



Academic Libraries and their Role in the Context of National Education Policy (NEP) 2020

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DOI : <https://doi.org/10.55248/gengpi.5.1124.3240>

ABSTRACT

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 envisions a transformative approach to education in India, focusing on holistic and multidisciplinary learning, critical thinking, and a learner-centric framework. Within this context, academic libraries are positioned to play a pivotal role in achieving the NEP's objectives. Academic libraries provide essential resources that support diverse learning needs, research, and innovation, making them integral to the policy's mission of fostering a knowledge-driven society. By offering access to both digital and physical resources, these libraries support interdisciplinary and collaborative learning, key elements encouraged under NEP 2020.

Moreover, academic libraries contribute to digital literacy and information fluency, equipping learners with essential skills for navigating the digital age. The NEP's emphasis on promoting multilingualism is also supported by libraries, which provide resources in multiple languages, thus encouraging inclusivity and cultural diversity. Additionally, academic libraries foster lifelong learning, enabling continuous professional development and knowledge acquisition for students, educators, and researchers alike.

In summary, academic libraries are critical to implementing NEP 2020 by facilitating resource access, promoting digital and information literacy, and fostering a collaborative and inclusive learning environment. As the NEP reshapes education in India, academic libraries will remain at the forefront, driving the policy's vision of a holistic, learner-centered, and innovative educational system.

Keywords: National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020), Academic Libraries, Digital Literacy, Lifelong Learning.

1. Introduction

Academic libraries play a vital role in supporting educational institutions by providing access to information, resources, and services that promote learning, research, and knowledge creation. With the introduction of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, the role of academic libraries has gained renewed significance. NEP 2020 emphasizes a holistic, multidisciplinary approach to education, encouraging innovation, critical thinking, and a knowledge-driven economy.

In this context, academic libraries are essential in facilitating the policy's goals by acting as hubs of knowledge and research support. They provide access to digital and physical resources, enable information literacy, support interdisciplinary learning, and foster an environment for collaborative research. NEP 2020 also underscores the importance of technology integration and digital learning, positioning academic libraries to expand their roles as centers of digital resources, online learning support, and inclusive information access for students and faculty alike.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, announced on July 29, 2020, represents a significant shift in India's approach to education across all levels, from primary to higher education. Developed by a committee led by Dr. K. Kasturirangan, former chairman of the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO), the policy aims to reform and modernize the Indian education system. The committee submitted a draft of the policy to the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) in 2019, where it was reviewed and revised before receiving approval from the Union Cabinet.

NEP 2020 replaces the previous National Policy on Education, established in 1986 and amended in 1992, addressing contemporary challenges and aligning the education system with the needs of the 21st century. Key highlights of NEP 2020 include a revised 5+3+3+4 structure for school education, a strong focus on multidisciplinary and vocational education, the introduction of a common entrance exam for universities, increased funding for education, integration of technology, and support for Indian languages.

Since its introduction, NEP 2020 has sparked widespread discussion and debate, with stakeholders expressing both enthusiasm and concerns over its diverse provisions and potential impact on the future of Indian education.

2. Vision and Mission of academic Libraries in the context of NEP 2020

2.1 Vision

The vision of academic libraries in the context of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is to become dynamic centers of knowledge, fostering a culture of lifelong learning, critical thinking, and innovation. Academic libraries aim to support the NEP's goal of creating a holistic, multidisciplinary, and inclusive education system by providing equitable access to diverse resources and promoting information literacy and digital fluency among students, educators, and researchers. Through these efforts, academic libraries aspire to empower individuals and contribute to the development of a knowledge-driven, globally competitive society in alignment with NEP 2020.

2.2 Mission

2.2.1 Support Holistic and Multidisciplinary Education: Provide diverse resources that encourage interdisciplinary learning, thereby aligning with NEP 2020's emphasis on a well-rounded education.

2.2.2 Promote Digital Literacy and Information Fluency: Equip students, educators, and researchers with essential digital and information literacy skills to navigate and leverage technology effectively in the digital era.

2.2.3 Facilitate Research and Innovation: Serve as hubs for research support and innovation, enabling access to quality academic materials, databases, and collaborative spaces to encourage scholarly growth and creativity.

2.2.4 Advance Inclusivity and Multilingualism: Enhance access to resources in multiple languages to support NEP 2020's mission of promoting inclusivity and cultural diversity in education.

2.2.5 Foster Lifelong Learning: Develop programs and provide resources that encourage continuous learning and professional development, fostering an environment where knowledge and skills are pursued beyond formal education.

By fulfilling this mission, academic libraries play an essential role in realizing NEP 2020's transformative vision for Indian education.

3. Methodology

This article is based on the review of different recent literature from various online and offline sources, utilizing relevant studies and adopting a descriptive research approach. Given the limited research conducted on the role and potential of libraries within the framework of the New Education Policy 2020 in India, this study seeks to fill that gap. It aims to understand and evaluate the essential role libraries play in supporting and enhancing the educational system.

4. Objectives

4.1 To support NEP 2020's educational goals by enhancing access to quality resources that promote inclusive and equitable learning for all students.

4.2 To facilitate research and innovation by providing comprehensive resources, tools, and collaborative spaces essential for scholarly and interdisciplinary pursuits.

4.3 To promote digital literacy and information skills among students, faculty, and researchers, helping them navigate and utilize digital resources effectively.

4.4 To support multilingualism and cultural diversity by offering resources in various languages, aligning with NEP 2020's emphasis on inclusivity.

4.5 To encourage lifelong learning by developing programs and providing materials that support continuous learning and professional development beyond formal education.

4.6 To integrate technology and digital platforms in library services, aligning with NEP 2020's focus on modernizing education through digital resources.

4.7 To overcome challenges of the digital age by adapting library services to meet the evolving needs of students and faculty in a rapidly changing information landscape.

4.8 To establish best practices and innovative models in academic libraries that can serve as benchmarks for effectively supporting the NEP 2020 framework.

4.9 To offer recommendations to stakeholders on enhancing library roles and capacities to better support NEP 2020's transformative vision for education in India.

Through these objectives, academic libraries contribute to creating a robust, accessible, and progressive educational environment in line with NEP 2020's vision.

5. Review of related literature

Sutar, D. B. (2024) discuss in his article "Libraries and national education policy (NEP 2020) of India in higher education". This study aims to provide an overview of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, identify areas where libraries can play crucial role in effective implementation of NEP 2020 and explains the role of libraries in higher education for implementation of NEP 2020 in India. Chakravarthy, A. S. (2024) highlighted the National Education Policy and its importance in our education system in his article "The role of libraries in National Education Policy – 2020". He also told that the NEP 2020 supports equal access to school, college, and higher education. The article focused on Libraries & the New Education Policy 2020, including the significant role of NEP2020 in Libraries, Libraries strategy to NEP 2020. Dixit, et al. (2024).The transformative role of libraries in driving the paradigm shift through the new education policy. This paper explores the transformative role of libraries in driving the paradigm shift through the New Education Policy 2020. Libraries have evolved from traditional repositories of books into dynamic. This paper also highlights the transformative potential of libraries in driving the paradigm shift through the new education policy." Asif and Singh (2022) discuss the role of libraries in the context of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 in India in his article "Libraries @ national education policy (NEP 2020) in India". He mainly focused on the key highlights of NEP 2020 including Library features and intended to focus on Library as essential service in the context of the Schools / Colleges / University systems in India. Bapte (2022) discusses the role of libraries in the context of the National Education Policy in India. The author argues that the NEP emphasizes the importance of libraries in promoting digital literacy, open access, and lifelong learning. Sharma, et al. (2022) present "A study on students' perceptions on application of blended learning (BLA) an approach towards NEP". The authors contend that blended learning is vital for fostering lifelong learning, with academic libraries playing a key role in this process by offering access to digital resources and providing necessary training.

6. Academic Libraries' Role in Supporting NEP 2020 Goals

Academic libraries play a pivotal role in advancing the transformative vision of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. As NEP 2020 aims to foster an inclusive, equitable, and holistic education system, academic libraries are uniquely positioned to support these goals by providing resources, services, and infrastructure critical to modern education. Below are key areas where academic libraries contribute to achieving NEP 2020 objectives:

6.1 *Enhancing Access to Quality Education*

NEP 2020 emphasizes equitable access to quality education for all learners. Academic libraries help fulfil this objective by offering a diverse array of resources, including books, journals, e-books, and digital databases, ensuring that students and faculty from various socio-economic backgrounds have access to high-quality academic materials. Libraries serve as knowledge centers, bridging educational gaps by providing access to resources that might otherwise be inaccessible to many students.

6.2 *Promoting Digital Literacy and Information Fluency*

Digital literacy is a cornerstone of NEP 2020, as it prepares students for the demands of the digital age. Academic libraries are at the forefront of this effort, offering digital literacy training programs, workshops, and resources that teach students and faculty how to navigate digital information effectively. These programs equip learners with essential skills such as critical thinking, research techniques, and the ability to assess the credibility of information—abilities that are crucial in a technology-driven world.

6.3 *Supporting Multilingualism and Inclusivity*

To foster inclusivity and cultural diversity, NEP 2020 places significant emphasis on multilingual education. Academic libraries contribute to this goal by curating collections in multiple languages, ensuring that resources are accessible to a linguistically diverse student body. By offering materials in regional and international languages, libraries promote an inclusive learning environment that respects and celebrates linguistic diversity.

6.4 *Fostering Interdisciplinary Learning and Research*

NEP 2020 encourages a multidisciplinary approach to education, promoting the integration of various fields of study to foster well-rounded knowledge. Academic libraries play a crucial role in supporting interdisciplinary learning by providing resources across a wide range of subjects. Libraries also offer collaborative spaces and research support, facilitating connections between disciplines and encouraging students and faculty to engage in interdisciplinary research.

6.5. Encouraging Lifelong Learning and Skill Development

Lifelong learning is a key objective of NEP 2020, encouraging individuals to continuously update their knowledge and skills beyond formal education. Academic libraries support this objective by providing resources and programs for ongoing learning and professional development. Libraries offer access to online courses, certification programs, and self-learning materials that empower students, faculty, and alumni to engage in lifelong learning, fostering a culture of continuous improvement.

6.6. Promoting Research and Innovation

NEP 2020 envisions a robust research ecosystem within India's educational institutions. Academic libraries support this vision by offering extensive research materials, databases, and access to academic journals that are essential for conducting research. Libraries also play a role in facilitating innovation by creating environments conducive to collaborative research and providing tools and resources that encourage innovative thinking and problem-solving.

6.7. Adapting to Technological Advancements

NEP 2020 advocates for integrating technology into the educational process. Academic libraries are increasingly adopting digital platforms, e-resources, and library management systems to make their services more accessible. By embracing technology, libraries enhance user experience, making it easier for students and faculty to access resources remotely, participate in digital learning, and utilize digital tools for research and collaboration.

6.8. Supporting Open Access and Scholarly Communication

To promote knowledge sharing, NEP 2020 emphasizes the importance of open access to research. Academic libraries contribute to this goal by supporting open-access publishing, managing institutional repositories, and encouraging faculty and students to publish in open-access journals. By advocating for open-access resources, libraries help democratize access to knowledge and support a more inclusive academic community.

6.9. Providing a Collaborative and Inclusive Environment

NEP 2020 seeks to create learning environments that are inclusive, accessible, and student-centered. Academic libraries contribute by offering collaborative spaces, quiet study areas, and digital tools tailored to different learning preferences. Libraries serve as inclusive spaces where students from diverse backgrounds can come together, share knowledge, and collaborate, fostering a sense of community within educational institutions.

7. Key Discussion Points and Recommendations for Enhancing NEP 2020 through Academic Libraries

As India implements the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, academic libraries play a crucial role in supporting its objectives. Libraries can contribute to NEP's vision of holistic, inclusive, and accessible education by providing resources, fostering digital literacy, and supporting lifelong learning. Below are key discussion points and strategic recommendations that can help academic libraries align with NEP 2020 goals:

7.1 Discussion Points:

7.1.1 Expanding Access to Educational Resources:

NEP 2020 emphasizes equitable access to quality education for all learners, regardless of socio-economic background. Academic libraries are essential in bridging this gap by offering diverse resources in both physical and digital formats. The challenge lies in ensuring that libraries reach underserved communities and accommodate students with varying needs. Libraries must therefore consider resource accessibility, especially in digital formats, to support remote and rural learners.

7.1.2 Enhancing Digital Literacy and Information Skills:

With NEP 2020 highlighting the importance of digital literacy, academic libraries have a key role in equipping students and faculty with digital skills necessary for the modern world. Digital literacy programs offered through libraries can train users to locate, evaluate, and use information effectively. This focus on digital skills is essential for preparing learners to engage with a technology-driven economy and global knowledge network.

7.1.3 Supporting Multilingual and Inclusive Resources:

NEP 2020 promotes multilingual education and cultural inclusivity. Academic libraries can support this by curating resources in various languages to reflect India's linguistic diversity. Developing regional language collections not only aligns with NEP's inclusivity goals but also broadens access to educational resources for students who learn in their native languages.

7.1.4 Fostering Interdisciplinary Research and Learning:

NEP 2020 encourages multidisciplinary education as a pathway to a well-rounded knowledge system. Academic libraries are positioned to facilitate this by providing access to resources across diverse subjects and encouraging collaborative spaces where students and faculty from different disciplines can interact and engage in research. Libraries can also support interdisciplinary research by curating resources that span multiple fields.

7.1.5 Encouraging Lifelong Learning:

One of NEP 2020's core objectives is to foster a culture of lifelong learning, which extends beyond formal education. Academic libraries can enhance this goal by offering resources, online courses, and self-learning materials for both students and alumni. Libraries that support ongoing skill development and self-directed learning reinforce NEP's emphasis on continuous personal and professional growth.

7.1.6 Adapting to Technological Advancements:

NEP 2020 promotes the use of technology to improve educational access and quality. Academic libraries can play a leading role in integrating technology by adopting digital platforms, offering remote access to resources, and utilizing advanced library management systems. However, technological challenges—such as funding and infrastructure limitations—must be addressed to optimize these services.

7.2 Recommendations

7.2.1 Increase Funding and Resource Allocation:

Adequate funding is crucial to expand collections, improve infrastructure, and implement new services. Government support and institutional funding should prioritize libraries to enable them to support NEP's objectives fully. Partnerships with other educational institutions can also help expand funding sources and resource sharing.

7.2.2 Develop Comprehensive Digital and Information Literacy Programs:

Academic libraries should implement digital literacy programs tailored to students, faculty, and researchers. These programs can include topics such as evaluating online information, using digital tools for research, and managing personal digital privacy. Digital literacy programs align with NEP's goal of preparing students for a technology-driven economy.

7.2.3 Create Inclusive and Multilingual Resource Collections:

Libraries should work to expand collections in multiple languages to cater to NEP 2020's goal of linguistic inclusivity. Collaborating with regional publishers and educational institutions can enhance multilingual offerings. Additionally, promoting open-access resources can provide students with equitable access to a broad range of learning materials.

7.2.4 Establish Collaborative Spaces and Tools:

Libraries should create flexible learning environments that support collaborative work and interdisciplinary learning. Providing group study areas, digital labs, and access to collaborative tools such as project management software encourages teamwork and fosters an environment conducive to interdisciplinary research and problem-solving.

7.2.5 Support Lifelong Learning Initiatives:

Libraries should offer resources that support lifelong learning, including online courses, webinars, workshops, and career development tools. By offering these resources, libraries help students and faculty engage in continuous learning, enhancing professional and personal growth beyond formal education.

7.2.6 Leverage Technology for Enhanced Services:

Libraries should adopt advanced digital tools, such as e-learning platforms, remote access options, and digital repositories, to improve user experience and accessibility. Implementing artificial intelligence for resource management and user assistance can enhance the efficiency of library services. Developing a robust IT infrastructure will be critical to support these advancements.

7.2.7 Advocate for Policy Support and Collaboration:

Libraries should actively engage with policymakers to align their goals with NEP 2020 objectives. Forming partnerships with educational and research institutions can also enhance resource-sharing, technology use, and the development of best practices. Advocacy is essential for securing support and recognition of the library's role in advancing NEP 2020.

8. Conclusion

Academic libraries are integral to realizing the goals of NEP 2020. By enhancing access to resources, promoting digital literacy, supporting multilingualism, and fostering lifelong learning, libraries play a central role in transforming India's education system. As NEP 2020 continues to shape the educational landscape, academic libraries will remain crucial in supporting an inclusive, accessible, and future-ready educational environment. Academic libraries are fundamental to the successful implementation of NEP 2020. By expanding access to resources, promoting digital literacy, fostering lifelong learning, and embracing inclusivity, libraries can significantly contribute to NEP's vision of a transformative and equitable education system. Addressing funding, technological, and infrastructural challenges, while fostering collaboration and policy support, will empower academic libraries to support NEP 2020 goals effectively.

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