



NEP 2020 AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN INDIA : CHALLENGES AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

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ABSTRACT

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is a landmark policy that aims to transform the country's education system to meet the challenges of the 21st century. The NEP 2020 is a comprehensive policy that seeks to address the various challenges faced by India's education system, including issues related to access, equity, quality, and affordability. The policy is aligned with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4, which focuses on ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all. NEP 2020 aims to ensure equal participation of boys and girls in achieving quality education. The policy has a thrust on Universalization of education at all levels. The objective of the policy is to ensure that all children in the age group of 3-18 years have access to quality education, with a focus on marginalized and disadvantaged groups. The policy promotes inclusive education, with a focus on providing equal opportunities to children with disabilities, girls, and children from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. The policy recommends a comprehensive reform of the curriculum, by pin pointing the promotion of critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills among students. The policy emphasizes the importance of teacher education and training targeting the development of skills and competencies of teachers to promote high-quality education. This paper aims to explore the role of NEP 2020 in achieving Sustainable Development Goals in India. The paper also explores the challenges faced by the Educational Administrators in implementation of Policy besides resource constraints, and social and cultural barriers. It also provides certain suggestions and strategies for fruitful implementation of the policy.

KEY WORDS: NEP 2020, Sustainable Development Goals, Challenges.

INTRODUCTION

India is a country of multicultural diversity and growing economy. It is a major contributor towards world's development, and it is quiet evident from its various education policies which it has been implementing since independence. Education is fundamental right of all the citizens, and is a mean for holistic development of every member of the society which in turn plays an important role in developing an equitable



society. India continuously aims at providing universal access to quality education for all its citizens. In coming years India will have the highest population of young people in the world, and by providing quality education to them will certainly brighten the future of country. More recently New Education Policy (2020) is aligning the education system towards achieving the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals.

The (SDG4) Goal four of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development seeks to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities to all by 2030. Such goals need to be achieved and for this NEP2020 is providing support by restructuring entire education system. (Chaudhary, 2022)

The World in general and India in particular is facing a rapid change in knowledge landscape. With demand the various technological advances like artificial intelligence and machine learning are taking over the unskilled jobs, thus arising a need for skilled workforce. The shift is more towards education which is inclined towards critical thinking abilities and problem-solving skills. This indirectly opening scope for multidisciplinary education and pedagogy involving experiential, integrated and holistic approaches. Considering this background this National Education Policy 2020 is the first education policy of the 21st century which aims to address the growing developmental imperatives of the country. This policy proposes the revision of all aspects of the education structure aligning with the achievement of United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Further it aims to bring the 2 crores out of school children back into main stream. One of the primary goals of schooling is to ensure Universal access to Education at all levels through various initiatives like Samagra Shiksha and Right to Education Act. Although India has done remarkably well but a survey conducted by NSSO noted that despite an increase in GER the dropout ratio is still there. Thus the priority is bringing back all these dropout students and achieving 100% Gross Enrollment Ratio in preschool to secondary level by 2030.

The NEP 2020 is working towards providing access of education to all including Socio-Economically disadvantaged groups (SEDGs) including gender, socio-cultural and geographical disabled communities. Sonawane (2022)

NEP 2020 further focuses on multilingualism and education through mother tongue, local language and regional language. It is emphasized that the medium of instruction needs to be mother tongue at least till grade 5th and preferably till grade 8 and even beyond if possible. It also encourages students to take up vocational Education at School level and they start earning at young age. It rightly advocates that students should be contributing member of the society and help in economy growth of the nation. The NEP 2020 advocates opening of Higher Education institutions with Open Distance Learning (ODL) and online programmes. This will help in improving the access of Higher Education to all, increase in Gross Enrollment ration and providing opportunities for lifelong learning (SDGs4).



For quality enhancement top institution will be encouraged to become multidisciplinary offering online programmes. But if we look towards progress of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) it is seen as a grim picture. It has been eight years since the inception of these goals but the SDGs Report 2023 showed very slow progress. This sluggish progress is the effect of COVID-19, climate change impact, geopolitical conflicts and fragile global economy. This slow progress is seen in many countries including India. (Mohanty, 2018)

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGs)

Sustainable Development Goals or global goals are a collection of seventeen interlinked objectives designed to serve as a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and planet. In 2015 the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) adopted these SDGs' in UNGA resolution known as the 2030 Agenda. These 17 goals with 169 targets, unanimously agreed upon by all 143 UN member states, aims to eradicate poverty, enhance education, reduce inequality and stimulate economic growth by 2030.

NEP 2020 ALIGNMENT WITH SDGs

NEP 2020 emphasizes quality education for all in India. NEP 2020 has put a focus on providing comprehensive and integrated environmental education including areas such as sustainable development, waste management, environmental protection, biodiversity, sanitation and climate change.

NEP 2020 is in the process of addressing educational disparities and promoting inclusivity in alignment with SDG4. SDG-4 envisages ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all. The NEP, through the various provisions, strive to achieve these targets. These provisions include Multi-Disciplinary Approach, Education and skill integration, making education more inclusive, allowing foreign universities.

According to NEP 2020 paragraph 15, teachers are the Key to achieving all the SDG4 targets. As teachers are a fundamental condition for guaranteeing quality education, teachers and educators should be empowered adequately recruited and remunerated, motivated, professionally qualified and supported within well resourced, efficient and effectively governed systems. (Ram, 2021)

The NEP 2020 further promotes gender equality (SDG5) ensuring equal opportunities for girls and women. It aims to eliminate gender-based discrimination and stereotypes in education, aligning with SDG5's objectives. NEP 2020 focuses on equipping students with practical skills and knowledge making them more employable. This aligns with SDG8 goal of promoting sustained inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all. The policy acknowledges the significance of environmental education and sustainability. It encourages eco-friendly practices and awareness of environmental issues among students aligning with SDG13 objective of combating climate change. NEP 2020 underscores the importance of



research and innovation and entrepreneurship aligning with SDG9 goal of promoting inclusive and sustainable industrialization and fostering innovation. The policy promotes international collaboration in higher education and research. It aims to establish partnerships with global institutions, foster knowledge exchange and align with SDG 17's objectives of strengthening global partnerships for sustainable development. Thus it is quite evident that need of the hour is education for sustainable development (ESD) which should aim to promote development of knowledge, skills, understanding, value and actions required for creating a sustainable world.

CHALLENGES TO EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF NEP 2020

It has been noticed that there are many challenges in effective implementations of NEP 2020 and a few have been discussed here.

Resource Constraints: One of the foremost hindrance in Implementation of NEP 2020 is Financial limitations. It can hinder the ability of institutions to implement the NEP effectively. Upgrading infrastructure, providing faculty training, and offering diverse learning experiences all require adequate funding. Without proper funds it may face difficulty in its implementation.

Coordination among Stakeholders: The NEP requires collaboration between various stakeholders, including central and state governments, regulatory bodies, universities, and teachers. Streamlining communication and ensuring everyone works towards the same goals can be challenging.

Faculty Development and Training: A significant shift in teaching methodology is envisioned by the NEP. Equipping existing faculty with the necessary skills and knowledge to deliver this new pedagogy requires comprehensive training programs.

Curriculum Revision and Standardization: Developing and implementing a new curriculum Framework that requires consistency across diverse institutions is a complex task. Balancing national guidelines with institutional autonomy needs careful consideration.

Assessment and Evaluation Reforms: Moving away from rote memorization towards assessing a wider range of skills requires developing robust and reliable evaluation methods. This necessitates innovation and capacity building within Education System.

Strategies for Effective Implementation of NEP 2020

- 1.Strategies for faculty improvement includes Investing in training programs to equip faculty with new pedagogical skills and knowledge.
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- 3.Incentivizing and promoting research activities among faculty members.
- 4.Addressing faculty shortages through targeted recruitment drives and improved working conditions.
- 5.Regularly updating curriculum content to reflect advancements in various fields.



6. Introducing more flexibility in course selection, allowing students to pursue electives and explore interdisciplinary interest.

7. Increasing government funding (requires government efforts for this) and exploring alternative sources of investment to upgrade infrastructure in universities and colleges.

8. Prioritizing the development of well-equipped labs, libraries, and digital learning facilities.

9. Ensuring easy access to learning resources including books, journals, and online databases.

10. Strategies for Equitable Access includes enhanced scholarship schemes. Expanding existing scholarship programs and increasing their financial coverage can make higher education more affordable for disadvantaged students.

11. Focus on Rural Education is another strategy. Investing in establishing new universities and colleges in rural areas, along with improving existing infrastructure, can bridge the geographical gap.

12. Promoting Inclusive Education: Implementing affirmative action programs and targeted outreach initiatives can encourage students from marginalized communities to pursue higher education.

13. Digital Learning Initiatives: Utilizing online learning platforms and digital resources can provide wider access to quality education, especially in remote areas.

14. Bridge Courses and Remedial Support: Offering bridge courses and academic support programs can help students from disadvantaged backgrounds overcome academic preparedness gaps. Bridging the Digital Divide

15. Government Initiatives includes investing in expanding broadband infrastructure, particularly in rural areas, to ensure wider internet connectivity.

16. Subsidy programs or initiatives to provide students from low-income families with affordable laptops or tablets.

17. Digital literacy training programs to equip students and faculty with the necessary skills to navigate online learning platforms and utilize digital resources.

CONCLUSION: The National Education Policy 2020 aims to transform the country's education system to meet the various challenges for better future. NEP 2020 seeks to address issues of access, equity, quality and affordability. This policy also aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals particularly SDG-4; SDG-5; SDG-13; SDG-9 and SDG-17. This is possible through effective strategies as discussed above.

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