

Role of Libraries in Implementing the New Education Policy 2020 in Higher Education in India

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Abstract - Libraries play a crucial and multi-faceted role in the implementation of the New Education Policy (NEP) of 2020 in higher education in India. They function as hubs of knowledge and are instrumental in supporting the educational goals outlined in the NEP. This article examines the intricate and significant part that libraries play in the effective execution of the NEP, specifically within the context of NEP 2020. It discusses how libraries can promote access to diverse knowledge resources, encourage research, and foster critical thinking skills among students. By utilizing the potential of libraries as centers of learning, higher education institutions can establish a more inclusive and just learning environment according to the NEP's vision. The primary focus of this study is to comprehensively elaborate on the multi-faceted involvement of libraries, including the active promotion of digital literacy, cultivation of research efforts and innovative initiatives, and facilitation of an all-encompassing and impartial approach to acquiring information for all segments of society. The article notes that libraries can contribute to the promotion of digital literacy, which is a critical aspect of the NEP. As the use of digital technologies in education increases, libraries play a vital role in providing access to a wide range of digital resources, such as e-books, online databases, and various digital learning materials. They can provide instructional guidance and assistance to both students and faculty members on the effective use of digital tools and platforms, leading to a significant improvement in their digital literacy skills. Libraries also offer access to a vast array of scholarly resources, including academic journals, research papers, and books. This accessibility empowers students and faculty members to engage in significant research endeavors. They also provide guidance and direction for conducting literature reviews, accessing relevant research databases, and keeping up with the latest developments in various disciplines. Therefore, libraries serve as collaborative spaces for interdisciplinary research and innovation, facilitating knowledge sharing and networking among students and faculty members, which is essential for NEP 2020. This research emphasizes the expected academic roles of libraries in enhancing all educational programs and proposes specific strategies to improve their functions. Previous literature is combined with qualitative research data from semi-structured interviews with 125 faculties, including Professors, Associate Professors, and working librarians from four universities associated with higher education institutions. Questionnaires and interview tools were used to explore the relevant data collection instruments.

Keywords: Libraries, New Education Policy 2020 in India, Higher Education

I. INTRODUCTION

Under the guidance of the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), a department of the Indian Government, the formulation of the NEP 2020 in India was initiated and subsequently approved by the Central Cabinet on July 28, 2020. The new policy outlines India's vision for its education system, replacing the prior National policy on Education from 1986. The NEP 2020 is a comprehensive reform and restructuring effort for every aspect of the educational framework, regulatory mechanisms, and governance protocols, all rooted in India's rich cultural heritage and core values. This policy aligns with Goal 4 (SDG4) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and demonstrates its commitment to the global pursuit of inclusive and equitable quality education for all. The NEP of 2020 provides a comprehensive framework to advance the national education system. The central principle of this policy is to emphasize the humanities and implement an interdisciplinary approach to imbue education with a humanistic essence (Ibrahim and Patange 2022).

Education has always been supported by libraries, providing resources and knowledge. Since the implementation of the NEP in 2020, libraries have played an increasingly important role in achieving the objectives of the policy in higher education. The NEP aims to completely transform the Indian educational landscape, by promoting interdisciplinary and holistic teaching, encouraging research and innovation, and ensuring that everyone has equal access to education. Libraries, with their vast collection of resources and expertise, are well-positioned to contribute significantly towards achieving these goals (Asif & Singh, 2020).

Libraries have played a crucial role in education by collecting and providing resources to support learning. With the introduction of the NEP in 2020 in India, libraries have become even more important in achieving the policy's objectives in higher education. The NEP aims to comprehensively transform the Indian education system by promoting interdisciplinary pedagogy, encouraging research and innovation, and ensuring equitable access to education for all. Libraries, with their abundant resources and expertise, can actively contribute to these goals.

Libraries have been a fundamental part of education since the beginning, acting as places to store information and providing materials to assist with learning. With the implementation of the NEP in 2020 in India, libraries have become even more important in achieving the policy's goals in higher education. The NEP's goal is to transform the Indian education system comprehensively by focusing on interdisciplinary and holistic teaching, encouraging research and innovation, and making education universally accessible and equitable for all. Libraries, with their extensive resources and knowledge, can play an active role in accomplishing these objectives (Raut, 2022).

Equitable access to education is a fundamental principle of the National Education Policy (NEP), and libraries can play a critical role in ensuring it. Libraries can develop comprehensive strategies to reduce the digital divide and promote fair access to information for all students, including those from marginalized communities or remote areas. These strategies involve providing resources such as computer labs, internet connectivity, and assistive technologies, allowing libraries to meet the diverse needs of their student population. They can also prioritize the acquisition of resources that reflect the cultural and linguistic diversity of the student population, promoting inclusivity in education. In today's world, global distances have decreased, and competition has increased. To promote a nation's progress, it is essential for education policies to be transparent and consistently enforced (Pandey *et al.*, 2021).

II. NEED FOR NEP 2020

Libraries can promote equitable access to education by formulating strategies to mitigate the digital divide and providing resources such as computer labs, internet connectivity, and diverse materials. A transparent and consistently enforced education policy is crucial for a nation's progress (Sontakke *et al.*, 2022).

Firstly, The NEP of 2020 in India highlights the importance of digital transformation in education. Libraries must adapt to the digital era and embrace technology to meet the dynamic needs of students and faculty. The policy stresses the need for digital literacy and integration of technology into the educational landscape. Libraries, as important sources of information, should align their operations with these objectives and provide access to digital resources such as online databases, electronic books, and other educational materials. The policy provides a framework for libraries to enhance their digital infrastructure, develop digital literacy programs, and leverage technology to optimize learning experiences.

Secondly, the policy emphasizes the significance of research and multidisciplinary methodologies. Libraries can facilitate research by providing access to scholarly resources, academic journals, research publications, and literary works. The policy recognizes the importance of research-driven education, and libraries can support this objective by aligning their services.

Finally, the policy promotes inclusive education and equitable dissemination of information. Libraries play a crucial role in providing access to high-quality educational materials, transcending socio-economic and geographical barriers. The policy emphasizes the need to bridge the digital divide and provide access to information for marginalized communities and remote areas. Libraries can develop strategies to address this by offering facilities such as computer labs, internet access, and assistive technologies. They can also curate resources that reflect the cultural and linguistic diversity of the student population, promoting inclusivity in education.

Therefore, libraries in higher education are essential for digital transformation, research support, and inclusive access to information. To align with the policy's objectives, libraries need to enhance their digital infrastructure, provide research support, and ensure equitable access to resources. By adopting these practices, libraries can significantly improve higher education while fostering students' comprehensive growth and development. The revisions outlined within the policy aim to nurture the acquisition of modern skills in students such as critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity, and digital literacy (K. C. *et al.*, 2022).

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The current study was carried out across various universities in Karnataka state, offering graduate and postgraduate programs during the 2023-24 academic year. An initial literature review was conducted, followed by qualitative research consisting of semi-structured interviews with 125 faculty members, including working librarians from four different universities. The interview protocol followed a pre-planned guideline to collect information on the librarians' knowledge and awareness of the importance and benefits of their role in higher education institutions. The qualitative data collected was analyzed using content analysis. The study also analyzed the practices of working librarians to identify concepts related to the implementation of the NEP, current trends, and approaches.

IV. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Libraries play a vital role in the execution of the NEP 2020 in higher education in India. They serve multiple essential objectives that contribute significantly towards achieving NEP's goals in the higher education sector. The objectives pertinent to the function of libraries in implementing NEP 2020 in higher education in India are as follows.

1. Promoting digital literacy
2. Fostering research and innovation
3. Ensuring inclusive and equitable access to information
4. Enhancing the learning experience
5. Promoting collaboration and networking
6. Evaluating the adequacy of learning resources for the NEP curriculum.

Libraries serve as central points for collaboration and networking among students, faculty, and researchers. They enable knowledge-sharing, interdisciplinary collaborations, and partnerships between academia and industry. Libraries can organize events, conferences, and seminars that bring together experts from various fields, creating opportunities for intellectual exchange and fostering a culture of innovation. The functions of libraries in implementing the NEP 2020 in higher education in India include promoting digital literacy, fostering research and innovation, ensuring inclusive and equitable access to information, enhancing learning experiences, and facilitating collaboration and networking. By aligning their services with these objectives, libraries can effectively contribute to the successful implementation of the NEP, supporting the holistic development of students in higher education.

V. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This literature review focuses on the role and functions of libraries in implementing the NEP 2020 in higher education in India. Through examining existing research and scholarly articles, the review aims to shed light on the various aspects of library involvement in aligning with the objectives of the NEP. The findings indicate that libraries play a crucial role in fostering digital literacy, promoting research and innovation, ensuring inclusive access to information, enhancing learning experiences, and fostering collaboration and networking. However, the review also identifies gaps in the literature and suggests areas for future research to further explore the impact of libraries in implementing the NEP.

Patil (2022) explores the importance of libraries and resources for implementing NEP 2020. Libraries are an essential component in the development of educational institutions and the successful implementation of new education policies. They not only serve as a repository of knowledge but also provide a means of communicating information to support the learning and research needs of users. Along with books and academic journals, libraries offer a wide range of digital resources that are of utmost importance to students, faculty members, and researchers alike. These resources aid in the acquisition of knowledge and enable impactful research endeavours.

Vagdal & Acharya (2023) study demonstrates the multifaceted role that academically oriented libraries play in supporting the NEP 2020 initiative. Libraries play an important role in supporting academic communities. They achieve this by providing quality information resources, promoting continuous education, facilitating research and innovation, creating opportunities for collaboration and networking, and improving digital literacy competencies. By doing so, libraries help achieve policy objectives and contribute to the overall development of the academic community.

Azim & Ajahar (2022) presented a comparative analysis, examining the higher education systems of India and Japan.

Education plays a vital role in societal advancement and national development. This study provides an extensive assessment of the education systems in two nations, examining recent policy initiatives and reform measures, as well as presenting statistical data on universities, colleges, and enrollment rates. Additionally, the article addresses the lower enrollment rates in higher education in both countries and raises questions about the factors and barriers contributing to this disparity. Ultimately, the study concludes by emphasizing the fundamental importance of higher education in a nation's development.

Singh & Srivastava, 2022 Digitization of education has encountered a set of challenges outlined within the framework of the NEP. These challenges impede the progress of online teaching and learning, which is a key focus of NEP 2020. The NEP aims to reform India's educational landscape by 2021, introducing a series of initiatives aimed at fostering digital learning and improving infrastructure prerequisites. However, the transition to online education has been met with obstacles. This analysis sheds light on the impediments faced and emphasizes the importance of developing essential infrastructure, providing digital literacy training, ensuring equitable access to educational resources, promoting pedagogical transformations, and fostering collaborative efforts. These measures are essential to overcome the identified challenges and ensure the effective and successful execution of the NEP 2020.

VI. ROLE OF LIBRARIES IN ACHIEVING THE OBJECTIVES OF NEP IMPLEMENTATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Academic libraries in higher education, particularly in universities and colleges, play a central role in implementing the New Education Policy 2020. They are an essential part of all types of educational institutions. Several phrases and quotes highlight their importance in academia. The Scottish philosopher Thomas Carlyle famously said, "The true university of these days is a collection of books." After independence, the Government of India constituted the University Education Commission under the chairmanship of scholar, philosopher, and renowned educationist Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, who stated, "The library is the heart of all the university's work, directly so as regards its research work, and indirectly as regards its educational work, which derives its life as its laboratories, while scientific research needs a library as well as its laboratories, while for humanistic research the library is both library and laboratory in one."

President Truman's Commission on Higher Education also stated, "The library is second only to the instructional staff in its importance for high-quality instruction and research." For both the pursuit of humanistic and scientific studies, the indispensability of a university library is evident. This historical social institution has remained integral to educational systems for numerous centuries (Varma *et al.*, 2021).

The establishment of the University Grants Commission (UGC) through an Act of Parliament in 1956 played a crucial role in the development of higher education in India. It also had a significant impact on academic libraries. The UGC formed a Review Committee on University and College Libraries in 1957, headed by Dr. S.R. Ranganathan, to ensure effective administration and governance of academic libraries (UGC, 1965). In 1959, UGC organized a seminar titled “From Publisher to Reader: Work Flow in University and College Libraries.” The committee and the seminar proceedings were published in 1965. This marked the beginning of the development of academic libraries in India after independence. Thereafter, UGC continued to make efforts to evolve and improve the state of academic libraries in the country.

Although the previous description emphasized the crucial role of university and college libraries in higher education in India, several shortcomings still exist despite the appointment of review committees. Libraries within higher education institutions are adversely affected by inadequate financial resources, insufficient physical space, a lack of well-trained personnel, suboptimal management practices, and a lack of necessary infrastructure. The important role of college libraries has been overlooked in the reports of numerous commissions and committees. However, the UGC, the main regulatory body for higher education in India, has taken a pivotal role in improving university and college library infrastructure. This is essential due to the significant impact of college library standards and services on the quality of higher education and research, especially at the postgraduate level.

Here are the key points:

1. The library is the center of academic institutions and plays a critical role in teaching, learning, and research.
2. The UGC has recognized the importance of the library and incorporated most of the recommendations of various committees and commissions.
3. Adequate financial support has been allocated for different aspects of library development, including collection expansion, procurement of books and periodicals, furniture and equipment acquisition, and the construction of new library facilities. Additionally, efforts have been made to enhance the remuneration of college librarians.
4. The operational units focusing on information and library network enhancement, the modernization of library services and information centers, along the pivotal role played by INFLIBNET, have collectively served as a catalyst for the advancement of academic libraries within the sphere of higher education.

VII. CHALLENGES IN HIGHER EDUCATION LIBRARIES TO IMPLEMENT NEP-2020

A. Infrastructure Development

One of the main challenges faced by libraries is the need for better infrastructure. Many libraries lack the physical space,

modern facilities, and technological resources required to meet the changing needs of students and faculty. Upgrading infrastructure to create collaborative spaces, provide access to digital resources, and enhance technological capabilities is essential for the effective implementation of NEP 2020.

B. Digital Transformation

Digital pedagogy and the integration of technology into the education system is crucial and NEP 2020 highlights its significance. However, libraries face challenges in adapting to digital transformation. This includes the need to digitize existing resources, implement digital library management systems, and provide remote access to digital materials. To achieve this, libraries need to invest in digital infrastructure, train staff in digital technologies, and ensure seamless access to digital resources for both students and faculty.

C. Resource Management

Libraries need to effectively manage their allocation of resources by the objectives outlined in their policy document. This involves acquiring a wide range of relevant and diverse resources, both in physical and digital formats, to cater to the needs of both students and faculty members.

However, budgetary constraints, licensing issues, and limited availability of quality resources present challenges. To optimize resource management and ensure access to quality materials, libraries should consider partnering with other institutions, joining consortia, and supporting open-access initiatives.

D. Training and Capacity Building

Libraries require trained staff with the necessary skills to effectively implement NEP 2020. Unfortunately, there is a shortage of skilled professionals in areas such as digital literacy, information literacy, and research support. Therefore, libraries need to prioritize training and capacity-building programs for their staff to enhance their competencies and keep up with the evolving trends and technologies.

E. Stakeholder Engagement

Engaging stakeholders, such as students, faculty, and administrators, is critical for the successful implementation of NEP 2020 in libraries. However, there are challenges due to limited awareness about the role of libraries, resistance to change, and lack of collaboration.

To overcome these challenges, libraries should actively engage with stakeholders by conducting awareness campaigns, user surveys, and feedback mechanisms. It is also important to build strong partnerships with academic departments and involve stakeholders in decision-making processes to foster support and collaboration.

VIII. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

1. *Facilitating Access to a Wide Array of High-Quality Resources:* Libraries assume a pivotal function in facilitating inclusive and equitable access to a comprehensive collection of diverse and high-quality informational resources encompassing literature, periodicals, databases, and digital assets, thereby aligning with the stated objective of the NEP 2020.
2. *Digital Literacy and Technology Integration:* Libraries have the potential to facilitate the enhancement of digital literacy among both students and faculty through the provision of access to digital resources and the delivery of training on digital tools and technologies. Additionally, libraries can play a pivotal role in endorsing the integration of technology within teaching and learning methodologies, as underscored in the NEP 2020.
3. *Research and Innovation Support:* Libraries function as invaluable pillars of research assistance within educational institutions, affording a wealth of scholarly resources, research databases, and academic journals. Their role extends beyond mere resource provision; libraries also furnish expert guidance on diverse research methodologies, effective literature review strategies, and meticulous citation management. This multifaceted support culminates in the cultivation of a fertile environment for research and innovation, thereby contributing significantly to the academic milieu of higher education establishments.
4. *Learning Spaces and Collaborative Environments:* Libraries can provide conducive learning spaces that facilitate active learning, collaboration, and group discussions. They can create environments that encourage interdisciplinary collaborations, knowledge sharing, and networking among students, faculty, and researchers.
5. *Proficiency in Information Literacy and Cultivation of Critical Thinking Skills:* Libraries possess the capacity to facilitate the cultivation of information literacy and the refinement of critical thinking skills within students, achieved through the provision of adept counsel in the evaluation and proficient utilization of informational reservoirs. This aligns cohesively with the fundamental objective set forth by the NEP 2020, which revolves around the cultivation of adept critical thinking capabilities and the promotion of innovative proficiency within the knowledgeable populace.
6. *Cultural and Linguistic Diversity:* Libraries can curate resources that reflect cultural and linguistic diversity, promoting inclusivity in education as emphasized in NEP 2020. They can provide materials in regional languages and ensure representation of diverse cultures and perspectives.
7. *Continuous Professional Development:* Libraries can offer training and capacity-building programs for library staff to enhance their skills and competencies in areas such as digital literacy, information literacy, research support, and emerging technologies. This supports NEP

2020's focus on continuous professional development for educators.

It is important to recognize that the practical implementation of the NEP 2020 in higher education in India may vary depending on contextual factors and available institutional resources, despite the potential benefits that libraries can bring to the table.

IX. DISCUSSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

Implementing the NEP 2020 in higher education in India requires careful consideration of the role libraries can play. Here are some discussions and implications regarding the implementation of NEP 2020 and the roles of libraries.

1. *Access to Resources and Information:* Libraries play a significant role in facilitating equitable information and resource access for learners of all backgrounds. They are instrumental in guaranteeing that both students and faculty members can avail themselves of a comprehensive array of high-quality resources, encompassing both physical and digital formats. This can bridge the gap between resource availability and the needs of learners, supporting the goal of inclusivity in education.
2. *Digital Transformation:* NEP emphasizes the critical significance of digital learning and the seamless integration of technology. Libraries are positioned to bolster this imperative by committing resources towards enhancing digital infrastructure, granting unfettered access to a repository of digital assets, and orchestrating structured digital literacy initiatives. Furthermore, libraries can foster collaborative partnerships with various educational establishments and affiliated entities to mutually share digital assets and broaden the reach of educational resources to encompass a wider spectrum of learners.
3. *Collaborative Learning Spaces:* Libraries can serve as collaborative learning spaces that promote active engagement and knowledge sharing. They can create environments that foster collaboration between students, faculty, and researchers, encouraging interdisciplinary approaches and innovative thinking. Libraries can offer spaces for group discussions, project work, and interactive learning experiences.
4. *Research and Innovation Support:* Libraries assume a pivotal role in facilitating research and fostering innovation within the realm of higher education. Libraries offer a comprehensive array of valuable assets, including access to meticulously curated research databases, authoritative scholarly resources, and an extensive suite of research support services.

Additionally, libraries undertake the facilitation of enlightening workshops, seminars, and training sessions, strategically designed to amplify the proficiency of research skills and cultivate an environment conducive

to fostering research and innovation across the academic community, comprising both students and faculty members.

5. *Information Literacy and Critical Thinking:* Libraries can contribute to developing information literacy and critical thinking skills among learners. They can offer guidance on evaluating information, using credible sources, and developing research skills. Libraries can also support learners in analyzing and critically evaluating information, fostering a culture of independent thinking and informed decision-making.
6. *Continuous Professional Development:* Libraries necessitate a proficient workforce that remains abreast of evolving educational trends and emerging technologies. NEP also emphasizes the significance of ongoing professional development for educators, and libraries are well-positioned to offer training initiatives and workshops tailored to their staff. This strategic approach ensures that libraries remain adept in addressing the evolving requirements of both learners and faculty.
7. *Collaboration and Networking:* Libraries can engage in formal collaborations with fellow libraries, educational institutions, publishers, and industry experts to establish an interconnected framework of resources and specialized knowledge. These collaborative endeavors have the potential to result in the sharing of educational assets, the joint pursuit of initiatives, and the exchange of valuable insights, thereby enriching the educational journey for all learners involved.

Integrating NEP 2020 with libraries can have a significant impact. Libraries play a vital role in transforming higher education by offering access to a vast amount of knowledge, promoting digital literacy, fostering academic research and creativity, nurturing critical thinking, and facilitating collaboration. However, to fully realize these benefits, libraries need adequate resources, infrastructure, and support from educational institutions and policymakers. Recognizing the importance of libraries and investing in their enhancement is crucial to leveraging their potential for the successful implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP) of 2020 in India.

X. CONCLUSION

Implementing the goals and objectives outlined in the National Education Policy (NEP) in higher education libraries in India is a challenging task that requires addressing key areas such as infrastructure development, digital transformation, resource management, training and capacity building, and stakeholder engagement. By systematically resolving these challenges and implementing suitable methodologies, libraries can play a pivotal role in the reformation of the Indian higher education landscape. Collaboration between libraries, institutions, and policymakers is essential to overcome these challenges and ensure the successful implementation of the NEP in higher education libraries. In conclusion, libraries have a significant

role to play in implementing the NEP in higher education in India. They can contribute to promoting digital literacy, fostering research and innovation, and ensuring equitable access to education. Through the strategic utilization of their available resources, domain-specific knowledge, and collaborative infrastructure, libraries can proactively facilitate the realization of educational objectives outlined in the NEP, thereby making a substantial contribution towards the overarching advancement of higher education within the nation.

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