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: 15th June, 2026	Vol. 04	Issue. 04	ISSN: 2331-2897

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W28: Digital Education and Technology Integration in Higher Education: Students' Perspectives in the Context of NEP 2020

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Abstract: The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 represents a transformative framework aimed at aligning India's education system with global standards through structural, curricular, and technological reforms. Among its key priorities is the integration of digital education and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in higher education. This paper examines the role, need, and challenges of digital education from the perspective of postgraduate students at Gujarat University. Based on primary data collected from 400 students across multiple faculties, the study explores perceptions regarding technology integration, multilingual education, research orientation, and internationalization. The findings reveal that while a majority of students acknowledge the benefits of digital education—such as accessibility, flexibility, and enhanced learning experiences—a significant proportion remain disengaged or uncertain, indicating gaps in awareness and digital readiness. Challenges such as digital divide, infrastructural limitations, reduced interaction, and concerns about over-reliance on technology continue to persist. The study also highlights the interconnected role of globalization and modernization in shaping educational practices and student expectations.

The paper concludes that while digital education holds immense potential in achieving the objectives of NEP 2020, its success depends on inclusive implementation, infrastructural strengthening, and the adoption of a blended learning model. The findings contribute to understanding the ground realities of policy implementation and offer practical recommendations for enhancing digital education in Indian higher education.

Keywords: Digital Education, NEP 2020, ICT, Higher Education, Blended Learning

1. Introduction

The emergence of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 marks a significant turning point in the evolution of India's education system. Designed as a comprehensive reform framework, the policy aims to enhance accessibility, quality, equity, and accountability across all levels of education. A key feature of NEP 2020 is its strong emphasis on digital education and technology integration, reflecting the growing importance of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in modern academic environments. The rapid advancement of technology, coupled with the forces of globalization and modernization, has transformed traditional modes of education. Universities are no longer confined to physical classrooms; instead, they are increasingly adopting digital platforms, online resources, and virtual learning environments. The COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated this transition, compelling institutions to shift abruptly to online modes of teaching and learning.

Digital education, in this context, encompasses a wide range of tools and practices, including online learning platforms, virtual classrooms, multimedia content, mobile learning applications, and Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs). These innovations have expanded access to education,

enabled flexible learning, and enhanced the overall learning experience. However, they have also introduced new challenges related to accessibility, engagement, and quality.

This study focuses on postgraduate students of Gujarat University and aims to examine their perspectives on digital education within the broader framework of NEP 2020. By analyzing empirical data, the study seeks to understand how students perceive the benefits and challenges of technology integration, and how these experiences align with the policy's vision.

2. Review of Literature

The integration of digital education cannot be understood in isolation; it is closely linked with broader sociological processes such as modernization and globalization. Yogendra Singh (1998) emphasized that modernization involves a shift toward rational and universalistic thinking, which is reflected in contemporary educational practices. As Robertson (1992) noted, globalization involves the compression of the world and the intensification of global consciousness. In education, globalization has led to the exchange of knowledge, international collaborations, and the adoption of global standards. Varghese (2013) emphasizes that globalization has transformed higher education into a market-driven enterprise, where knowledge production and dissemination are influenced by economic considerations. Advancements, particularly in ICT, have played a pivotal role in reshaping educational delivery methods and expanding access to knowledge globally. NEP 2020 recognizes the intersection of these two processes and seeks to integrate digital technology as a means of achieving educational transformation. Gupta and Kaur (2018) explore the challenges in integrating Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in Indian higher education, highlighting systemic barriers such as inadequate infrastructure, insufficient faculty training, limited funding, and resistance to change. Despite improvements in internet access and digital tools, ICT implementation in education is inconsistent, particularly in rural and semi-urban areas. The study also addresses the digital divide, emphasizing disparities in internet speed, device availability, and teacher preparedness between urban and rural regions.

3. Methodology

The present study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design. This paper is a small portion of my Ph. D. research work (Shah R.D., 2025) titled 'Impact of Globalization and Modernization in University Students (with Special Reference to Postgraduate Students of Gujarat University)'. Primary data were collected from 400 postgraduate students across different faculties at Gujarat University, including Arts, Commerce/Management, Science, and Professional Courses. In the thesis several concepts were explored such as aims of higher education, relation of globalization and modernization in higher education, role of ICT and National Education Policy (NEP 2020).

A stratified random sampling technique was used to ensure representation from diverse academic backgrounds. To cover various dimensions of NEP 2020, including technology integration, multilingual education, research orientation, and internationalization, data were collected through open ended questions. Qualitative responses helped to explore thoughts, emotions, experiences and gather in-depth feedback.

4. Role of Technology in Enhancing Learning Experience

Students' opinions on this change were investigated by asking them how they thought technology could improve education. Different levels of awareness, optimism, and insight into how digital technologies are changing education in India are revealed by the responses. The findings indicate that digital technology plays a significant role in enhancing the learning experience, although perceptions vary among students.

Table 1: Role of Technology in Learning (Summary)

Response Type	Total Count	Percentage
Positive Views on Technology	209	52.0%
Concerns about Over-Reliance	32	8.0%
Blank or "Nill" Responses	119	29.6%
"No Idea" Responses	20	5.0%
Total Responses Analysed	**400**	**100%**

A majority of students (52%) expressed positive views toward digital education, while 29.6% provided no response, indicating a lack of engagement or awareness. Additionally, 8% of students raised concerns regarding its implementation, and 5% reported having no idea about the role of technology in education.

Analysis: A majority of students recognize the benefits of digital education, particularly in terms of:

- Ease of Access to Information: Students valued 24/7 availability of study materials, especially useful for self-paced learning.
- Visualization and Multimedia: Digital tools like videos, PPTs, and 3D models help simplify complex topics and enhance retention.
- Flexibility and Remote Learning: Technology supports learning from any location, reducing dependency on physical presence.
- Blended Learning Approach: A majority favor combining digital tools with traditional methods for a balanced learning experience.
- Automation and Future Readiness: Particularly noted by Professional (IT) students who see technology as vital for future careers.
- However, the high percentage of “Nil” responses suggests a lack of engagement or awareness among a significant section of students. This indicates that while digital education is widely promoted, its understanding and effective utilization remain uneven.

Despite its advantages, digital education presents several challenges such as Digital Divide, Infrastructure Limitations, Reduced Interaction and Over-Reliance on Technology.

5. Multilingualism and Digital Education

The NEP highlights that early instruction in the native tongue, particularly for younger students, can offer a more inclusive and successful educational experience. The question was: “The policy aims to promote multilingualism and mother tongue-based education. What do you think are the benefits of learning in one's mother tongue?” The responses reflect diverse views, ranging from support for

bilingual/multilingual education in a globalized context to strong preference for mother tongue-based learning.

Table 2: Student Views on Multilingualism

Response Type	Approximate Percentage
Positive Views on Mother Tongue-Based Education	60–65%
Support for Multilingual Approach	20–25%
Concerns about Exclusivity of Mother Tongue	10–15%
Blank or "Nill" Responses	15–20%

A majority of students (60–65%) expressed positive views toward mother tongue-based education, while 20–25% supported a multilingual approach. Around 10–15% of respondents raised concerns about the exclusivity of mother tongue instruction, and approximately 15–20% provided blank or "Nil" responses, indicating limited engagement or uncertainty on the issue.

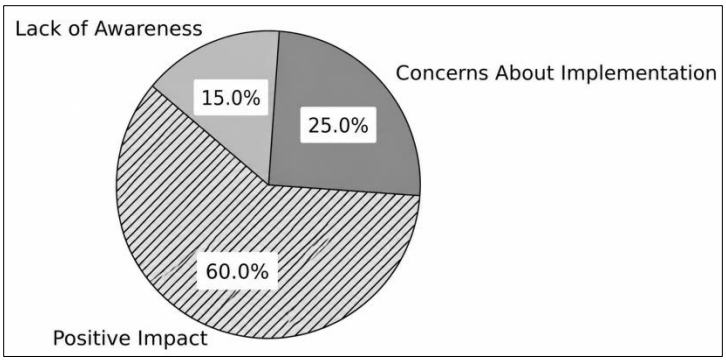
- **Better Understanding & Retention:** Common across all faculties; mother tongue facilitates easier learning and improves academic performance.
- **Cultural & Linguistic Preservation:** Especially emphasized in Arts and Education faculties; seen as a way to maintain identity.
- **Cognitive & Emotional Development:** Several responses highlight better thinking, creativity, and confidence when learning in mother tongue.
- **Multilingualism for Global Access:** Commerce, Management, and Professional students favor adding English to remain competitive in job markets.
- **Bilingual Approach:** Widely supported as the ideal solution: mother tongue for foundational years, English for higher studies.
- **Professional Readiness:** Concern among Science, Commerce, and CA/IT students that exclusive mother tongue education may limit career opportunities.

Analysis: Students recognize the importance of learning in the mother tongue for better understanding and cultural preservation. At the same time, they emphasize the need for English and other global languages for career advancement. Digital platforms can support multilingual education by providing content in multiple languages, thereby promoting inclusivity.

6. Research and Innovation in Digital Era

The New Education Policy (NEP) aims to build a research-driven, innovation-focused academic culture in Indian higher education. It moves beyond rote learning by promoting inquiry, creativity, and critical thinking, while strengthening research infrastructure and encouraging interdisciplinary learning. To understand student perceptions on this vision, responses were gathered to the question: "How do you think this could impact the quality of education and research in India?"

Chart 1: Research & Innovation Perception



A majority of students (60%) expressed a positive outlook, while 25% raised concerns, and 15% demonstrated a lack of awareness regarding the issue.

Analysis: Most responses indicate that research leads to higher education quality, problem-solving skills, and real-world applications. Students believe that digital education enhances research capabilities by:

- Providing access to global knowledge
- Encouraging innovation
- Facilitating collaboration

However, some respondents question whether research is done with originality or just copied which concerns about plagiarism and lack of originality highlight the need for proper academic training.

7. Internationalization and Digital Education

India's NEP promotes internationalization in education by fostering collaborations, recruiting global universities, and facilitating exchanges among students and teachers. This initiative aims to elevate academic standards and prepare students for a global context, while also addressing concerns related to accessibility, cultural integration, and participation disparities. Students were asked the following question to investigate these aspects: "The NEP talks about promoting internationalization and global exposure in education. Do you see any potential benefits or challenges in this aspect?"

Table 3: Faculty-wise Responses

Faculty	Benefit	Challenge	Nil
Arts	41.0%	9.0%	50.0%
Commerce/Management	49.0%	6.0%	45.0%
Professional Programs	31.0%	13.0%	56.0%
Science	39.0%	11.0%	50.0%

Across faculties, students generally perceive internationalization as beneficial, though with varying degrees of response. Students from Commerce/Management reported the highest perceived benefits (49%) and the lowest challenges (6%), followed by Arts (41% benefits, 9% challenges) and Science (39% benefits, 11% challenges). In contrast, Professional Programs showed comparatively lower perceived benefits (31%) and higher challenges (13%). Notably, a significant proportion of students across all faculties provided "Nil" responses—ranging from 45% to 56%—indicating limited awareness or engagement with the concept of internationalization in education.

Analysis: Students view internationalization positively in terms of:

- Global Exposure: Enhances competitiveness and access to international opportunities.
- Cultural Exchange: Promotes cross-cultural understanding and global perspective.
- Career Opportunities: Enables global networking and better career prospects.

However, some challenges have also been highlighted by the respondents such as:

- Language Barriers: Communication challenges in non-English-speaking regions.
- Cultural Barriers: Difficulty adapting to new cultural norms and lifestyles.
- Economic Barriers: High costs make studying abroad inaccessible for many.
- Brain Drain: Concern over skilled students not returning to contribute locally.
- Cultural Erosion: Fear of losing traditional values due to Western influence.

8. Limitations of the Study

This study is subject to a few limitations:

- Geographical Limitation: The study is geographically confined to Gujarat University, Ahmedabad. Hence, the findings may not be entirely generalizable to universities across India, though they offer useful insights.
- Sample Specificity: Although efforts were made to ensure diversity, the sampling was limited to 400 postgraduate students only, excluding undergraduates or distance learners. Some social groups or remote rural perspectives may still be underrepresented.
- Self-reported Data: The responses are based on self-reporting by students, which may carry subjective bias or social desirability effects.

9. Suggestions

The findings reveal a complex relationship between digital education and student experiences. While technology enhances learning, its benefits are not equally distributed. The gap between policy objectives and ground realities highlights the need for a more inclusive approach.

- **Strengthen digital infrastructure**: Institutions should improve internet connectivity, availability of devices, and technological resources to support seamless digital learning.
- **Promote digital literacy:** Students and teachers must be equipped with the necessary skills to effectively use digital tools and platforms for academic purposes.
- **Encourage blended learning:** A balanced combination of traditional classroom teaching and digital methods can enhance learning outcomes and student engagement.
- **Provide affordable access to technology:** Efforts should be made to ensure that all students, especially from economically weaker sections, have access to affordable devices and internet services.
- **Train teachers in ICT**: Regular training programs should be conducted to help teachers adapt to digital teaching methods and effectively integrate technology into pedagogy.

10. Conclusion

Digital education is a transformative force in higher education. However, its success depends on addressing challenges related to accessibility, infrastructure, and inclusivity. A balanced approach combining digital and traditional methods is essential for achieving the goals of NEP 2020.

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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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