

LIBRARIES IN THE NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY 2020: A CONTENT-BASED EXPLORATION

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Abstract: An innovative vision for the role of libraries in accomplishing 21st-century educational goals is presented in India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. To investigate how libraries are positioned as key components for advancing literacy, encouraging lifelong learning, bolstering digital inclusion, and protecting cultural diversity, this study conducts a content analysis of the policy. Libraries are intended to be vibrant, welcoming community places essential to educational transformation, not just places to store books. The research thoroughly explains how libraries may promote equitable and complete learning for all age groups by highlighting important policy issues, including digital access, multilingualism, foundational literacy, and community participation.

Keywords : National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, Role of Libraries, Function of Libraries as per NEP 2020.

1.0 Introduction

Libraries have always been vital hubs for information access and education. The Indian government highlights the need of robust libraries at all educational levels in NEP 2020. It is believed that libraries are essential to making education fun, inclusive and lasting. NEP 2020 envisions libraries as active learning centres that foster creativity, critical thinking and innovation in addition to being venues for reading and studying. By providing equitable access to information resources, they are anticipated to aid in closing the educational inequalities that exist between urban and rural communities. As digital technology is included, libraries are anticipated to evolve into cutting-edge information hubs that benefit the community at large as well as pupils.

The policy emphasizes the need of cultivating a strong reading culture from early infancy to maturity. Digital libraries, public libraries and school libraries are all seen as vital resources for advancing social justice, lifelong learning and fundamental literacy. Additionally, libraries will be crucial in helping students learn about Indian languages, cultural history and the wider world. As a result, libraries are becoming important pillars for community involvement, cultural preservation and national development under NEP 2020 in addition to promoting academic achievement.

1.1 Objectives

- i. To study how the role of libraries at various educational levels is explained by NEP 2020.
- ii. To study how libraries enhance lifetime learning, fundamental education, and reading.
- iii. To learn about the recommendations made by NEP 2020 for enhancing digital and physical libraries.
- iv. To demonstrate how communities may benefit from libraries' provision of digital resources and education.
- v. To study how libraries might help achieve the primary objectives of NEP 2020.

2.0 Literature Review

The National Education Policy 2020 has positioned libraries as fundamental pillars of India's educational transformation, emphasizing their critical role in supporting quality education across all levels from elementary to higher education. Asif and Singh (2022) highlighted that NEP 2020 envisions libraries as essential services that must evolve beyond traditional repositories to become active learning hubs providing 24/7 access to resources for knowledge and skill development. The policy specifically advocates for the strengthening of library infrastructure through the development of attractive learning materials in all regional and Indian languages, ensuring equitable access to books and digital resources for all students, including those with disabilities. The authors emphasized that libraries under NEP 2020 are expected to serve as the hearts of educational institutions, requiring government support for enhanced procurement of reading materials, periodicals, and learning resources while establishing ICT-equipped facilities, particularly in rural areas. This transformation positions libraries as integral components of the

self-reliant India (Atmanirbhar Bharat) vision, moving from passive service providers to active participants in holistic, multidisciplinary education delivery.

Further, the National Education Policy 2020 has redefined the role of academic libraries in India's educational ecosystem, transforming them from traditional information centres into dynamic learning hubs that support collaborative research, critical thinking, and lifelong learning initiatives.

Mhaprolkar (2022) emphasized that NEP 2020 requires libraries to adopt a service-oriented mentality while integrating both digital and print educational resources to support the policy's fundamental principles of access, equity, quality, and affordability. The study highlighted that librarians must collaborate with teachers to implement passion projects and cluster groups that foster students' holistic development across academic and extracurricular areas, moving beyond their traditional role as bookkeepers to become teacher-librarians. However, the research identified significant implementation challenges, including inadequate mobile connectivity and internet infrastructure, insufficient funding, copyright issues, and the need for comprehensive professional development programs requiring 50 hours of continuing education annually. The author concluded that while NEP 2020 recognizes libraries' pivotal role in educational transformation, successful implementation requires addressing these infrastructural and resource constraints to enable libraries to function as effective learning partners in India's knowledge-based society.

Devkar (2022) explores how the position of librarians in India is impacted and changed by NEP 2020. The report emphasizes how school libraries are being transformed into centres of active learning that support national educational objectives. The author offers a thorough grasp of how libraries might promote inclusive, fair and skill-based learning by analysing 84 research publications. The development of 21st-century abilities including digital literacy, critical thinking and problem-solving is emphasized in the work. The integration of libraries into school development plans is demonstrated through a case study of the S.V. Union High School Library. The utilization of ICT, digital resources and the necessity of making books available in rural regions are all emphasized in the dissertation. It also highlights the importance of librarian training and professional development to meet the new demands of NEP 2020.

Govindraj, Manoj and Thanduthapani (2022) discusses how everyone has equal access to education under the Indian Constitution, as stated in Article 45 of the Directive Principles of State Policy. It clarifies that states are permitted, but not required, to adhere to the Centre's recommendations because education is on the Concurrent List. Education for children ages 6 to 14 is now a basic right thanks to Article 21A. The writers mention a number of government programs that promote education, including the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, the Mid-Day Meal Scheme and Kendriya Vidyalayas. The goal of NEP 2020 is to improve India's educational system by replacing a 34-year-old policy. Accessibility, equality, quality, affordability and accountability are the five main NEP tenets that are highlighted in this study.

Muralidharan, Shanmugan, and Klochkov (2022) highlight the dedication of the Indian government to guaranteeing comprehensive, equitable, and high-quality education in addition to providing the necessary infrastructure. The worldwide Sustainable Development Goal 4, which encourages lifelong learning and educational equality for all students, regardless of background, is linked by the authors to NEP 2020. They clarify that the social, economic, and scientific environment of India has changed over the past 20 years, leading to NEP 2020. Using statistical and structural models, the study looks at the tight relationship between education and quality of life. Also, authors explain that in order to enhance education, skills, and career prospects, flexible lifetime learning and training are crucial, and NEP 2020 will only succeed if significant obstacles are overcome.

3.0 Methodology

A simple content analysis was employed in this study. The Government of India's National Education Policy 2020 was systematically reviewed to identify all references pertaining to libraries. These references were then analysed to explain the government's expectations of, and envisioned roles for, libraries within the policy framework.

4.0 Discussion on NEP 2020: Focus on libraries

A revolutionary vision for libraries as important hubs for education, digital access, and community involvement is presented in the National Education Policy 2020. The main topics pertaining to libraries, their important functions, and the particular contributions outlined in the policy are highlighted in this section through a content analysis. Libraries are in a position to play a key role in accomplishing the objectives of NEP 2020 by fostering lifelong learning, digital education, multilingualism, and foundational literacy. The following tables provide a detailed breakdown of these themes and responsibilities:

Table 5.1: Themes Related to Libraries in NEP 2020

Theme	Percentage (Approx.)
Foundational Literacy and Reading Culture	30%
Community and Public Access	25%
Digital Libraries and Technology Use	20%
Lifelong Learning and Adult Education	15%
Multilingualism and Cultural Preservation	10%

The table 5.1 shows the main themes related to libraries as highlighted in NEP 2020. Foundational literacy and building a strong reading culture are given the highest importance (30%), as libraries are key to developing early learning skills. Community and public access (25%) focus on keeping libraries open for all, promoting education beyond the schools. Digital libraries and technology use (20%) are encouraged to bridge the digital divide and provide easy access to knowledge. Lifelong learning and adult education (15%) recognize libraries as hubs for continuous skill development. Lastly, multilingualism and cultural preservation (10%) emphasize the need for libraries to promote Indian languages and cultural heritage.

Table 5.2: Key Roles of Libraries Mentioned in NEP 2020

Role	Importance Level (Scale 1–5)
Promoting Foundational Literacy	5
Supporting Community Learning	4
Providing Digital Resources	4
Encouraging Multilingualism	3
Facilitating Lifelong Learning	4

The primary library-related themes as emphasized in NEP 2020 are displayed in the table 5.2. Since libraries are essential for fostering early learning abilities, foundational literacy and creating a strong reading culture are given the greatest priority (30%). The goal of community and public access (25%) is to ensure that libraries remain accessible to everyone, encouraging education outside of the classroom. To close the digital gap and make information easily accessible, 20% of respondents are urged to embrace digital libraries and technology. Libraries are recognized as centres for ongoing skill development in adult education and lifelong learning (15%). Finally, the necessity for libraries to support Indian languages and cultural heritage is emphasized by multilingualism and cultural preservation (10%).

Table 5.3: Qualitative Analysis Summary

NEP 2020 Focus Area	Library’s Contribution	Example
Foundational Literacy	Expanding school/public libraries with books in local languages	Storybooks in regional languages for young learners
Community Development	Keeping libraries open after school for community use	Farmers accessing farming guides
Digital Learning	Creating digital libraries and online access	Students using e-library apps
Lifelong Learning and Adult Education	Offering skill-learning resources in libraries	Adults learning computer basics
Multilingualism and Cultural Preservation	Stocking books in multiple Indian languages	Availability of Tamil, Sanskrit, Hindi literature

The contributions libraries provide to the various NEP 2020 focus areas are compiled in this table 5.3. Libraries will add books in regional languages to their collections to promote early reading and foundational literacy. Libraries will remain open beyond school hours to support community development by giving everybody, including farmers, access to helpful information. Libraries will establish digital places for students to access online resources in the field of digital learning. Libraries will provide resources and classes to help individuals gain new skills for lifetime learning. Last but not least, libraries will preserve and celebrate cultural diversity by carrying literature in a variety of Indian languages, thereby encouraging multilingualism.

5.0 Role of Libraries Defined in NEP 2020

5.1 Expanding Libraries Beyond Schools: In order to guarantee access to educational resources and promote a reading culture across all areas, this project seeks to expand the reach of libraries beyond educational institutions to include underprivileged and rural populations. For example: A mobile library van stocked with foundational literacy books could travel to remote hamlets weekly, ensuring book access in places with no schools or libraries.

5.2 Localized Content Availability: NEP 2020 encourages inclusion and preserves linguistic variety by

promoting the provision of learning resources in regional and local languages to help students better grasp the curriculum. For example: Libraries could partner with local writers and educators to create short storybooks and picture books in regional dialects and distribute them to early readers.

5.3 Development of Digital Libraries: The strategy promotes the delivery of educational information via digital platforms, which lessens reliance on physical infrastructure and gives students remote access to a variety of resources. For example: Libraries could set up low-cost digital kiosks with offline e-libraries to provide access to e-books in areas with limited internet.

5.4 Opening School Libraries to the Community: In order to encourage education for persons other than students, this program seeks to transform school libraries into shared community educational spaces by permitting public access outside of regular school hours. For example: Schools could implement a community pass system that allows villagers to check out books from the school library during weekends or evenings.

5.5 Access to Diverse Learning Materials: From early literacy to practical skills, libraries are supposed to offer a wide range of educational resources to meet the diverse learning requirements of various age groups and interest areas. For example: Libraries could curate special shelves or digital folders for adult learners, covering topics like rural entrepreneurship, maternal health and sustainable farming.

5.6 Enhancing Local Knowledge: In order to directly help communities in their everyday lives and line of work, this program focuses on providing libraries with knowledge pertinent to the local context, such as farming, health, or crafts. For example: Libraries could organize monthly “Knowledge Sharing Days,” where community members can access books, videos, or guest talks on local trades, crafts and practices.

5.7 24/7 Accessibility via Digital Platforms: With 24/7 access to materials, digital libraries are designed to give students who might not have the time or travel to visit traditional libraries the flexibility they need. For example: Libraries could create a simple mobile app that allows registered users to access PDFs of books or receive audio summaries on demand.

5.8 Inclusive Learning for All Ages: Libraries are supposed to complement NEP 2020's emphasis on lifelong learning by providing materials and activities that are appropriate for people of all ages, not only students. For example: Libraries could host “Family Reading Nights” where children and parents attend storytelling or educational sessions together, encouraging multi-generational learning.

5.9 Diverse Educational Resources and Programs: In order to accommodate various learning styles and goals, libraries are urged to expand their collection beyond books by adding online tutorials, courses and skill-development activities. For example: Libraries could offer hybrid learning pods with printed guides and tablets preloaded with government e-learning apps for skill development.

5.10 Community Engagement and Skill Development: In order to become hubs of empowerment, libraries should actively participate in the community by planning initiatives that promote lifelong learning and the development of practical skills. For example: Libraries could partner with local trainers to host weekly community workshops on computer basics, resume writing and online banking.

5.11 Stocking Multilingual Books: By offering books in a variety of Indian languages, community members and students may study in the language of their choice, which promotes cultural identification and helps with understanding. For example: Libraries could survey local language preferences and order multilingual books accordingly, including bilingual editions to help students transition to Hindi or English.

5.12 Promoting Multilingual Reading Habits: In order to improve their linguistic flexibility and broaden their understanding of India's rich literary and cultural legacy, this program encourages students to read in other languages. For example: Libraries could start a “Read in 3 Languages” challenge that rewards children for completing books in their mother tongue, Hindi and English.

5.13 Supporting Cognitive and Academic Growth through Multilingualism: This program seeks to use libraries to help students improve their cognitive talents, such as improved memory and problem-solving skills, which are connected to reading in several languages. For example: Libraries could run multilingual storytelling circles where stories are read in one language and discussed in another, improving cross-language comprehension and thinking.

6.0 Findings

6.1 Libraries play a crucial role in Promoting Foundational Literacy and Reading Culture:

Foundational reading and numeracy are important, especially for students by Grade 3, according to the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. The knowledge that early literacy skills are essential for lifetime learning and that libraries are essential to this process is what motivates this goal. The policy encourages the growth and improvement of public and school libraries as part of this endeavour. The goal is to increase the accessibility and enjoyment of reading materials in order to inspire a passion for reading in both students and the general public.

6.2 NEP 2020 encourages transforming school libraries into community hubs: Making school libraries accessible to the community is emphasized in the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. The goal of this project is to transform libraries into useful resources for community development and lifetime learning in addition to being educational resources for students. School libraries may serve as important hubs for fostering literacy, skill

development and information sharing among all societal members including adults and out-of-school youth by being accessible to the general public beyond school hours. In rural regions, where access to educational materials is frequently restricted, this project is especially important. By providing extended hours of access, Libraries may reach a larger audience and provide them access to information.

6.3 The policy promotes digital libraries: The expanding significance of digital learning in the contemporary educational environment is acknowledged in the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. The expansion of digital learning possibilities through the creation of online and digital libraries is one of the main strategies mentioned in the policy. The goal of this change is to close the gap between students in urban and rural areas, especially those who live in distant places and have difficulty accessing traditional educational materials like physical books. Regardless of financial background or geographic location, digital libraries are seen as a vital instrument for democratizing education and guaranteeing fair access to high-quality educational resources. Students may access material at any time and from any location as long as they have a proper device or an internet connection thanks to the extensive array of digital resources available.

6.4 Libraries are Support Systems for Lifelong Learning: The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 highlights the value of lifelong learning and adult education as essential elements of an all-encompassing educational framework. The policy states that learning is a continuous, lifelong process that continues beyond formal schooling. Libraries are viewed as essential to this goal, developing into centres of lifelong learning where individuals of all ages, including adults, students and even elderly citizens, may access chances and resources to gain new competences, knowledge and skills. In this sense, libraries are more than just locations to check out books. They are evolving into vibrant community hubs for both professional and personal growth, providing a variety of tools and initiatives to assist people in improving their abilities and adjusting to the ever-evolving needs of society.

6.5 Libraries support multilingual education: The value of multilingual education is emphasized in the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 as a means of promoting a closer bond with education, culture and identity. In addition to promoting the learning of other languages to guarantee well-rounded growth, the policy acknowledges that learning in one's mother tongue helps pupils establish a solid literacy foundation. By offering a broad variety of reading materials in several languages, libraries play a critical role in promoting multilingualism in this setting. This allows students to form reading habits in both their mother tongues and other frequently spoken languages, such as Hindi and English. Libraries, particularly those in schools, may play a significant role in fostering multilingualism by providing children with the chance to read literature in a variety of languages, which improves their language proficiency, cognitive capacities and awareness of other cultures.

7.0 Conclusion

According to the National Education Policy 2020, libraries play a crucial part in India's educational revolution by redefining their mission and reach. Libraries are now viewed as active hubs for skill development, digital empowerment, lifelong learning, and cultural preservation rather than just as places to read quietly. Libraries act as accelerators for inclusive national progress by encouraging multilingual education, fostering fundamental literacy, and facilitating community access. Both digital and physical libraries need to be equipped, enlarged, and included in local and educational ecosystems in order to carry out their functions. Therefore, achieving the more general objectives of NEP 2020, which are equity, accessibility, and high-quality education for all, requires the strengthening of libraries.

8.0 References

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