

# Towards Equal Educational Opportunities for All Children: Prospects and Challenges under National Education Policy (NEP) 2020

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**Abstract** -The NEP 2020 has provided an opportunity to create a more equitable and inclusive education system that aims to revolutionize education in India. The goal of an equitable education system is to “remove all barriers towards holistic education”. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) laid down 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), under which Goal 4 avowed commitment to “Ensure Inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” by 2030. Keeping to its commitment, the Government of India launched the National Education Policy 2020 that focuses on holistic development, multidisciplinary learning, global competitiveness, accountability and quality assurance, vocational and action-oriented education, etc. The objective of this paper is to explore the framework and philosophy of NEP 2020 and to consider various competencies that might help to achieve equitable and inclusive education in India. One of the most profound contributions of the NEP 2020 lies in enhancing access to equitable and inclusive education. Embracing a multidisciplinary learning approach, NEP 2020 is the key to creating a robust legal framework that reflects a shift in priorities and acknowledges the value of education. There are also challenges to overcome before India can provide equitable and inclusive education under NEP 2020. Adopting the NEP 2020 demands a new vision that paradigm shifts towards holistic education in India. As per the analysis of secondary data, we need to ramp up interdisciplinary cooperation among the stakeholders.

**Key Words:** Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), National Education Policy, holistic education, multidisciplinary learning, NEP 2020.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The objectives of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 are to transform India's education system into a modern, progressive, and equitable one. The new

policy emphasizes improving literacy and numeracy outcomes in primary schools, reducing dropout levels in middle and secondary schools, and introducing a multidisciplinary approach in the higher education system. A well-defined and advanced education policy is essential for every country, as education is the key driver of economic and social progress. Taking into account their particular traditions and culture, different countries have adopted varied education systems. Recently, the Government of India took a colossal leap forward by announcing its new education policy, the National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020), almost three decades after the last major revision was made to the policy in 1986. The policy has come at the right time, and the objective is very good. But there lies a world of distinction between laying down a policy on paper and following it in spirit. The success of NEP 2020 and the pace of its implementation depend to a large extent on how effectively the government, universities, and schools can overcome the practical challenges facing them.

Education is the most important feature for any country to permit it to achieve its full human prospective, develop a fair and just society, and to promote overall national development. The education sector across the globe has newly experiential transformation in the programme structure and outcome due to speedy scientific and technological advancements.

Objectives of the Study:

1. To study the opportunities and challenges presented by the new Education Policy 2020 for Indian school education.
2. To identify the concept of the National Education Policy 2020 and the Structure of Education.

3. To describe the nature of learning framework of early childhood education under NEP 2020.

**Research Methodology:**

The present study espouses a primarily theoretical approach to explore NEP 2020 in promoting the 21st-century student learning. In order to gain a comprehensive understanding of this subject matter, data was collected from secondary sources, encompassing a range of diverse materials such as research publications, scholarly journals, websites, articles, etc.

The New Education Policy (NEP2020) is devised to restore and rejuvenate the background of the Indian education system, including its regulation and governance, and to create a new system that is aligned with the desired goals of the 21st century. NEP places special importance on the development of the inspired probable of each individual. Further, the policy lays stress on the principle that education must widen not only the horizons of cognitive capacities- both the foundational capacities of literacy and numeracy and higher order cognitive capacities like critical thinking and problem solving, but also social, ethical, and emotional capacities and outlook. Moreover, this NEP 2020 visualizes an 'education system rooted in Indian ethos that contributes directly to transforming India into an equitable and vibrant knowledge society, by providing high-quality education to all, and thereby making India a global knowledge superpower (NEP 2020, p. 6).

Education is a means to empower people, uplift communities, and drive economic growth. It promotes a multi-pronged approach that addresses the gender disparity, ensuring equality of education for all. A massive change in every dimension of the heart of the learning process guarantees autonomy, good governance, and empowerment. Online education has replaced conventional classroom instruction E-dtech has the potential to provide innovative, cost-effective methods to transform education and can play a powerful role in achieving universal access to quality education for all children by 2030. The inspirational goal set by India's New Education Policy is the implementation of strategies for remote education and delivering high-quality audio-visual, interactive content to effectively capture student attention. Developing creative assessments to test socio-

emotional skills reorients the entire education system towards holistic learning.

Education has always occupied a key role in the growth and development of an individual, country, or the world. Currently, the education situation is experiencing a great transformation with the introduction of technological advancements in the old school learning system. The complete process of spreading information is experiencing a shift from the conventional, stereotypical way of learning in the classrooms to a more facilitated, self-driven learning with the help of technology.

India's NEP 2020 is a policy document made by the Government of India to provide quality education to all citizens and equip them with the knowledge and skills required for their development and aimed at providing access to quality education for all, irrespective of caste, religion, gender, or socio-economic background. The policy focuses on making education more affordable, equitable, and accessible across the country and emphasizes skill development and improvement in existing educational infrastructure.

The recent challenge for learners is the enrichment of resources and the execution of basic needs in a regular classroom arrangement. Some social obstructions make children more uncomfortable in social platforms. The stringency of schooling system makes them more discouraged towards the learning process in the classroom, somewhere it makes more internal suffocation in the public. The major challenge is regarding the lack of teaching learning materials and instructional strategies, as this miscommunication with learners makes them hopeless and worthless.

The Samagra Shiksha Scheme (SSS), introduced in 2018 and positioned as a pioneer to NEP 2020, put together various interventions, including Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), vocational training, and digital infrastructure upgrades. The Government of India in July 2020 accepted the New Education Policy (NEP), universalization of elementary education in India. The National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education 2010 quoted the NEP 1986, which said, "The status of the teacher reflects the socio-cultural ethos of the society; it is said that no people can rise above the level of its teachers". NEP 2020 has entrusted the intellectual development of kindergarten children from

underprivileged sections to matriculation-pass Anganwadi teachers and helpers whose monthly salary is about ₹10,000 and ₹5,000, respectively. Anganwadi teachers will not be able to fulfill the task of developing underprivileged kindergarten students into creators simply because they lack the expertise to do so.

The NEP2020 aims to offer universal access to high-quality childhood education through an innovative educational framework. The pre-primary education programmes in rural areas suffer from unique challenges due to geographical location, economic distress, and inadequate infrastructure. The educational quality among rural, marginalized students in the pre-primary section is inferior in government schools. The Annual Status of Education Report 2019 revealed poor learning outcomes in early childhood education in rural areas. The Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) has released the National Curriculum for Early Childhood Care and Education 2024, titled “Aadharshila” for play-based learning on the lines of the national Education Policy 2020 and national Curriculum framework.

#### CONCLUSION

Access to quality education in rural areas remains a huge challenge. Indian school education system prioritizes service training and professional development among the school teachers leads to bridging the learning gap. NEP 2020 aims to support a multi-disciplinary ecosystem, global best practices, outcome-based education, skill development, education in the Indian language medium and establish a dynamic, research-driven academic environment. Since the launch of NEP 2020, there have been visible developments in our education system. The PM SHRI initiative, which underlines the public service ethos, is an example of providing high-quality learning environments in government schools. The Play-based learning method aims at making pre-primary education qualitative, inclusive, and autonomous, and also allows students to practice at their own pace to improve foundational literacy and numeracy skills.

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