Since women's education has a significant impact on both social growth and economic development, promoting gender-inclusive education is crucial for sustainable development.

Global education systems were also severely disrupted by the COVID-19 epidemic. Millions of students in India were forced to switch from traditional classroom instruction to online learning environments. Nearly 70% of students participated in e-learning during this time, according to research.

In order to address these issues and provide continuous and broader access to learning opportunities, NEP 2020 promotes the growth of digital learning initiatives, including platforms like SWAYAM and DIKSHA, along with other online education programs.

2. Rationale of the Study:

This study's justification is the increasing significance of education as a vital tool for social change and sustainable development. Global catastrophes like the COVID-19 epidemic, demographic shifts, and technological breakthroughs are all contributing to the rapid evolution of the global education scene.

Despite significant progress in expanding access to education, India continues to face several challenges, including:

- Educational inequality between urban and rural areas
- Gender disparity in education
- Lack of technological infrastructure
- Poor quality of learning outcomes
- Insufficient teacher training and professional development

By introducing a more flexible curricular framework, promoting transdisciplinary learning, and integrating technology into teaching and learning activities, the National Education Policy 2020 aims to address current issues in the educational system. Assessing if NEP 2020 successfully advances the Sustainable Development Goals, especially SDG 4, which focuses on guaranteeing inclusive,

egalitarian, and high-quality education for all, is another important reason for doing this study. These worldwide objectives emphasize the importance of education as the cornerstone of sustainable development.

Thus, the purpose of this study is to evaluate NEP 2020's applicability and efficacy in achieving these goals and advancing the more general objectives of equitable and sustainable educational development.

3. Review of Related Literature:

Numerous academics and researchers have investigated the relationship between sustainable development and education policies.

The National Education Policy 2020's contribution to gender justice and sustainable development was examined by Roy and Lahiri (2021). According to their findings, inclusive growth depends on attaining gender equality in education. They contend that improved health outcomes, higher economic production, and general social welfare can result from educating and empowering women.

In a similar vein, Bhattacharya (2021) emphasized how crucial education is to the socioeconomic advancement of contemporary countries. The author claims that education promotes creativity, builds human capital, and makes a substantial contribution to the advancement of the country.

Another study by Jena (2020) looked at how the COVID-19 pandemic affected Indian higher education. The results showed that both students and teachers experienced benefits and challenges from the quick shift to online learning.

Halder (2021) looked into the effects of closing schools in West Bengal during the pandemic in a similar setting. The study found that although digital learning contributed to the continuation of educational activities, it also revealed notable differences in access to digital devices and dependable internet connectivity.

According to a UNESCO report from 2020, the epidemic caused disruptions to education systems around the world, forcing governments to implement alternate teaching strategies like online and remote learning.

Velkoff (1998) previously emphasized the value of women's education in boosting social stability, economic productivity, and family health.

In general, the literature currently in publication indicates that in order to effectively support sustainable development, educational reform strategies should concentrate on enhancing equity, quality, and accessibility.

4. Objectives of the Study:

The main objectives of this study are:

1. To examine the key features and objectives of the National Education Policy 2020.
2. To analyze the role of NEP 2020 in achieving Sustainable Development Goals.
3. To evaluate the impact of digital learning and technology integration in education.
4. To study the challenges faced in implementing NEP 2020.
5. To suggest measures for improving the effectiveness of the policy.

5. Research Questions:

The study attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the major objectives and features of NEP 2020?
2. How does NEP 2020 contribute to achieving Sustainable Development Goals?
3. What are the challenges faced in implementing the new education policy?
4. How has the COVID-19 pandemic influenced the transformation of education in India?
5. What strategies can improve the successful implementation of NEP 2020?

6. Research Methodology:

6.1 Research Design:

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020's contribution to India's attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is examined in this study using a descriptive and analytical research design. In addition to a little amount of survey-based interpretation, the research mostly uses secondary data sources.

NEP 2020's features and goals are examined using the descriptive technique, and its effects on gender equality, education, and sustainable development are assessed using the analytical approach.

6.2 Sources of Data:

The study is based on secondary data, which were collected from:

- Government reports on National Education Policy 2020
- Academic journals and research papers
- Books related to education policy
- UNESCO and World Economic Forum reports
- Census and education statistics
- Articles from the edited book *National Education Policy 2020: Meeting Sustainable Development Goals*

7. Analysis:

A number of cutting-edge changes to the Indian educational system are introduced by NEP 2020. The quality, relevance, and accessibility of education are all intended to be enhanced by these changes.

7.1 Structural Changes in the Education System:

One of the most significant reforms introduced by NEP 2020 is the **5+3+3+4 structure of**

school education, replacing the traditional 10+2 system.

The new structure includes:

- **Foundational Stage (5 years)** – Pre-school to Grade 2
- **Preparatory Stage (3 years)** – Grades 3 to 5
- **Middle Stage (3 years)** – Grades 6 to 8
- **Secondary Stage (4 years)** – Grades 9 to 12

This structure emphasizes early childhood education and focuses on developing foundational literacy and numeracy skills.

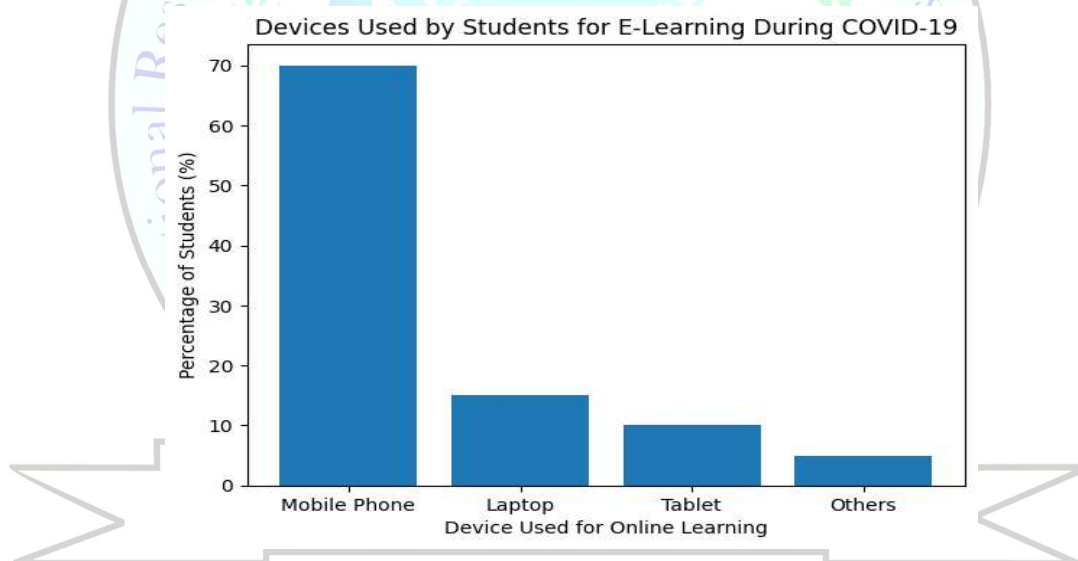
7.2 Emphasis on Holistic and Multidisciplinary Education:

NEP 2020 encourages a multidisciplinary approach to education. In order to dismantle the conventional divisions between science, the arts, and business, students are encouraged to select courses from a variety of academic fields.

Additionally, the policy prioritizes the growth of critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving abilities over memorization.

7.3 Technology Integration and Digital Education:

The significance of digital learning platforms was brought to light by the COVID-19 epidemic. Technology use in instruction, learning, and assessment is encouraged under NEP 2020.



Students can access online learning resources through digital platforms including SWAYAM, DIKSHA, and the National Digital Library of India (NDLI). These platforms aid in increasing access to education, especially for students who live in rural places.

7.4 Gender Inclusiveness and Social Equity:

NEP 2020 places a high premium on gender equality. In order to promote female education and lessen gender inequality, the policy suggests programs like the Gender Inclusion Fund. Because educated women make substantial contributions to social and economic development, women's education is seen as crucial for sustainable development.

7.5 Teacher Education and Professional Development:

NEP 2020 recognizes that teachers are the backbone of the education system. The policy proposes reforms such as:

- Four-year integrated B.Ed. programs
- Continuous professional development
- Improved working conditions for teachers

These measures aim to improve the quality of teaching and learning in educational institutions.

8. Discussion:

NEP 2020's implementation has sparked a lot of debate among academics, policymakers, and educators.

The policy's comprehensive approach to education is one of its main advantages. Global developments in education are in line with the emphasis on interdisciplinary learning and skill development.

However, the policy's execution could be hampered by a number of issues.

8.1 Digital Divide:

Digital learning has increased educational options, but it has also brought disparities in technology access to light.

It is challenging for many students in remote locations to engage in online learning because they lack digital equipment and internet connectivity.

8.2 Financial Constraints:

A substantial financial investment in infrastructure, teacher preparation, and technology resources is necessary for the successful implementation of NEP 2020.

The policy calls for raising public spending on education to 6% of GDP, although reaching this goal is still difficult.

8.3 Teacher Training:

In order to adopt the new curriculum and teaching methods introduced by NEP 2020, teachers must receive sufficient training.

The policy's goals might not be fully achieved without the right assistance and training.

8.4 Administrative Challenges:

In India, both the federal and state governments share responsibility for education. Effective policy implementation requires coordination across these governmental levels.

9. Results:

The analysis of the National Education Policy 2020 suggests several positive outcomes.

1. The policy promotes **inclusive and equitable education**.
2. It encourages **innovation, creativity, and critical thinking** among students.

3. Digital learning platforms have expanded educational opportunities.
4. The policy supports **gender equality and social inclusion**.
5. NEP 2020 aligns the Indian education system with global development goals.

However, the success of the policy depends on addressing challenges such as the digital divide, funding limitations, and teacher training.

10. Conclusion:

A major reform aiming at updating the Indian educational system is the National Education Policy 2020. The policy aims to create a knowledge-driven society that can address contemporary global issues by emphasizing inclusive educational approaches, technology integration, and holistic learning. By promoting equal access to education and assisting the empowerment of underprivileged groups, particularly women, the policy also helps to accomplish the Sustainable Development Goals. Nevertheless, despite its progressive outlook, NEP 2020's successful execution will require strong political will, adequate funding, and good coordination between the federal and state governments. To guarantee that the benefits of the policy reach every segment of society, it is also essential to expand teacher training programs and close the digital gap. If NEP 2020 is carried out well, it can significantly contribute to sustainable development and help India become a global hub of knowledge.

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