ISSN (Online): 2455-3662
EPRA International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research (IJMR) - Peer Reviewed Journal
Volume: 12| Issue: 3| March2026|| Journal DOI: 10.36713/epra2013 || SJIF Impact Factor 2026: 8.753 || ISI Value: 1.188

THE ISSUES AND CHALLENGES OF NEP (NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL POLICY) 2020 IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Article DOI: https://doi.org/10.36713/epra26839
DOI No: 10.36713/epra26839

ABSTRACT

The National Education Policy 2020, which aims to support flexibility, transdisciplinary learning, and development, represents a major overhaul in India's higher education system. Although the policy aims to improve quality, accessibility, and global competitiveness, several obstacles hinder its implementation. Lack of qualified faculty, opposition to institutional and administrative change, and poor infrastructure, particularly in rural institutions, are major problems. The digital divide between rural and urban locations further restricts equal access to technology-driven education. Significant obstacles are also posed by curriculum adaptation, data protection, and language diversity. Due to a lack of information and support networks, marginalised communities may continue to experience challenges. These obstacles present chances for modernisation and innovation in higher education. To achieve equitable and sustainable development, progressive planning, sufficient resource allocation, capacity building, and strong policy backing are necessary for effective implementation.

KEY WORDS: *Issues, Challenges, NEP 2020.*

INTRODUCTION

The landscape of higher education globally is undergoing transformation, driven by the imperatives of knowledge economies, technological advancement, and the pursuit of sustainable development goals (Altbach & Wit, 2020; Marginson, 2021). In India, this global momentum culminated in the formulation of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, a landmark framework that replaces the 34-year-old National Policy on Education of 1986. Approved by the Union Cabinet on July 29, 2020, the policy represents the most comprehensive reform in Indian education since independence (Ministry of Education, 2020).

In the higher education sector, the NEP 2020 envisages a paradigm shift from a rigid, disciplinary system to a holistic, flexible, and multidisciplinary model. Key reforms include the introduction of a 4-year undergraduate program with multiple entry and exit options, the establishment of the Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) as a unified regulatory body, the promotion of institutional autonomy, and the ambitious target of achieving a 50 per cent Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) by 2035 (Bele, 2023). Additionally, the policy advocates for the creation of an Academic Bank of Credits to facilitate seamless credit transfer and the discontinuation of the M. Phil program to streamline doctoral education (Mahaldar et al., 2026).

Despite the transformative potential of these reforms, critical scholarship has begun to highlight substantial challenges that threaten their effective implementation (Kaur, 2024). Multiple interrelated factors complicate the transition from policy vision to ground-level reality. Scholars have identified inadequate public funding as a primary concern, with the policy's aspiration to allocate 6 per cent of GDP to education remaining historically unattainable (Azam & Ahmad, 2022). Furthermore, the concurrent nature of education under India's federal structure necessitates complex coordination between the Centre and states, a process fraught with political and administrative challenges (Singh, 2024). Infrastructural deficits, particularly in rural and semi-urban institutions, compounded by the digital divide, pose significant barriers to equitable access (Ering & Ering, 2023). Additionally, the shortage of qualified faculty and the absence of comprehensive teacher training mechanisms undermine the policy's pedagogical aspirations (Santra & Basu, 2023).

This paper examines multifaceted issues and challenges confronting the implementation of NEP 2020 in Indian higher education. It argues that without addressing the structural, financial, and human resource constraints, the policy's transformative vision risks remaining unrealised. The paper is structured as follows: first, it analyses the financial challenges and resource allocation constraints; second, it examines the federal and regulatory complexities; third, it explores infrastructural and equity-related issues; and finally, it discusses faculty development and pedagogical challenges before offering concluding reflections on the forward.

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REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Bele (2023) highlight that NEP 2020 offers opportunities such as flexible learning and skill development but faces major challenges, including funding gaps, poor infrastructure, and the need for faculty training, indicating a gap between policy vision and implementation.

Ahmad (2023) states that strong physical and digital infrastructure is key to NEP 2020, improving participation and learning, while poor facilities increase dropout rates. It concludes that infrastructure, along with teacher training and policy support, is essential for quality education.

Nirmal (2020) emphasises that NEP-2020's multidisciplinary approach is essential for transforming higher education. Studies and committees highlight the need for flexible curricula, integration of diverse disciplines, and holistic learning, making education more adaptive and relevant to 21st-century demands.

Azam & Ahmad (2024) argue that adequate funding is vital for quality, access, and equity in higher education, but low public investment remains a major challenge. They conclude that increased public spending and better financial management are essential.

Sarman (2023) views NEP 2020 as a comprehensive reform aimed at improving quality and access in education, while highlighting challenges such as funding, infrastructure, teacher training, and the digital divide, and stressing the need for effective implementation.

Ramakrishna (2023) shows that NEP 2020 faces a gap between its vision and implementation in secondary education, with key challenges including poor infrastructure, the digital divide, low teacher readiness, financial constraints, and curriculum reforms, highlighting the need for strong execution.

OBJECTIVES

- To examine the different issues of NEP 2020 on higher education.
- To analyse the challenges to implement NEP 2020 in higher education.

METHODOLOGY

To identify issues relevant to the higher education sector under NEP 2020, the researcher reviewed a wide range of articles, journals, books, government websites, NEP 2020 guidelines, and internet-based resources. Subsequently, by analysing these diverse sources of information, the researcher identified various implementation-related challenges currently existing within the higher education sector in the context of NEP 2020.

Overall, in line with the requirements of this study, it relies primarily on secondary data sources. Consequently, it constitutes a 'documentary study, conducted using a qualitative approach.

Major Features of NEP-2020

The concern for improvement of education has been at the forefront of India's developmental agenda, with successive governments recognising education as a fundamental driver of social and economic progress (Rani, 2022). The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, approved by the Union Cabinet on July 29, 2020, represents the most comprehensive reform in Indian education in 34 years, replacing the National Policy on Education of 1986 (Ministry of Education, 2020). The policy introduces several innovative and transformative features across higher education sectors. Among the most revolutionary changes is the dismantling of rigid divisions between the humanities, arts, and sciences, as well as between academic and vocational education, thereby fostering a truly multidisciplinary learning environment (Kumar, 2023).

Key Features include

- Flexible undergraduate programs: 3–4-year programs with multiple entry and exit options; students receive certificates, diplomas, or degrees based on duration completed.
- Academic Bank of Credits digital system for credit accumulation and transfer across institutions.
- Higher Education Commission of India (HECI), a single unified regulatory body replacing UGC and AICTE (Excluding Medical and Legal Education).
- GER targets to achieve a 50% gross enrolment ratio in higher education by 2035.
- Multidisciplinary education: No rigid separations between arts, sciences, and vocational streams.
- foreign university entry permission for the top 100 foreign universities to establish campuses in India.
- Ph. D to be the sole doctoral degree; M.Phil. discontinued.

❖ **Issues of NEP (National Educational Policy) 2020 In Higher Education**

- **Development of Skills:** The Union Cabinet of India approved the National Education Policy (Ramakrishna, 2023). It is the first education policy of the 21st century and aims to address the many growing developmental imperatives of our country. This Policy proposes revising and revamping all aspects of the education structure, including its regulation and governance, to create a new system aligned with the aspirational goals of 21st-century education, including SDG4, while building upon India's traditions and value systems (NEP, 2020). The National Education Policy 2020 aims to transform the education landscape by focusing on multiple aspects, including early childhood care and education, school education, higher education, vocational education, and teachers' training (ABSM, 2023). Under the Government of India's Skill India Mission (SIM), the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) delivers skill, re-skill, and up-skill training through an extensive network of skill development centres/institutes under various schemes, viz. (GIMEDHE, 2025). While policymakers and

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administrators must reflect on why India remains far from the goal established by the Kothari Commission in 1964–1966, the public's attitude toward vocational education must change (Rani, 2022).

- **Teachers' Availability:** National Education Policy 2020 (NEP, 2020) places the teacher at the centre of the fundamental reforms in the education system in India. Education is a continuous process that affects every citizen's life, and the teacher plays a crucial role in that process (NPST, 2023). The National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST) and the National Mission for Mentoring (NMM) have been developed to support teachers' professional development. The NPST outlines the competencies required for effective teaching at different career stages (GIME, 2024). The recommendations of NEP 2020 prioritise students' individual development, including the cultivation of conceptual understanding, creativity, and critical thinking through a multidisciplinary, holistic approach to experiential learning (Jana & Chattopadhyay, 2023).
- **Management System:** Education systems evolve in response to societal, economic, and technological transformations. In India, NEP 2020 represents one of the most significant reforms in decades, aiming to restructure higher education into a flexible, multidisciplinary, and student-centric system (Lole, 2026). This is a very important issue to discuss, from schooling to higher education, students regularly make an effort to sharpen their skill set and, after completing their studies, join the ranks of people working for organisations in India or abroad, building successful lives (Kale, 2023).
- **Multidisciplinary Higher Education:** An interdisciplinary educational program is a fantastic idea that will provide students with the freedom to study the areas they want. The multidisciplinary approach in higher education is a significant step in NEP-2020, which offers students the flexibility to choose subjects from any stream or discipline (Nirmal, 2024). The agenda of providing quality education is reflected in Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) of the 2030 Agenda, which India adopted in 2015. Such critical targets can be achieved by reconfiguration of the entire education system (Kumar, 2024).
- **Curriculum:** NEP 2020 emphasises an education that increases creativity and innovation, critical thinking and higher-order thinking capacities, problem-solving abilities, teamwork, communication skills, greater in-depth learning and mastery of curricula across fields, social and moral awareness, and other 21st-century skills, besides general engagement and enjoyment of learning (AKBSS, 2023). In accordance with the NEP 2020, the UGC has formulated a new student-centric "Curriculum and Credit Framework for Undergraduate Programmes (CCFUP)" that incorporates a flexible choice-based credit system, a multidisciplinary approach, and multiple entry and exit options. This will enable students to pursue their career path by choosing a subject field of interest (CCFUP, 2024). This is a risky worldview that discourages and undercuts a person's other natural abilities.
- **Digitalisation:** The introduction of the NEP 2020 marks a transformative policy within the Indian education system, aimed primarily at integrating new technologies into the educational framework and establishing a novel, advanced methodology for imparting education through digital technologies. Against the backdrop of growing awareness regarding the bright future of digital education, the NEP 2020 has formulated a specific blueprint or roadmap to ensure the effective application of technology within India's educational structure; the core objective of which is to guarantee both the quality and universal outreach of education across India's diverse geographical landscape. Introducing NEP 2020 is a policy change in the Indian Education System that aims to adopt new technologies and use digital technology to formulate a new and improved system of education delivery (Vats, 2024). The idea of digital learning is not new and has existed in various forms for many years. However, after the covid pandemic interrupted face-to-face learning, its importance increased significantly (Dalal, 2023). Teachers are expected to grow from their pedagogical contexts by using data-driven tools to monitor student progress and to participate in online professional development (Bhakat & Bera, 2025).
- **Assessment System:** The assessment system, including the final certification, will be guided by HEI. To promote innovation and flexibility, the choice-based credit system will be revised (Panigrahi & Gupta, 2021). NEP 2020 introduces a fundamental shift from summative to formative assessment, recognising that learning is a dynamic, continuous process that transcends the boundaries of traditional examinations (Meena, n.d.). The policy emphasises competency-based education and experiential learning, aiming to address the limitations of traditional assessment methods by incorporating continuous and comprehensive evaluation (Naik et al., 2024).
- **Multiple Entry and Exit System:** Highlighting the importance of flexible learning, NEP, 2020 states that imaginative and flexible curricular structures will enable creative combinations of disciplines for study and will offer multiple entry and exit points, thereby removing the currently prevalent rigid boundaries (GMEEAPHEI, 2021). A key recommendation of the NEP 2020 is to enable a creative combination of disciplines in study, incorporating multiple entry and exit options (SRTMUN, 2022).
- **Academic Bank of Credits (ABC):** The Government of India has approved the constitution of a High-Level Committee, vide order dated 18th November 2021, to develop a National Credit Accumulation & Transfer Framework for both Vocational and General Education (NCF, 2022). Its core mission is to modernise and democratise higher education by introducing unprecedented levels of flexibility, student mobility, and

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personalised learning opportunities. Envisioned as a sophisticated digital repository, ABC serves as a central hub for the storage and management of students' academic credits, empowering them to seamlessly transfer, accumulate, and redeem these credits across a network of recognised institutions (H. Langa et al., 2025). Expected Impact of ABC on the Educational System: The UGC expects a positive impact resulting from the practice of ABC in the coming years. HEIs participating in the scheme will benefit greatly from the smooth management of credits (Bhandari, 2022).

- **Governance and Regulatory Issue:** Education is fundamental for achieving full human potential, developing an equitable and just society, and promoting national development (NEP, 2020). Governance and digital infrastructure are key to the success of NEP 2020. Strong governance guarantees smooth decision-making, transparency, and accountability, while digital infrastructure supports new-age learning and widens access to education (Singh et al., 2025).
- **Language and Medium of Instruction:** Language is also viewed as a key tool in the school curriculum for ages to come, and plays a very instrumental role in a child's overall development. Language performs numerous functions not only in educational settings but also in our daily lives (Ghosh, 2024). A major foundation of NEP-2020 is its emphasis on multilingualism, specifically the importance of mother-tongue instruction in early grades (Verma, 2025). By reading the NEP 2020 as a document that reiterates the emphasis on imparting regional language education, the goal is to understand the linkages among family language preservation, language policy implementation in schools, and the NEP 2020's broader vision (Sastry & Ghosh, 2025).
- **Infrastructure:** NEP 2020 states that the Ministry will focus on establishing digital content, digital infrastructure, and resource building to meet the demands of higher education and the classroom in terms of e-learning (Prathap, 2025). Basic structure of NEP in school-based on four stages of study in the education system of students between 3 and 18 years of age. The new system of 5+3+3+4 school structure will comprise 12 years of school and 3 years of pre-school (Ahaad, 2023). The policy seeks to implement a holistic, multidisciplinary educational process with inclusive and equitable learning opportunities. The policy supersedes the old NEP 1986 and brings sweeping changes across all levels of education (Singh et al., 2025).
- **Research and Innovation:** The National Research Foundation (NRF) is a pivotal component of the NEP 2020. The NRF serves as a central body dedicated to funding and supporting research and innovation across all disciplines of education. It provides financial backing for various research initiatives, fellowships, and vocational programs designed for students and researchers. Furthermore, the NRF will foster collaboration between educational institutions and the industrial sector to facilitate knowledge and technology exchange. The NEP 2020 constitutes a comprehensive policy framework, the primary objective of which is to reform and revitalise India's education sector radically. This National Education Policy of 2020 is fundamentally grounded in the core principles of "Access, Quality, Equity, Affordability, and Accountability." This proposed initiative aims to address various existing challenges in India's educational landscape—most notably, low literacy standards, high student dropout rates, and the absence of a cohesive, interdisciplinary framework. NEP 2020 highlights the importance of research and innovation in education. The policy recognises that research and innovation are essential for developing a knowledge-based economy and for the country's growth and development (Kumar, 2023). The NEP has several challenging tasks, conveying multiple crises in the education system. Its effective implementation is critical if India wants to attain demographic dividends. Apart from these, weak state capacity, limited availability of financial resources, and the education ecosystem, which acts as a drag on new ideas and innovation (Reddy, 2025).

❖ Implementation Challenges of NEP (National Educational Policy) 2020 In Higher Education:

The difficulty of achieving NEP 2020's lofty objectives is a major problem. Significant funding, cooperation among numerous parties, and political will are needed to transform the educational system completely. It can be difficult to ensure successful implementation at all educational levels, particularly in institutions of higher learning (Ishaq, 2024).

- **Lake of Infrastructure and funding:** One of the biggest challenges in the implementation of the NEP 2020 is the lack of infrastructure in schools (Sharma,2025). NEP 2020 requires substantial investment over the coming years, including targets such as achieving 6% GDP growth in education, improving digital literacy, increasing the number of trained teachers, expanding infrastructure, and raising the gross enrollment ratio to 50% by 2035 (Sarman, 2023). India's education infrastructure is inadequate, with many schools lacking basic facilities such as classrooms, toilets, and libraries (Pruthi et al., n d). Financial limitations impede infrastructure development, faculty training initiatives, and the acquisition of essential resources to meet NEP criteria (Nagamani et al., 2024). Investing in faculty development programs, creating a support system for teachers, and strengthening institutional leadership are crucial for successful implementation (Ishaq, 2024). Because education promotes social and economic growth, a well-organised and forward-thinking education strategy is essential for our country (Yadav & Vashishtha,2026).
- **Lack of trained teachers:** One of the most groundbreaking aspects of NEP 2020 is its approach to teacher education. The policy calls for the establishment of high-quality teacher education institutions in multidisciplinary settings (Singh,2024). The NEP has several challenging tasks, conveying multiple crises in the education system (Kaur,

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2024). learn new skills and have more freedom in teaching, and Teachers try to integrate new tools and technologies into learning. The respondent also shares those rural areas teacher lack enough training to use the new teaching methods and digital tools, Lack of proper classrooms, libraries, labs, and digital tools, Teacher's main focus is on important changes in the education system, Teachers are ready to follow flexible and multi-subject course plans suggested by NEP 2020 and Organizations must provide teachers with good working conditions (Sanghavi, 2025). Implementing NEP 2020 will be difficult unless the compensation review for teachers is reconsidered (Singh, 2023).

- **Monitoring and evaluation:** India's National Education Policy 2020 (NEP, 2020) heralds a paradigm shift, aiming to reconfigure education from early childhood through higher education to meet the demands of the twenty-first century (Government of India, Ministry of Education, 2024). India's National Education Policy 2020 (NEP, 2020) heralds a paradigm shift, aiming to reconfigure education from early childhood through higher education to meet the demands of the twenty-first century (GIME, 2024). Moving away from rote memorisation toward assessing a wider range of skills requires developing robust, reliable evaluation methods. This necessitates innovation and capacity building within the education system (Ishaq, 2024). While NEP 2020 offers a visionary blueprint, bridging gaps in coordination, resources, and data quality will determine its transformative potential (Pandya**,** 2025).
- **Limitations in terms of books:** NEP 2020 faces critical implementation challenges, particularly regarding infrastructure deficits, shortages of trained teachers, and funding constraints. However, there may be limitations in the availability of books and learning materials covering a wide range of subjects and disciplines. The government will have to work with publishers and other stakeholders to ensure that there are enough books and learning materials covering a wide range of subjects and disciplines (Sharma, 2025).
- **Challenging Due to Linguistic Diversity:** To ensure the preservation, growth, and vibrancy of all Indian languages, NEP recommends setting an Indian Institute of Translation and Interpretation (IITI), National Institute (or Institutes) for Pali, Persian and Prakrit, strengthening of Sanskrit and all language departments in HEIs, and use mother tongue/local language as a medium of instruction in more HEI programmes (Babu,2023). However, in secondary schools, the issue of language becomes more complex, especially in multilingual regions where students might be studying in a language that is not their first language. Teaching the fundamental subjects in the mother tongue will be a hassle, as India has 22 scheduled languages and innumerable dialects. The course material will need to be converted to these languages first, and then the requirement of skilled teachers to implement this (Mate, 2023). Creating instructional materials and increasing capacity in many languages may be resource-intensive and require careful preparation (Sardar & Miah, 2024). Teaching in the mother tongue may pose difficulties: Due to the diverse linguistic landscape in India, with 22 official languages and numerous dialects, adapting curriculum materials for the mother tongue can be challenging (Singh & Mishra, 2025).
- **Less emphasis on English**: The policy promotes multilingualism, but there is a demand for proficiency in English for higher education and employment. Balancing regional language instruction with English proficiency remains a challenge (Ramakrishna, 2023).
- **Lack of resource shortages:** All professional education will be an integral part of the higher education system (Babu, 2023). The 2020 national education strategy requires all children to learn local crafts, carpentry, cooking, gardening, and more beginning in 6th grade. Resource shortages make vocational training difficult (Singh, 2023).
- **Lack of digital resources and connectivity:** The digital divide present in India is even more extreme in rural areas, where not everyone can afford smartphones. The problem is further compounded by the poor IT infrastructure in government-run schools, which will create implementation challenges for the digitisation of education (Mate, 2023). Although there is a lot of focus on using technology in teaching, learning, and assessment, building up virtual laboratories, preparing schools, coaching, and setting up conversations, the plan overlooks the digital divide between urban and rural areas, the lack of a sophisticated foundation, and access to gadgets/web (Singh, 2023). Despite the policy's emphasis on equitable access to education, students from marginalised backgrounds may still face barriers, including limited access to technology, inadequate support systems, and limited awareness of the policy's provisions (Ramakrishna, 2023). Addressing the digital divide between urban and rural students and ensuring marginalised communities benefit equally from the policy (Sardar & Miah, 2024).
- **Administrative challenges:** Any new policy or system to be implemented must face challenges, as it proposes changes to the old system, and people do not like change, especially if it goes against their comfort level. A new system is proposed because there is a need for time and upgradation to make young India able to compete with the times and the world. The new system offers some opportunities for cash; every system has its pros and cons, and things will be clear in time. No system is perfect; it requires gradual changes and upgrades over time (Kale, 2023). Despite its advantages, implementation may face challenges. Infrastructure limitations in rural institutions. Resistance to administrative change. Need for faculty training: data security and privacy concerns. Thus, phased implementation and policy support are necessary (Lole et al., 2026).

CONCLUSION

The National Education Policy 2020, which encourages adaptability, interdisciplinary learning, and inclusive development, is a revolutionary vision for higher education.

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Volume: 12| Issue: 3| March2026|| Journal DOI: 10.36713/epra2013 || SJIF Impact Factor 2026: 8.753 || ISI Value: 1.188

However, several obstacles, including poor infrastructure, a lack of qualified faculty, budgetary constraints, the digital divide, and administrative opposition, hinder its effective implementation. The process is made more difficult by problems with support for underprivileged populations, access to technology, and linguistic variety. The concept has enormous potential to modernise India's higher education system and bring it into line with international standards, notwithstanding these challenges. Sustained investment, efficient governance, capacity building, and robust stakeholder coordination are all necessary to achieve its goals. To overcome these obstacles and ensure the policy achieves its objective of providing equitable, high-quality, and comprehensive education for everyone, a phased, adaptable strategy can be used in conjunction with ongoing monitoring and assessment.

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ISSN (Online): 2455-3662
EPRA International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research (IJMR) - Peer Reviewed Journal
Volume: 12| Issue: 3| March2026|| Journal DOI: 10.36713/epra2013 || SJIF Impact Factor 2026: 8.753 || ISI Value: 1.188

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