

Libraries and the National Education Policy of India (NEP 2020) in the Context of Higher Education

Dr. Sanjeev Kumar¹DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18557438>**Review: 04/02/2026****Acceptance: 04/02/2026****Publication: 10/02/2026****Abstract**

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 marks a transformative step in reshaping India's higher education system with a focus on equity, inclusion, multidisciplinary education, and research excellence. Libraries, as integral academic support systems, play a pivotal role in enabling these reforms by providing access to scholarly resources, technological infrastructure, and inclusive services for all learners. This paper examines the contributions of libraries toward the effective implementation of NEP 2020 in higher education institutions (HEIs). Using a descriptive research method and policy analysis of the NEP 2020 document, the study identifies specific library-related functions that align with the policy's objectives. Findings suggest that libraries are catalysts in promoting quality education, research, equity, innovation, and internationalization in higher education, making them indispensable for the successful realization of NEP 2020 goals.

Keywords: Libraries, NEP 2020, Higher Education, India, Multidisciplinary Education, Research, Equity, Policy Implementation.

Introduction

Libraries play a pivotal role in the effective implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 in India. They serve as permanent providers of current and emerging information resources, reference tools, and information services that contribute significantly to the development of readers' knowledge and skills. With the changing trends in education, libraries have undergone substantial transformations. Their services and facilities are increasingly based on information and communication technologies, making them integral to education, teaching, learning, and research. Consequently, the role of libraries in education is widely acknowledged as indispensable.

Universities and colleges across India have begun implementing the NEP 2020. In this context, examining the role of libraries in higher education is crucial for the successful realization of policy objectives. Part Two of the NEP, under the section titled *Higher Education*, emphasizes that "*an individual should be able to pursue in-depth studies in one or more areas of particular interest.*" Achieving this objective is not possible without the support of libraries, which provide invaluable assistance for in-depth study and research. Libraries facilitate access to a wide range of reference tools, scholarly books, and digital resources, enabling readers to explore subjects of interest comprehensively. By offering timely information services and advanced tools, libraries support deep learning and ensure that learners remain updated with the latest knowledge in their respective fields.

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1. Research Methodology

For the present study, the researcher conducted an evaluation of the *National Education Policy (NEP) 2020* document, which extends across 70 pages. The content of the policy document was systematically reviewed to identify the key areas in which libraries are expected to play a critical role. In alignment with these identified areas, the study describes the potential contributions of libraries toward the effective implementation of NEP 2020. Given the nature and objectives of the study, the **descriptive research method** was employed. This methodological approach was considered appropriate as it facilitates an in-depth examination and interpretation of the policy document to highlight the specific functions and responsibilities of libraries in the context of NEP 2020.

2. National Education Policy 2020

The *National Education Policy (NEP) 2020* of India was officially implemented on 29 July 2020 by the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India. The policy document begins with an introduction that outlines the historical context of earlier education policies, the guiding principles of the current policy, and its overarching vision. The document is structured into four major parts, comprising a total of 27 chapters:

- **Part I: School Education** (Chapters 1–8)
- **Part II: Higher Education** (Chapters 9–19)
- **Part III: Other Key Areas of Focus** (Chapters 20–24)
- **Part IV: Making it Happen** (Chapters 25–27)

The policy concludes with a section providing a list of abbreviations used throughout the text. The primary aim of NEP 2020 is articulated in its introduction: “The aim must be for India to have an education system by 2040 that is second to none, with equitable access to the highest-quality education for all learners regardless of social and economic background” (Government of India, NEP 2020).

Furthermore, the policy envisions: “an education system rooted in Indian ethos that contributes directly to transforming India, that is Bharat, sustainably into an equitable and vibrant knowledge society, by providing high-quality education to all, and thereby making India a global knowledge superpower” (Government of India, NEP 2020).

3. Libraries and National Education Policy 2020

The sub-chapters numbered 9 to 19, presented under Part II of the *National Education Policy (NEP) 2020* on Higher Education, were thoroughly examined by the researcher. Based on the content pertaining to the higher education system in India, specific library-related parameters were identified. These parameters were then used to explain and analyze the role of libraries in the effective implementation of NEP 2020.

4.1 Quality Universities and Colleges: A Forward-Looking Vision for India's Higher Education System

The *National Education Policy (NEP) 2020* emphasizes the establishment of high-quality universities and colleges as a cornerstone of India's higher education reform. The policy envisions the development of institutions that are not only academically rigorous but also future-oriented, capable of fostering innovation, critical thinking, and multidisciplinary learning. A central feature of this vision is the transformation of higher education institutions into **large multidisciplinary universities and colleges**, each with a strong commitment to teaching, research, and community engagement. By restructuring the institutional framework, the policy aims to eliminate fragmentation and promote comprehensive education that integrates diverse fields of study. Furthermore, NEP 2020 underscores the importance of **quality assurance and accreditation mechanisms**. It advocates for transparent, independent, and rigorous accreditation processes to ensure that institutions maintain global standards of excellence. The focus is on creating an ecosystem where quality becomes a continuous pursuit, enabling Indian universities and colleges to compete internationally. In addition, the policy encourages **internationalization of higher education**, fostering collaborations with global institutions, attracting international students, and positioning India as a hub of knowledge exchange. By embedding flexibility in curricula, integrating technology, and promoting skill development, NEP 2020 seeks to prepare graduates who are adaptable to emerging global challenges.

Thus, quality universities and colleges under NEP 2020 are envisioned not merely as centers of instruction, but as dynamic institutions driving India's transformation into a vibrant knowledge society and a global leader in education. Multidisciplinary undergraduate education, the reform of curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, and student support to enhance the overall learning experience, career progression based on teaching, research, and service, as well as the promotion of access, equity, and inclusion for disadvantaged and underprivileged students, are identified as essential modifications to the current higher education system. In addition, the expansion of online education and open and distance learning, together with the provision of accessible infrastructure and learning materials for learners with disabilities, constitute vital reforms envisioned under the *National Education Policy (NEP) 2020*.

The successful management and implementation of these critical changes within the higher education system can be effectively supported through libraries. Libraries, as key academic support systems, can contribute to this transformation in the following ways: Libraries can play a central role in supporting the reforms envisioned in the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. Their contribution to enhancing the higher education system can be articulated in the following ways:

(a) Provision of Multidisciplinary Resources and Activities

Libraries supply learning materials across a wide variety of subjects and fields of study. They also organize interdisciplinary activities that foster collaboration among departments, faculties, and researchers.

(b) Support for Curriculum and Pedagogy Reform

Libraries assist faculty members in updating and restructuring curricula and pedagogy in accordance with recent academic and technological trends. They also provide students with relevant and up-to-date reading materials that support emerging fields of study.

(c) Facilitation of Teaching, Research, and Career Progression

Libraries function as integral academic support units, aiding teaching, research, and services essential for faculty and student career advancement.

(d) Promoting Equity, Access, and Social Change

Libraries act as agents of social transformation by ensuring equitable access to information resources. Special emphasis is placed on serving disadvantaged and underprivileged students through initiatives such as digital libraries, remote access to e-resources via web-scale discovery services, and book bank schemes.

(e) ICT-Enabled Infrastructure and Accessibility

Libraries contribute to the development of robust ICT infrastructure, ensuring seamless access to reading materials. In particular, they provide remote access and assistive technologies to support learners with disabilities, thereby promoting inclusive.

3.2 Institutional restructuring and consolidation

For transforming higher education institutions and to enable students for artistic creative and analytic subjects, it is essential to develop active research community across discipline including cross-disciplinary research and to increase resource efficiency for both material and human. In this regard, libraries extend help to transform Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) by enabling students to get subject knowledge by developing research communities and orient them through social media about research applications such as research Gate, Google scholar, IRINS Facility, VIDWAN Database and other similar communities. It further ensures maximum utilisation of all other available resources for better productivity with right decisions supported by nascent and current information. For offering high-quality teaching, research and community engagement, libraries provide variety of information and reference sources and services to enhance the quality of teaching as well as research. Libraries have social recognition for community engagement through its various extension activities like organising book exhibitions, arranging expert lectures, seminars, conference and workshops for academicians and researchers. Appropriate accreditation to evolve into research-intensive or teaching intensive universities: Fulfilment of accreditation criteria for research- and teaching-intensive activities by libraries through access to print and digital collection, automated library and information services, library networks and community engagement are crucial activities of libraries. Libraries develop their own infrastructure and various reading materials in different forms and formats to attract students in multi-disciplinary institutions for larger student enrolments to ensure optimal use of infrastructure and resources. To run open distance learning and online programs and their suitable integration into the curriculum of higher educational institutions, libraries contribute effectively in teaching and learning process in open distance education and online programme environments.

3.3 Towards a more holistic and multidisciplinary education

To bring back the notion of knowledge of many arts or liberal arts in Indian education, libraries preserve the cultural heritage of a nation to transfer it from generations to generations. For positive learning outcomes include increased creativity and innovation, critical thinking and higher order thinking capacities, problem solving abilities, teamwork, communication skills abilities, communication skills and improvement and enhancement of research through holistic and multidisciplinary education approach etc. libraries develop critical thinking and thinking capacities of stakeholders by providing knowledge, it helps to solve particular problem by providing information about the best alternative available, develop teamwork by building research communities and also impart various communication skills through information and digital literacy. Developing all capacities of humans including intellectual aesthetic, social, physical, emotional and moral in an integrated manner and for the development of an ethic of social engagement; soft skills such as communication, discussion and debate is the outcome of higher education. The performance of these basic skills can be enhanced with the support of libraries and by exploring and exploiting specialized knowledge of library professionals. To increase the faculty and institutional economy in setting curricula and pedagogy with an increased emphasis on communication, discussion, debate, research and opportunities for cross-disciplinary and interdisciplinary thinking, library professionals provide the reading materials, appropriate references and resources for increasing the emphasis of all these things. Environmental education and value-based education consist of climate change, pollution waste management, biodiversity forest and wildlife conservation and the development of humanistic, ethical, constitutional and universal human values, respectively. Libraries provide information about climatic conditions, pollutions and waste management, ecology and environment and assist to impart ethical value-based education and research. Library support research and innovation by developing research centres, providing workspaces and by developing a system to provide e resources at the desktop of students and teachers as per their subject-specific needs.

3.4 Optimal learning environments and support for students

For optimal learning environment and support for students, providing suitable resource and infrastructure such as quality libraries, student discussion spaces is necessary. Libraries acquire reading material as per demand of researchers and provide suitable learning and reading resources with modern ICT infrastructure to use these to the fullest extent. For internationalization, encouragement and support to students from socioeconomically disadvantaged, adequate academic facilities are ensured by libraries by access to free library services and resources irrespective of any discrimination among readers community and by providing digital and virtual library services. For research collaboration between Indian and global institutions, libraries make available all resources at national and international levels through Web scale discovery platforms and can engage in library networks as well as resource sharing through networks. Thus, student activity and participation are enhanced.

3.5 Motivated energized and capable faculty

Libraries by providing information about improvement in citations, H-index and research recognition platforms, etc., motivates the faculty in terms of teaching, research and service. HEIs are expected to be well equipped with libraries. Every HEI has its library with books, equipment, furniture and ICT facilities to support the higher

education system of the nation. Every library works in tune with vision and mission of parent institution. Freedom to faculty for textbook and reading material selection in the library is to be given. Library acquires the books and reading material recommended by faculty on priority basis. While doing so, they check for duplicates and purchase the books by avoiding duplicate material. It empowers the faculty to conduct innovative teaching, research and service for creative work.

3.6 Equity and inclusion in higher education

For promoting equity and inclusion in HEIs, conducting outreach program on higher education opportunity is essential. Libraries also arrange for various outreach programs like arranging book exhibitions, celebrating special days such as Librarians Day, Book Week and World Book Day. To develop and support technology tools for better participation and learning outcomes, libraries provide information about latest development in technology tools and its practical use to improve better learning outcomes.

3.7 Teacher education

To fulfil the teacher requirement for multi-disciplinary knowledge and development of practice, libraries contribute through making available all its information services and products for the stakeholders. It makes provision and supply of high-quality contents and e-contents for teaching, learning and pedagogy. For re-orientation of PhD programs at the University, professional knowledge of librarianship can assist to a considerable extent at every step of research. For the effective use of technology platforms such as SWAYAM/DIKSHA, libraries can provide assistance regarding its use and delivery of contents.

3.8 Catalyzing quality academic research in all fields through a new National Research Foundation

To meet the NEP criteria for knowledge creation and research; fundamental contributions to new knowledge in the realm of science, art, language and culture, libraries preserve the treasury of knowledge in various forms and formats and to develop new branches of knowledge. The criticality of research is more than ever before, for the economic, intellectual, societal, environmental and technological health and progress of a nation. A library helps to use all types of resources to use at the maximum level for more productivity in all sectors of human life. Libraries enable a country to much more easily import and adapt relevant research from abroad. It makes provision of availability of global research and import-export of related research material. Much of the very best research in the world has occurred in multidisciplinary university settings. Libraries offer national and international collaboration among research institutions and researchers.

3.9 Transforming the regulatory system of higher education

Fulfilment of library criteria for accreditation of parent institution is crucial. For ranking of NIRF, evaluation of HEIs by NAAC, etc. libraries play a dominant role by assisting to fulfil relevant evaluation criteria.

5. How do libraries contribute effectively for implementation of NEP 2020 in HEIs?

Libraries' contributions to the effective implementation of NEP 2020 are highlighted in the following section.

5.1 Libraries and development of persons, skills and values

Libraries contribute for “personal development” as well as “to inculcate certain prescribed skills and values”. For personal development, libraries provide accurate and nascent information for proper decision making, developing communication and writing skills, improving leadership qualities, providing motivation and helping to develop other managerial skills. As the NEP 2020 includes “problem solving, knowledge creation and innovation”, it is necessary to take the right decisions at the right time to solve any problem. The right solution of problems depends on the accuracy of the information provided by the library. “Discovery and innovation” is the outcome of research and the role of libraries at every stage of research is remarkable. “Providing high-quality education with equity and inclusiveness” is one of the goals of the NEP and the library acts as a cultural Centre for inculcating equity, value in society and enhancing quality in higher education.

5.2 Restructuring and strengthening of institutions

Under the NEP 2020 several aspects have been considered for “Restructuring and Strengthening of Institutions”. “Interdisciplinary research” is intended to develop an active community of research in various disciplines as well as to increase the efficiency of both physical resources and human resources. Promoting interdisciplinary research is done through libraries. Libraries develop information communities and enhance the efficiency of students, teachers and researchers by providing various information and reference resources at local and remote places. The goal of creating versatile and creative individuals through personal development, skill acquisition and recognition of values is facilitated through libraries. Schemes to support teaching and research institutions are also initiated through inter-library exchange, resource sharing for collective use of reading material, remote access to e-resources, development of digital libraries and Institutional repositories, etc. Apart from this, community involvement and substantial contribution to various areas of service learning and student and faculty development are implemented through libraries. In open and distance learning as well as online educational programs, libraries provide e-resources and make the educational material available to the readers on the websites through appropriate hyperlinks with remote access to all.

5.3 More versatile and interdisciplinary education

Enabling and promoting high-quality multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary teaching and research is considered for strengthening institutions under the NEP. Any multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary teaching and research is library-oriented. Under the NEP, the elements of communication, discussion, debate and transactional skills have been given more importance to move towards a more holistic and multidisciplinary education. For more creativity and innovation, logical thinking, effective communication skills, improvement and growth in research, reading and supplementary reading programs, libraries contribute significantly. Science, professional subjects and practical skills, opportunities for continuous learning, in-depth research based specialization, curricular flexibility and innovative and attractive course options, community involvement, environmental education and value-based education are all seen to be contributing by the library. To focus on technology development as well as research and innovation, libraries themselves have technology based information acquisition, information storage, information subject-wise structure, information retrieval and computerization of libraries for providing informational resources to the readers through the library website and online public access catalogues for the

readers to know the reading materials available in the library. Web OPAC and Mobile OPACs provide a “single window search platform” that results in saving time for searching information on various topics scattered across different locations only with the help of “keywords” through Web-scale discovery services. Such a service is useful to search for the appropriate information quickly and accurately.

5.4 Conducive atmosphere for education and student co-operation

Creating an environment conducive to learning and student collaboration depends on regular changes in the curriculum, implementation of high-quality pedagogy and adequate facilities and quality of library services. The developmental plan of any organization involves the development of libraries. Integration of various educational schemes and subject oriented student development can be achieved through libraries. “Career counselling” is equally important for students from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds. A librarian can offer a very effective counselling role. Underprivileged sections are streamlined in the mainstream of education by providing information by the libraries. Many libraries have developed “inclusive education centres” to provide library facilities to visually impaired and disabled students. These include the provision of Braille books, the availability of screen reader software for computer read ability of digital reading materials, audiobooks and various updated tools for visually impaired students. This role of libraries is definitely effective in an age of digital information technology environment.

5.5 Inter nationalization of education

The NEP envisages “increasing the number of international students” and “providing high quality education at affordable fees” under inter nationalization of education. The proportion of international students in educational institutions depends on the nomination and status of the educational institution. The educational supplementary services and facilities provided by the library are taken into consideration in the nomination and enhancement status of any educational institution. Therefore, it is necessary to provide reading materials and information services to international students in a language they can better understand. For this purpose, libraries also provide “translation services” to international students as per their needs. Libraries are complementary in providing “high quality education at affordable fees” as the information services and facilities provided through the library are offered free or at a very nominal fee.

5.6 Infrastructural support for higher education

Infrastructure-equipped libraries in higher education institutions are at the apex of providing up-to-date educational technology. As teachers and students are given full freedom to choose textbooks and reading materials through libraries, libraries acquire the material as per their recommendations. Libraries provide information resources in various forms and formats to bring innovation in both learning and teaching processes. Libraries are useful in enhancing the quality of research. Selecting a particular research topic, making available all the previous research studies on that topic to facilitate easy topic selection, providing materials to the researchers for studying and brief review of the literature, in-depth information about the topic at every stage of the research is greatly facilitated by libraries. Libraries guide them on how to present a research report, how to properly cite, how to use standard language, how to increase the research visibility, etc

5.7 Equity and inclusiveness in higher education for all

A lack of information about opportunities in higher education, geographic and linguistic barriers, the lack of adequate student support systems prevent many students from pursuing their careers as well as equity and inclusion in higher education. A student support system can be developed with opportunities in higher education through libraries, overcoming language barriers through translation services, and overcoming geographical barriers by making information available to readers in electronic form through digital libraries and remote access to digital contents. Complementary work for equality and inclusiveness is done through libraries.

5.8 Inclusive education for all

For inclusive education, the library facilitates access to libraries for people with disabilities, with access to information through various media such as talking books, braille books and audio-visual material. Emotional and academic support through appropriate counselling and guidance is provided through the library to students as well as teachers with disabilities.

5.9 Promoting the multidisciplinary approach and knowledge orientation in the higher education

Promoting the multidisciplinary approach and knowledge orientation in the higher education system requires modern research on various aspects of education, imparting knowledge about values, culture, art and traditions to people from generations to generation, complementing adult and professional education, libraries not only contribute to academic development but also to social, economic, cultural and national development. Overall personality development, strengthening of educational institutions, optimistic move towards multidisciplinary education through identification of business skills and specific skills and values, inter nationalization of education, a motivation factor for students, teachers and researchers as well as equity and inclusiveness in higher education are all the areas occupied by libraries.

6.0 Conclusion

NEP is bringing out tremendous positive changes in higher education of India. The changes can be effectively implemented with the help of libraries and library professionals to adapt to course, curriculum, research and infrastructure-related changes. The challenges of 21st century in the field of higher education are related with personality development, strengthening of HEIs, inter nationalization of higher education, specific skills and values for students, motivation for researchers and teachers as well as for equity and inclusiveness of higher education can be effectively imparted by libraries and it can contribute as a catalyst for overall national development.

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