

AARSI

A Peer Reviewed Multidisciplinary
Annual Journal



Published by
**SLU Arts and H. & P. Thakore
Commerce College for Women**
An Endeavour of
Gujarat Stree Kelavani Mandal



Theme

**National Education Policy 2020 –
Achievements, Challenges & Future Directions**

**Vol. 4
Issue. 4
Year
2026**



ISSN – 2231 : 2897



GSKM - SLU Campus, Ahmedabad.

AARSI - A peer reviewed multidisciplinary annual journal

Issued Date: 15 th June, 2026	Vol. 04	Issue. 04	ISSN: 2331-2897
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W07 &16 - NEP 2020 and Its Implementation: Examining Challenges in the Indian Education Sector

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Abstract: The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 represents a comprehensive reform aimed at transforming the Indian education system to meet the demands of the 21st century. The policy emphasizes holistic, multidisciplinary, and competency-based education while promoting flexibility, inclusiveness, and quality learning outcomes. This article examines the implementation framework of NEP 2020 and identifies the major challenges associated with its execution across the Indian education sector. The study discusses key reforms introduced in school and higher education, including the 5+3+3+4 curricular structure, multidisciplinary approach, skill-based learning, digital education, and teacher education reforms. The article identifies several challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, financial constraints, shortage of trained teachers, language policy issues, curriculum restructuring difficulties, governance complexities, and technology integration barriers. The digital divide, rural–urban disparities, and limited institutional preparedness also pose significant obstacles to the successful execution of the policy. In addition, the shift from rote learning to competency-based education and the adoption of flexible curriculum frameworks require substantial changes in teaching-learning practices and assessment methods. The paper also suggests strategies for effective implementation, including increased public investment in education, strengthening teacher training programs, improving digital infrastructure, promoting multilingual education, and enhancing coordination among stakeholders. A phased implementation approach, institutional autonomy, and continuous monitoring mechanisms are also recommended. The study concludes that NEP 2020 has the potential to transform the Indian education system; however, its success depends on effective planning, resource allocation, and collaborative efforts among all stakeholders to overcome implementation challenges.

Keywords: National Education Policy 2020, NEP 2020, Indian Education System, Education Reforms, Multidisciplinary Education, Skill-Based Learning, Digital Education

1. Introduction

The Indian education system has undergone several reforms since independence, reflecting the country's evolving socio-economic priorities and developmental needs. Education has always been considered a critical instrument for nation building, social transformation, and economic progress. In the early years after independence, the focus of educational reforms was primarily on expanding access and improving literacy levels. Policies such as the University Education Commission (1948–49), the Secondary Education Commission (1952–53), and the Kothari Commission (1964–66) laid the foundation for a structured education system in India. These commissions emphasized equal educational opportunities, national integration, and modernization of curriculum. Subsequently, the National Policy on Education of 1968 marked the first comprehensive effort to provide a unified direction to education in India, highlighting the importance of science education, teacher training, and a common school system.

The National Policy on Education 1986, later modified in 1992, brought further changes aimed at universalizing elementary education, reducing disparities, and strengthening vocational education. This policy emphasized child-centered learning, adult education, and the use of educational technology. During the following decades, several initiatives such as the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP), Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA), and the Right to Education Act (2009) were introduced to improve access, equity, and quality in education. These reforms significantly increased enrolment rates and improved infrastructure; however, concerns regarding quality, employability, and learning outcomes persisted. The traditional education system continued to emphasize rote learning, examination-oriented approaches, and rigid disciplinary boundaries, which limited creativity, critical thinking, and skill development among students.

2. Overview of NEP 2020

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is a comprehensive reform initiative aimed at transforming India's education system by improving access, quality, equity, and accountability. Replacing the National Policy on Education 1986, it promotes a holistic, flexible, and multidisciplinary approach to education that meets the needs of the 21st century. The policy emphasizes learner-centered education, skill development, critical thinking, technology integration, and the connection between academic knowledge and practical application.

The vision of NEP 2020 is to build an education system rooted in Indian values while preparing students for global competitiveness. Its mission is to create a knowledge-driven society through strengthened foundational literacy and numeracy, multidisciplinary learning, innovation, research, and lifelong learning opportunities. The policy also seeks to increase participation in higher education by improving the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER).

NEP 2020 is guided by principles such as holistic development, flexibility in subject selection, conceptual understanding, experiential learning, equity, inclusion, multilingualism, technology adoption, continuous assessment, and teacher empowerment. It aims to move away from rote learning and promote creativity, problem-solving, and critical thinking.

3. Implementation Framework of NEP 2020

The successful implementation of the National Education Policy 2020 requires a coordinated and collaborative framework involving multiple stakeholders at different levels of governance. Since education is a subject included in the Concurrent List of the Indian Constitution, both the central and state governments share responsibility for policy execution. The implementation framework of NEP 2020 emphasizes decentralization, institutional autonomy, stakeholder participation, and phased execution. It aims to ensure that reforms are implemented systematically while addressing regional diversity and resource constraints. The policy also highlights the need for strong monitoring mechanisms, capacity building, and structural changes in educational governance to achieve the intended outcomes.

The central government plays a crucial role in providing overall direction, policy guidelines, and financial support for the implementation of NEP 2020. It is responsible for developing national

frameworks related to curriculum, teacher education, digital infrastructure, and assessment reforms. The central government also facilitates coordination among states and ensures uniformity in quality standards across the country. Institutions such as national-level regulatory bodies, research foundations, and accreditation agencies are to be established or restructured under the guidance of the central government. Additionally, the central government supports states through funding initiatives, technological platforms, and capacity-building programs. It also monitors progress and evaluates the implementation of reforms to ensure alignment with the objectives of NEP 2020.

State governments hold a significant responsibility in translating policy recommendations into practical action. Since education systems vary across states in terms of infrastructure, language, and administrative structure, states are expected to adapt NEP 2020 according to their local requirements. State governments are responsible for implementing curriculum changes, recruiting and training teachers, improving school infrastructure, and ensuring accessibility. They also play a key role in strengthening state-level institutions and monitoring implementation at district and local levels. Coordination between state education departments, school boards, and higher education institutions is essential to ensure consistency and effectiveness. The success of NEP 2020 largely depends on how efficiently state governments align their policies and resources with the national framework. Educational institutions themselves are central to the implementation process, as they are responsible for executing reforms at the ground level. Schools, colleges, and universities must adopt new curricular structures, promote multidisciplinary learning, and integrate skill-based education. Institutions are expected to redesign teaching-learning processes, introduce flexible subject choices, and promote experiential learning. They also need to enhance infrastructure, including digital facilities and laboratories, to support modern educational practices. Institutional leadership plays a critical role in encouraging innovation, managing change, and ensuring quality. Autonomy granted to institutions under NEP 2020 is intended to enable them to design programs that respond to local and global educational needs.

4. Challenges in Implementation of NEP 2020

- Many educational institutions, particularly in rural and remote areas, lack adequate physical infrastructure required for implementing NEP 2020 reforms.
- Insufficient classrooms, laboratories, libraries, and learning spaces hinder the adoption of multidisciplinary and activity-based learning approaches.
- Lack of digital infrastructure such as smart classrooms, computers, projectors, and learning management systems limits the use of technology in teaching and learning.
- Poor availability of electricity and technical support further restricts the integration of digital education in schools and colleges.
- The rural–urban divide remains a significant barrier, as urban institutions often have better infrastructure compared to rural schools.
- Students in rural areas face difficulties in accessing digital platforms, online content, and technology-enabled learning tools.
- Implementation of NEP 2020 requires substantial financial investment for infrastructure development, teacher training, and digital transformation.

- Budget allocation for education in India remains limited compared to the recommended 6 percent of GDP suggested by NEP 2020.
- Many states face financial limitations that affect their ability to implement reforms effectively.
- Public institutions depend heavily on government funding, which may not be sufficient to support large-scale reforms.
- Private institutions may face challenges in mobilizing funds for upgrading infrastructure and implementing new academic programs.
- There is a shortage of trained and qualified teachers capable of implementing competency-based and multidisciplinary education.

5. Suggestions for Effective Implementation

- The government should increase public expenditure on education to meet the recommended allocation of 6 percent of GDP for effective implementation of NEP 2020.
- Adequate financial support should be provided to states to reduce disparities in infrastructure and educational resources.
- Special funding schemes should be introduced for rural and underdeveloped regions to strengthen basic educational facilities.
- Public-private partnerships should be encouraged to mobilize additional resources for infrastructure and digital education.
- Institutions should be provided financial autonomy to develop multidisciplinary programs and research initiatives.
- Infrastructure development should be prioritized to support modern teaching-learning practices.
- Schools and colleges should be equipped with smart classrooms, laboratories, libraries, and vocational training facilities.
- Digital infrastructure including internet connectivity, computers, and learning management systems should be expanded.
- Special attention should be given to bridging the rural–urban divide in educational infrastructure.
- Maintenance and upgradation of existing institutional facilities should be ensured regularly.
- Comprehensive teacher training programs should be introduced to prepare teachers for competency-based education.
- Continuous professional development should be made mandatory for teachers at all levels.
- Training should focus on experiential learning, multidisciplinary teaching, and student-centred pedagogy.
- Teachers should be trained in the effective use of digital tools and technology-enabled learning.

6. Conclusion

The National Education Policy 2020 represents a transformative step toward restructuring the Indian education system to meet the demands of the 21st century. It aims to create a holistic, flexible, multidisciplinary, and skill-oriented educational framework that promotes critical thinking, creativity, and innovation among learners. The policy emphasizes inclusive and equitable education, improved learning outcomes, and alignment of education with global standards. Through structural

reforms in school and higher education, NEP 2020 seeks to strengthen foundational literacy, promote research and innovation, integrate technology, and enhance employability. These reforms have the potential to significantly improve the quality and accessibility of education across the country.

However, the successful implementation of NEP 2020 faces several challenges, including inadequate infrastructure, financial constraints, teacher training requirements, language-related issues, and governance complexities. The digital divide, limited institutional capacity, and resistance to change further complicate the implementation process. These challenges highlight the need for coordinated efforts among central and state governments, educational institutions, teachers, and other stakeholders. Without addressing these barriers, the objectives of NEP 2020 may not be fully realized.

Effective implementation of the policy requires increased investment in education, strengthening of institutional infrastructure, and comprehensive teacher training programs. The adoption of competency-based curriculum, flexible learning pathways, and continuous assessment systems must be supported by adequate resources and administrative support. Additionally, technology integration, multilingual education, and multidisciplinary learning should be introduced gradually to ensure smooth transition. Strong monitoring mechanisms and stakeholder collaboration are essential to ensure accountability and consistency in implementation.

Overall, NEP 2020 provides a visionary roadmap for transforming the Indian education system into a dynamic, inclusive, and globally competitive framework. While the policy offers numerous opportunities for improving educational quality and access, its success largely depends on effective implementation and sustained commitment from all stakeholders. With proper planning, adequate funding, and coordinated execution, NEP 2020 has the potential to shape the future of education in India and contribute significantly to national development and knowledge-based growth.

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About SLU College

Shree Lalshankar Umiyashankar Arts and Harivadan & Padmaben Thakore Commerce College for Women, which was established in 1920 as an endeavour of Gujarat Stree Kelvani Mandal, has the proud privilege of being the first women's college in Ahmedabad. The college is recognised under Section 2 (f) and 12 (b) of UGC Act 17th June, 1972. The college runs various programmes in affiliation with Gujarat University such as - B.A., B.Com., and M.Com. The BS-BBA programme was added from the academic year 2025-2026. The college also runs several add-on programmes like Fashion Design and Computer Courses at the ICTC centre located at the SLU Campus.

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