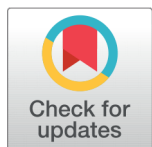


ORIGINAL ARTICLE



Indian Education in Transition: Historical Layers and the Reformist Vision of National Education Policy 2020

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Abstract

Background: This study examines the historical evolution and contemporary reforms of education in the Indian subcontinent, presenting a layered analysis of ideological, philosophical, and political influences across centuries. This paper has analyzed the education periods from the Ancient Vedic to the post-independence and to the present Bharat a nation-building phase.

Objectives: (i) to identify the historical evolution of educational reforms in India via significant commissions and policies; (ii) to evaluate the National Education Policy 2020 as a transformative initiative that reinterprets and expands this legacy; and (iii) to pinpoint implementation challenges and future opportunities, emphasizing the incorporation of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) as a cultural and pedagogical foundation. **Method:** Official government reports, academic journals, and Policies have been thoroughly and systematically reviewed. The major parameters in the present review study were: Institutional modality, pedagogy, technology, teacher education, equity. The time frame for the coverage was from Ancient Vedic Education to NEP 2020, which included the commissions and the policies from pre- and post-independence periods and evaluations of NEP implementation that are still going on today. **Significance of the Review Paper:** This review paper focuses on the explicit reintegration of the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) as mandated by the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, analysing how this contemporary policy is rooted in the long-neglected historical layers, particularly the Vedic and Gurukul traditions. The review employs a perspective that sees NEP 2020 as a significant break from the colonial-era educational legacy (which prioritized Eurocentric models and clerical training). It contrasts the holistic, interdisciplinary, and value-based approach of ancient IKS (emphasizing character, moral values, and an integrated view of knowledge) with the often compartmentalized, rote-learning-focused, and Western-centric systems that predominated post-colonial and mid-20th-century policies.

Keywords: National Education Policy-2020; Historical Perspective of Indian Education System; Indian Knowledge System

1 Introduction

The Indian education system boasts an unparalleled continuity, tracing its origins back to the Vedic Period (c. 1500 BCE) with the establishment of the Gurukul system. This ancient tradition laid the philosophical and cultural foundation for learning, emphasizing the Guru-Shishya Parampara (teacher-disciple tradition), where students lived with their gurus to receive a holistic education focused on character development, spiritual growth, and knowledge of the Vedas, philosophy, grammar, and practical skills. This system evolved further with the rise of Buddhism and Jainism, leading to the establishment of great monastic universities like Nalanda and Taxila, which attracted scholars from across the globe, solidifying India's status as a pre-eminent global center of knowledge and advanced learning for centuries⁽¹⁾.

The medieval era, marked by political and cultural shifts, saw the integration of Persian and Arabic teachings with the existing structure, primarily through the establishment of Madrasas, changing the academic landscape. However, major changes in Bhartiya Education occurred with the colonial influence, particularly after the Macaulay's Minute of 1835, which promoted Western education in English to create a class of administrative aids. This move institutionalized a formal, structured system of schools and universities by secularizing and modernizing education and Britishers also introduced a major shift by side-lining Bhartiya traditional indigenous knowledge and prioritizing the English language as the medium of instruction. The colonial structure, including the initial "Downward Filtration Theory", set the stage for the modern, centralized educational apparatus that India inherited at independence in 1947⁽²⁾.

After British rule, Indian government made the universalization of education a national priority, driving reform through various commissions and policies. Key initiatives like the Kothari Commission (1964–66) and the subsequent National Policy on Education (NPE) in 1968 and 1986 aimed to align education with national aspirations, introducing the uniform 10+2+3 structure and focusing on social equity⁽³⁾. Landmark legislation like the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act of 2009 made elementary education a fundamental right, dramatically increasing enrolment and accessibility⁽⁴⁾. Most recently, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 seeks a major paradigm shift, proposing a flexible 5+3+3+4 curricular structure, multidisciplinary learning, and a greater emphasis on vocational training and critical thinking, building upon India's ancient legacy while preparing students for the demands of the 21st-century global economy⁽⁵⁾. In the light of the present review paper, various documents have been relooked and revisited systematically to see the significance of the various govt. education policy setup time to time. The procedure of reviews, method and findings of the review paper have been mentioned herewith.

Research Contributions

This study adds to the conversation about changes to Indian education by carefully tracing the history of education commissions and putting their suggestions in the context of NEP 2020's reformist vision. This paper takes a comparative approach to show how educational thought and practice have changed over time, as opposed to earlier reviews that looked at commissions and policies on their own. Additionally, it encompasses the actual advancements in NEP implementation, encompassing curricular reorganization, educator training, and digital initiatives. The paper elucidates the enduring deficiencies in policy translation by linking historical legacies to modern reforms, thereby extracting essential insights for the advancement of future research and practices in Indian education.

Research Gaps

Even though there is more and more research on changes to Indian education, there are still some important gaps. First, there is a lack of long-term studies that link the suggestions of earlier education commissions to the reformist parts of NEP 2020. This means that the history of reform has not been studied enough. Second, there isn't much real-world data on how NEP 2020 is being put into action in different states, which makes it hard to compare progress and differences between regions. Third, teacher education and capacity building widely acknowledged as the foundation of pedagogical transformation persist in receiving inadequate analytical scrutiny, especially regarding the preparation of educators for competency-based and digitally-driven learning environments. Fourth, although the digital divide is often recognized, there is insufficient comprehensive evaluation of its effects on equity and inclusion in the execution of NEP's technology-focused vision.

Therefore, present review paper has unique contribution to synthesize the entire temporal spectrum of Indian education—from its ancient roots to its modern framework—with a singular focus on the relevance and potential of IKS and digital power for future-ready education. It uniquely positions the principles of ancient Indian thought (Jnan-Knowledge, Vignan-Science, and Jeevan Darshan-Philosophy of Life) not just as historical content, but as the guiding philosophical and ethical framework for the structural and pedagogical reforms proposed in NEP 2020. It systematically maps the ancient concepts (like multidisciplinary learning, experiential education, and value-based development from the Gurukul system and universities like Takshashila and Nalanda) directly to the specific reform mandates of NEP 2020 (e.g., multidisciplinary HEIs, vocational integration, and holistic report cards), demonstrating a coherent, policy-driven argument for the IKS revival.

Research Questions

This study is structured around three primary research questions, derived from the identified gaps

1. How does the National Education Policy 2020 reinterpret and reframe the legacy of India's historical education commissions, and in what ways does it build upon or diverge from previous reformist visions?
2. What makes NEP 2020 different because it focuses on Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS)?
3. What are some practical ways to bring IKS into mainstream curricula while reconnecting education to its cultural and philosophical roots?
4. What should future research and policy implementation focus on to make sure that NEP 2020's goals for reform lead to long-lasting, inclusive, and results-oriented educational practices all over India?

Objectives

(i) to identify the historical evolution of educational reforms in India via significant commissions and policies; (ii) to evaluate the National Education Policy 2020 as a transformative initiative that reinterprets and expands this legacy; and (iii) to pinpoint implementation challenges and future opportunities, emphasizing the incorporation of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) as a cultural and pedagogical foundation.

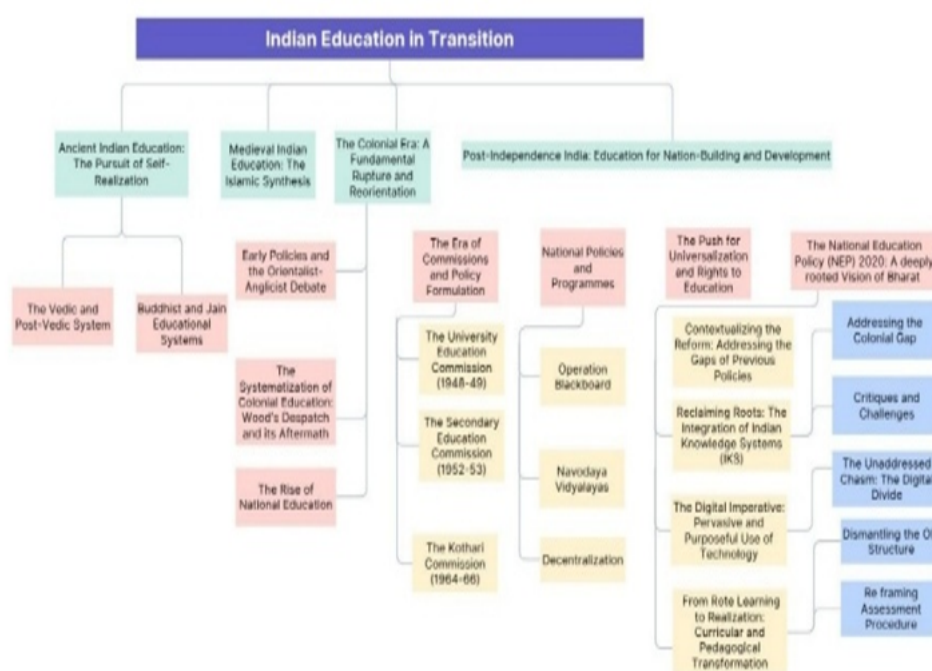


Fig 1. Transition of Indian Education

1.1 Education in India: A Systematic Review

This literature review synthesizes a vast body of scholarship to trace the long arc of Indian education from the ancient Gurukuls and the renowned universities of Nalanda and Taxila, Vikramshila and Vallbhi to the Maktabas and Madrasas and through the transformative challenges and aspirations of post-independence reform efforts. Scholars such as Amartya Sen and Jean Drèze have emphasized that India's developmental outcomes are intimately tied to its educational history, underscoring the importance of a nuanced understanding of this legacy. At its core, this review argues that Indian education is the product of both accretion and conflict, a terrain where ideals of holistic self-cultivation have repeatedly collided with colonial utilitarianism and modern nation-building imperatives^{(6), (7)}.

It is well known that NEP 2020 emerged from an extensive nationwide consultation process and replaced the National Policy on Education of 1986, which had long been criticized as inadequate for the demands of a 21st-century knowledge society. Declaring its vision to build an education system "rooted in Indian ethos" and capable of transforming India into "an equitable and vibrant knowledge society", the policy has been both praised and scrutinized for its sweeping scope and reformist ambition.

This review moves beyond a descriptive summary of NEP 2020 to critically examine the scholarly discourse surrounding its transformative agenda. It focuses on three foundational pillars of the policy- the revitalization of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS), the strategic deployment of educational technology, and the structural overhaul of curriculum and pedagogy. Drawing on a wide range of academic literature, policy documents, and historical analyses, this article aims to contextualize NEP 2020 within the broader continuum of Indian educational reform and assess its potential as a genuine paradigm shift.

1.2 The Vedic and Post-Vedic System

The earliest form of organized education was the *Gurukul* system, which dominated the Vedic and Upanishadic periods (c. 1500 BCE - 500 BCE). This system was residential, with the student (*shishya*) living with the teacher (*guru*) as a member of their family. The relationship was deeply personal and sacred, based on reverence and duty. The primary method of instruction was oral, involving recitation, memorization, and critical discussion of the Vedas, the foundational scriptures of Hinduism.

During the Vedic period, curriculum was comprehensive, encompassing both the sacred (*para vidya*-spiritual knowledge) and the secular (*aparavidya*-worldly knowledge) (Altekar, 1965). While the four Vedas-Rigveda, Samaveda, Yajurveda, and Atharvaveda-formed the core, students also studied the six *Vedangas* (auxiliary sciences): phonetics (*shiksha*), ritual (*kalpa*), grammar (*vyakarana*), etymology (*nirukta*), metrics (*chhanda*), and astronomy/astrology (*jyotisha*). Higher learning also included logic (*TarkaShastra*), philosophy (*Darshana*), and law (*Dharma Shastra*). The pedagogy emphasized self-discipline, contemplation, and debate (*shastrartha*), aiming for the holistic development of the individual's physical, mental, and spiritual faculties⁽⁸⁾.

1.3 Buddhist and Jain Educational Systems

Great monastic universities, or Mahaviharas, emerged during this time as global hubs of learning that drew academics and students from China, Tibet, and Korea, among other Asian countries. Despite being before Buddhism, Taxila (Takshashila) thrived as a hub for higher education in a variety of fields, such as law, medicine, and military sciences. But between the fifth to twelfth century CE, Nalanda University in present-day Bihar rose to prominence. The extensive library, demanding curriculum, stringent admissions procedures, and lively intellectual environment of Nalanda were all described in detail by Chinese pilgrims such as Xuanzang and Yijing. There was an unexpected level of intellectual syncretism in the curriculum, which included both Mahayana and Hinayana Buddhist philosophy in addition to logic, grammar, medicine, and the Vedas. Other notable universities that contributed to a golden age of institutionalized learning were Odantapuri, Valabhi, and Vikramshila. This intellectual legacy suffered a catastrophic hit when Turko-Afghan invaders particularly Bakhtiyar Khilji destroyed these centers in the 12th and 13th centuries.

1.4 Medieval Indian Education: The Islamic Synthesis

A new education system based on Islamic customs to root out the Indian culture was introduced with the entry of Turkic and Afghan invaders starting in the 11th century, which led to the foundation of the Delhi Sultanate (1206–1526) and the Mughal Empire (1526–1857). Instead of completely replacing the local centers of learning and the native Gurukulas, this system continued with Gurukulas but, always tried by these invaders to destroy and root out its deeply rooted Indian Culture. Islamic education's main goals were to spread the religion through study of the Quran⁽⁹⁾.

The two primary institutions that made up the educational system were madrasas and maktabas. Maktabas were affixed to mosques and functioned as elementary education institutions where children were taught to recite verses from the Quran and read and write the alphabet. Mughal rulers always tried to impose their own culture on Hindus. Sanskrit learning and local knowledge systems were retained by the then Gurukulas, through indigenous education in Gurukulas and private tutoring, despite the state's emphasis on the Islamic system. Thus, a dual educational system that was primarily split along religious lines was developed during this time, significantly complicating the subcontinent's educational environment.

1.5 The Colonial Era: A Fundamental Rupture and Reorientation

The most significant disruption in Indian educational history occurred with the entry of European commercial organizations and the subsequent rise of the British East India Company. Driven by the demands of a colonial empire, the British intervention was not just an addition but a fundamental reorientation of the goal, substance, and organization of education.

1.6 Early Policies and the Orientalist- Anglicist Debate

Indifference and a practical desire to comprehend local laws and practices for administrative interests were the defining characteristics of early British policy. Known as the Orientalists, early colonial administrators like Jonathan Duncan and Warren Hastings supported the advancement of traditional Indian education. As a result, the Benares Sanskrit College (1791) and the Calcutta Madrasah (1781) were founded to teach Indian officials about their own legal and literary customs. The Company was required to set aside one lakh (100,000) rupees a year for the "revival and improvement of literature and the encouragement of the learned natives of India, and for the introduction and promotion of a knowledge of the sciences among the inhabitants of the British territories". This was a historic Charter Act of 1813. As "English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect, but Indian in blood and color". The "Downward Filtration Theory," which postulated that Western knowledge would saturate the masses from this anglicized elite, was established by Lord William Bentinck's resolution in 1835. It was not objective for widespread upliftment, but rather for administrative convenience and cultural hegemony⁽¹⁰⁾.

1.7 The Systematization of Colonial Education: Wood's Despatch and its Aftermath

The entire model for an organized educational system in India was provided by Sir Charles Wood's Despatch of 1854, although Macaulay's Minute established the ideological direction. The despatch, which is frequently referred to as the "Magna Carta of English Education in India," suggested a system of education that was graded from elementary school to university.

After reviewing the developments since the despatch, the Hunter Commission (1882) suggested by giving more focus on primary education and transferring authority to local boards. Through the Indian Universities Act of 1904, which expanded government control, Lord Curzon, as Viceroy (1899–1905), started extensive reforms aimed at enhancing the effectiveness and quality of education, especially in universities. Moving away from the exclusively affiliating paradigm, the Sadler Commission (1917–1919), which concentrated on Calcutta University, suggested a more substantial framework for secondary education as well as the establishment of unitary, residential institutions⁽¹¹⁾.

1.8 The Rise of National Education

A nationalist reaction was unavoidable given the colonial educational system's alleged objective of cultural domination. Indian leaders and reformers started to imagine a "national education" that would embrace contemporary science and have its roots in Indian culture and values. The Dayanand Anglo-Vedic (DAV) schools were founded by the Arya Samaj with the goal of fusing Western education with Vedic knowledge. As a contrast to the strict, impersonal colonial paradigm, Rabindranath Tagore established Visva-Bharati (1921) at Santiniketan, focusing on nature, creative creativity, and a synthesis of Eastern and Western knowledge⁽¹²⁾. At the 1937 Wardha Conference, Mahatma Gandhi presented his "Basic Education" (Nai Talim) concept, which called for free, mandatory education based on a profitable handicraft to make learning less bookish and more self-sustaining. As hubs of nationalist education, institutions such as the Kashi Vidyapeeth in Benares (1921) and the Jamia Millia Islamia in Delhi (1920) frequently boycotted the British system. The ideological foundation for the educational policies that would be discussed and put into effect in India after independence was established by this movement.

2 Post-Independence India: Education for Nation-Building and Development

2.1 The Era of Commissions and Policy Formulation

Numerous significant commissions were entrusted with determining the direction of Indian education throughout the post-independence era.

- **The University Education Commission (1948-49):** Higher education was the main emphasis of this commission, which was chaired by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan. In order to regulate university finance and quality, it suggested to create the University Grants Commission (UGC) as a statutory entity. This suggestion was carried out in 1956⁽¹³⁾. Additionally, it promoted the growth of universities in rural areas and a stronger emphasis on Indian philosophy and culture.
- **The Secondary Education Commission (1952-53):** This commission, which was chaired by Dr. A. Lakshmana Swami Mudaliar, focused on the vital connection between elementary and higher education. In order to address linguistic variety and national unity, it suggested creating multipurpose schools, broadening the curriculum, and introducing the concept of a "three-language formula" (Hindi, English, and a regional language)⁽¹³⁾.
- **The Kothari Commission (1964-66):** Under the direction of Dr. D.S. Kothari, the most demanded and innovative commission which was formed and its report "Education and National Development," offered a radical plan for the overhauling of Indian Education System. Its main suggestions served as the cornerstone of subsequent policies such as a

uniform 10+2+3 structure of education ?? for the entire country was proposed, also the provision of Common School System was established to provide equal quality education to all children, irrespective of caste, creed or class, thereby promoting social cohesion. Emphasis on Science, mathematics and work experience (SUPW) as integral parts of general education was highlighted⁽¹³⁾.

2.2 National Policies and Programmes

The National Policy on Education (NPE) of 1968, the Government of India's first official policy statement on education, was greatly impacted by the Kothari Commission's recommendations⁽¹⁴⁾. It supported the idea of a common school system and the 10+2+3 framework.

A New Policy of Education (NPE) came in 1986. It was a little bit more comprehensive in comparison to the previous policies and was able to cover major aspects of the Education system.

- **Operation Blackboard:** A strategy that will improve the fundamental facilities in elementary schools across the country, including two classrooms, two teachers, and necessary teaching supplies.
- **Navodaya Vidyalayas:** Each district built a system of residential schools to offer gifted kids, primarily from rural areas, a top-notch, contemporary education.
- **Decentralization:** The establishment of District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs) for teacher training and increased autonomy for institutions⁽¹⁴⁾.
- In order to advance equity, women's education, that of Scheduled Castes (SCs), and that of Scheduled Tribes (STs) should be prioritized⁽¹⁵⁾.

Despite these initiatives, issues with access, equity, and quality persisted in the system. The idea of a single education system was undermined by the parallel systems of private and public schools, which increased the quality disparity.

2.3 The Push for Universalization and Rights to Education

A paradigm shift toward a right to education occurred at the start of the twenty-first century. Launched in 2001, the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) was a flagship initiative to quickly and universally provide basic education⁽¹⁶⁾. It sought to increase learning quality, close social and gender gaps, and enroll all children in school.

This movement culminated in a historic constitutional amendment. The **86th Amendment Act (2002)** inserted Article 21-A into the Constitution, making education a fundamental right. To enforce this, the **Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act was passed in 2009** and came into effect on April 1, 2010⁽¹⁷⁾. The RTE Act mandates free and compulsory education for all children between the ages of 6 and 14 in a neighborhood school. It also includes provisions for minimum norms and standards for schools, pupil-teacher ratios, and a 25% reservation for children from economically weaker sections (EWS) in private schools. However, there have been some obstacles with the RTE's implementation, such as a lack of qualified teachers, poor infrastructure, and arguments about learning results rather than enrollment⁽⁴⁾.

2.4 The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020: A Deeply Rooted Vision of Bharat

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, India's first ever policy which has given emphasis on its culture and also to promote the Indian Knowledge system. This was introduced after more than thirty years. With the goal of completely revamping the educational system from preschool to doctoral degrees, this strategy represents the most important reform program in education history of Bharat. Its goal is to establish an "equitable and vibrant knowledge society" by offering everyone access to top-notch education. The Policy's important characteristics are as under:

- A new pedagogical and curricular structure of **5+3+3+4**, replacing the 10+2 system and formally integrating Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) for ages 3-8.
- A strong emphasis on **multidisciplinarity and flexibility** in higher education, with multiple entry and exit points and the establishment of an Academic Bank of Credit⁽¹⁸⁾.
- The dissolution of silos between arts, sciences, and vocational streams, and the promotion of **critical thinking and experiential learning**.
- A renewed push for **multilingualism**, with the medium of instruction until at least Grade 5, and preferably till Grade 8 and beyond, to be the home language/mother tongue/regional language, a point of considerable debate⁽¹⁹⁾.
- The establishment of a single, overarching regulator for higher education, the **Higher Education Commission of India (HECI)**, with four independent verticals⁽²⁰⁾.

- A renewed commitment to achieving the 6% of GDP public investment target in education
- Emphasis on Traditional culture and IKS in deeply rooted Indian society.

The NEP 2020 focuses on five fundamental pillars- access, equity, quality, affordability, and transparency. These are combined to form the vision for upgrading India's educational system. While equity aims to eliminate social and regional inequalities, access assures inclusive participation for every learner. While affordability aims to make education more affordable by increasing public investment and cost regulation, quality places more emphasis on holistic, experiential, and trans-disciplinary learning. Transparency, effectiveness, and efficient governance among institutions are all facilitated by accountability. When taken as a whole, these pillars seek to establish an educational system that is egalitarian, inclusive, and competitive worldwide.

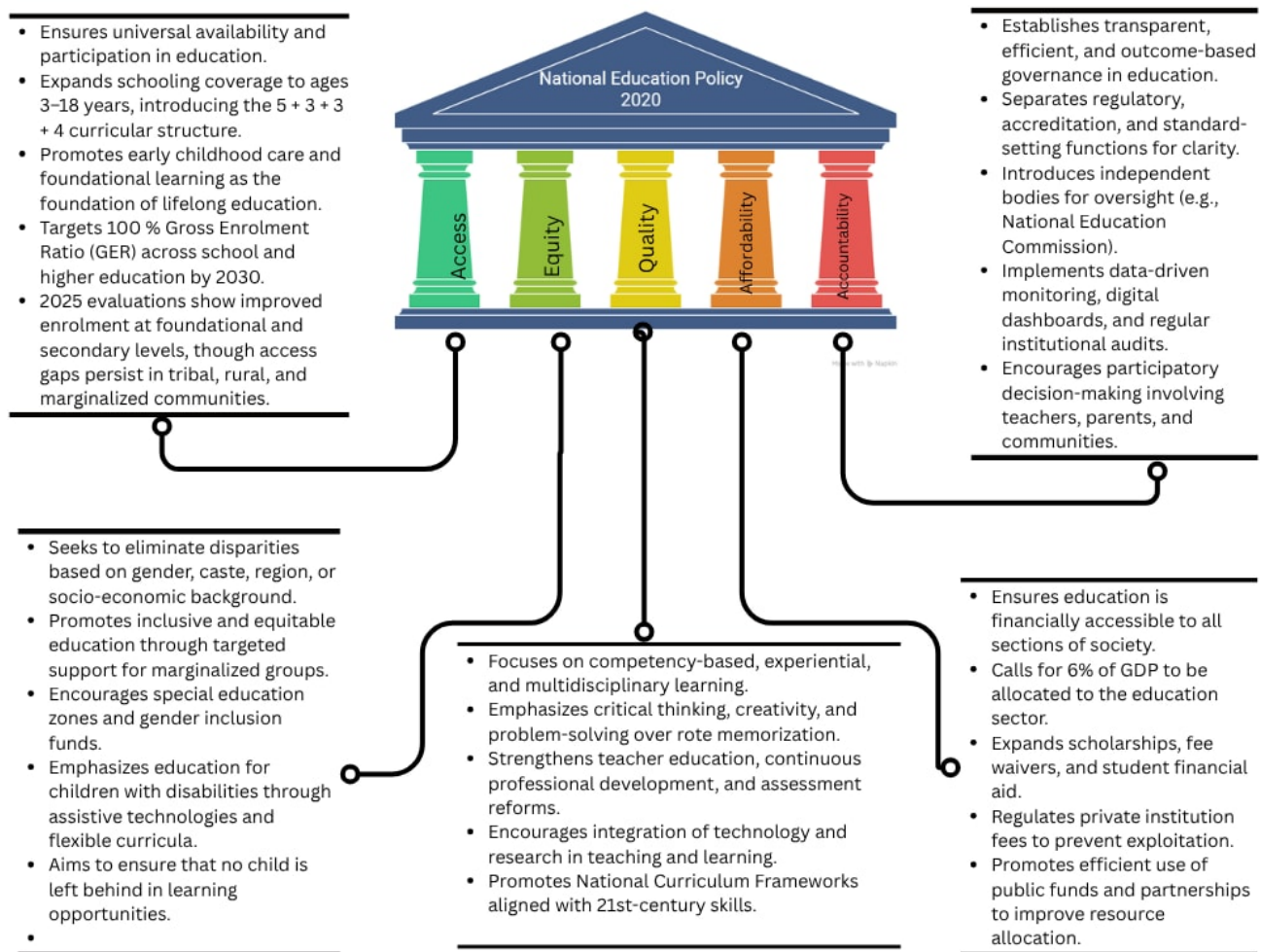


Fig 2. Five Pillars of National Education Policy 2020

The NEP 2020 is an ambitious attempt to address the historical legacies of the Indian education system, its rigidity, colonial hangover, and inequities and align it with the aspirations of the 21st century⁽²¹⁾. It takes the place of the National Policy on Education (NPE) 1986, which was largely seen as insufficient for the needs of a knowledge economy in the twenty-first century, even if it had its own Programme of Action in 1992⁽²²⁾.

NEP 2020 specifically looks into three interrelated areas that serve as the foundation for the suggested change: the integration and revitalization of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS); the strategic use of educational technology; and the fundamental reorganization of curriculum and pedagogy. By examining these pillars, this review also interrogates a central claim of the policy, its capacity to address the historical deficiencies and fulfill the long-standing aspirations that previous commissions and policies identified but failed to fully realize. The review synthesizes a wide array of sources including the primary policy

document, reports from preceding commissions, scholarly articles, and critical commentaries to evaluate whether NEP 2020 offers a genuinely new path forward or a repackaging of old ideas^{(23), (24)}.

2.4.1. Contextualizing the Reform: Addressing the Gaps of Previous Policies

One must first recognize the structural issues and historical inertia that NEP 2020 aims to address in order to fully grasp its revolutionary potential. A mosaic of colonial legacies and post-independence aspirations can be seen in the Indian educational system. The colonial system, exemplified by Macaulay's notorious 1835 Minute, was created to create a class of anglicized clerks to work for the British Raj rather than to promote popular knowledge. This system imposed a strict, exam-centric approach that encouraged memorization over critical thinking and purposefully undervalued indigenous knowledge.

However, efforts were made through the NPE-1986 to fill the gaps occurring between school education and higher education, but there were considerable difficulties in putting them into practice⁽²⁵⁾. Since the Common School System never came to pass, there is now a system of government schools with inadequate resources for the poor and a system of private schools with excellent quality for the wealthy, which exacerbates inequality. For many years, the 6% GDP target remained an unattainable objective. Instead of providing valuable vocational training, "work experience" was frequently reduced to a superficial activity. The Yash Pal Committee Report, "Learning without Burden" (1993), which emphasized the psychological strain and intellectual aridity of rote memorization, bemoaned the system's inflexible examination-driven nature. Even the historic Right to Education (RTE) Act of 2009, which established education as a basic right, came under fire for ignoring learning results in favor of an overemphasis on enrollment and infrastructure inputs. Therefore, NEP 2020 is a direct response to these well-documented historical failures rather than being built from scratch⁽²⁶⁾.

2.4.2. Reclaiming Roots: The Integration of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS)

The strong advocacy of NEP-2020 for the inclusion of "Indian Knowledge Systems" (IKS) in the core curriculum is one of its most notable and contentious aspects. Compared to the predominantly Eurocentric curriculum that has dominated Indian education since the colonial era, this represents a substantial ideological shift. Metallurgy, architecture, shipbuilding, agriculture, mathematics (the works of Aryabhata and Brahmagupta), medicine (Ayurveda and Yoga), governance (Chanakya's Arthashastra), and philosophy are among the disciplines where the strategy defines IKS in a broad sense^{(23), (24)}.

2.4.3. Addressing the Colonial Gap

The colonial project's "epistemic violence", the rejection of indigenous knowledge as illogical and unscientific, is directly addressed by this emphasis on IKS. Its goal, which previous commissions had stated but never completely achieved, is to foster a sense of cultural rootedness and national pride. The vision of NEP 2020 is much more clearly and structurally planned than the Kothari Commission (1966) or the Radhakrishnan Commission (1950), which discussed integrating Indian culture with Western science and cultivating national consciousness, respectively⁽²⁷⁾. It suggests adding IKS to teacher education curricula, creating dedicated research funds through the National Research Foundation (NRF), and creating an IKS section under the Ministry of Education. The objective is to demonstrate the historical depth of Indian thinking by integrating IKS's contributions across disciplines rather than offering it as a specialized, alternative subject. For instance, Ayurvedic principles can be covered in biology and wellness classes, and ideas from the Sulbasutras can be taught in geometry.

2.4.4. Critiques and Challenges

A thorough, peer-reviewed framework for evaluating and selecting IKS content for textbooks is urgently needed⁽²⁸⁾. The integration may turn tokenistic or worse, pseudoscientific in the absence of such a framework. Additionally, there is a serious shortage of pedagogically sound resources and qualified educators who can conduct IKS in a critical and nuanced way. The ability and role of organizations such as the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) is crucial to create excellent, genuine, and unbiased educational resources to the accomplishment of this ambitious undertaking, which will further support the nation to achieve the goal of Viksit Bharat 2047.

3 The Digital Imperative: Pervasive and Purposeful Use of Technology

NEP 2020 has emphasized to integrate technology into teaching, learning, evaluation, and administration as a core part of the educational ecosystem rather than just an add-on tool. This is a major change from earlier policies that frequently restricted ICT in education to hardware provision (such as the 1980s CLASS project) or isolated e-learning projects.

As a national storehouse of top-notch e-content, including materials in several Indian languages, initiatives such as DIKSHA (Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing) have been started meticulously. In order to improve the Gross Enrollment

Ratio (GER), the policy also encourages blended learning models, online education, and the creation of digital institutions. In contrast to the one-size-fits-all classroom paradigm of the past, the focus on employing Artificial Intelligence (AI) to create individualized, adaptive learning pathways for students is especially forward-looking, aiming to accommodate unique learning paces and styles⁽²⁹⁾.

3.1 The Unaddressed Chasm: The Digital Divide

The glaring digital divide in India is the biggest obstacle to this digital goal. Deep disparities in access to gadgets (laptops, cellphones), dependable internet connectivity, and electricity were exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, especially between urban and rural locations and across various socioeconomic strata⁽³⁰⁾. The drive for digital schooling runs the risk of escalating current disparities and establishing a "digital caste" system if this basic infrastructure gap is not addressed. Critics contend that the policy fails to adequately budget for or plan for closing this gap and is unduly optimistic about technology's capacity to be an equalizer. It is an enormous undertaking that calls for consistent investment in professional development to train millions of teachers in the pedagogical integration of digital resources as well as their use.

3.1.1. *From Rote Learning to Realization: Curricular and Pedagogical Transformation*

NEP 2020's comprehensive revision of the curriculum and pedagogical framework, which directly addresses the legacy of rote memorization and high-stakes tests, may be the most drastic change suggested. Therefore, in NEP 2020 it has been clearly stated that the assessment of learner would be at 360°

3.1.2. *Dismantling the Old Structure*

Ages 3–8, 8–11, 11–14, and 14–18 are represented by the 5+3+3+4 design, which replaces the old 10+2 structure⁽¹⁴⁾. There are two reasons why this move is revolutionary. First, it acknowledges the vital significance of foundational learning, a field that was previously primarily left to the private and unorganized sectors, by legally integrating Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) for children ages 3–6 within the educational framework. Numerous researches on learning outcomes have found a significant need that this immediately fills.

The policy also seeks to eliminate the strict division between academic and extracurricular activities, academic and vocational education, and academic streams (science, arts, and commerce)⁽³¹⁾. Secondary school students will be able to select subjects more freely, encouraging a multidisciplinary approach to education. By including vocational education, including internships, from the middle school stage onward, this is a direct attempt to more meaningfully achieve the vision of the Mudaliar Commission's "multipurpose schools" and the Kothari Commission's "work experience"⁽³²⁾.

3.1.3. *Re framing Assessment Procedure*

NEP 2020 calls for a radical reform of assessment in order to move the emphasis from memory to competencies. It urges a shift to competency-based, frequent, formative evaluation that monitors students' progress toward learning objectives. Grades 10 and 12 board exams will be modified to be "low-stakes," assessing both higher-order abilities like analysis and critical thinking as well as fundamental ideas⁽³³⁾. To create guidelines and standards for student assessment and evaluation across all school boards, a new national assessment center called PARAKH (Performance Assessment, Review, and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development) would be established⁽³⁴⁾,⁽³¹⁾. The "Learning without Burden" report and decades of criticism of the exam-centric culture that inhibits innovation are the direct causes of this.

4 Findings of the Review Study

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 marks the most comprehensive reform in India's education system since independence, breaking away from colonial and post-colonial legacies. Its vision rests on four pillars: the integration of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) to foster cultural confidence and decolonize curricula; the adoption of technology as a central tool for expanding access and quality; a curricular and pedagogical overhaul through the 5+3+3+4 structure emphasizing experiential and competency-based learning; and continuity with past reform agendas by addressing gaps highlighted various Commission.

- Integration of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS): Aimed at fostering cultural self-confidence and decolonizing the curriculum, reviving indigenous epistemologies neglected by earlier policies.
- Technology-driven transformation: NEP 2020 positions digital platforms and tools at the heart of educational reform, with the potential to expand both access and quality.

- Curricular and pedagogical overhaul: By restructuring schooling into the 5+3+3+4 model and prioritizing experiential learning, foundational literacy, and competency-based assessment, it seeks to dismantle the legacy of rote memorization and high-stakes exams.
- Historical continuity: NEP 2020 responds to unfinished agendas-reviving the Kothari Commission's call for holistic education, addressing the Yash Pal Committee's concerns over learning burdens, and moving beyond the Right to Education Act's input-driven metrics toward outcome-oriented reforms.

5 Outcomes of the Present Study

It provides a historical and philosophical validation for NEP 2020. It has also emphasised on Modern technology - embracing with Digital Learning, suggesting that the policy is not a sudden shift but a reclamation of India's indigenous educational ethos that was suppressed over centuries. It typically identifies and critically analyses the challenges in integrating IKS, such as academic resistance (the perception of IKS as unscientific), lack of standardized, scholarly resources, faculty shortages trained in IKS and modern pedagogy, and the risk of ideological misuse or political appropriation. The review proposes a futuristic agenda for the Indian education system, advocating for a cautious, scholarly, and inclusive approach to IKS integration to ensure it is authentic, academically rigorous, and unbiased. This includes promoting original research in IKS, developing digital resources, and fostering interdisciplinary study (e.g., IKS in AI ethics, sustainable development).

6 Conclusion

The National Education Policy 2020 is undeniably a document of profound ambition and vision. It represents the most coherent and comprehensive attempt in post-independence Indian history to break from the shackles of its colonial past and the inertia of its post-colonial evolution. By championing the integration of Indian Knowledge Systems, it seeks to instill cultural self-confidence and decolonize the curriculum in a way that previous policies only hinted at. By placing technology at the core of its strategy, it aims to leverage digital tools to enhance both the quality and reach of education. Most importantly, through its radical overhaul of the curricular, pedagogical, and assessment structures, it directly confronts the most debilitating legacy of the old system: the culture of rote memorization and high-stakes examinations.

NEP 2020 systematically attempts to address the gaps left by its predecessors. It renews the Kothari Commission's call for a holistic, flexible, and nationally rooted education system. It gives programmatic shape to the cultural aspirations of the Radhakrishnan Commission. It tries to finally slay the demon of "learning without burden" identified by the Yash Pal Committee, and it seeks to move the conversation beyond the input-based focus of the RTE Act towards tangible learning outcomes.

However, the chasm between a visionary policy document and its effective implementation is vast and treacherous. The success of NEP 2020 is contingent on overcoming formidable challenges. The idealistic push for IKS must be carefully navigated to avoid the pitfalls of jingoism and pseudoscience. The technology-driven vision can only succeed if the glaring digital divide is addressed with urgency and massive investment. The transformative pedagogical shifts require an unprecedented and sustained effort in teacher education and capacity building.

Ultimately, NEP 2020 provides a detailed and inspiring roadmap. It successfully diagnoses the historical ailments of the Indian education system and prescribes a holistic cure. Whether the political will, financial commitment, and institutional capacity exist to administer this cure remains the critical question. The coming decade will reveal whether the policy becomes a landmark in India's developmental journey or another chapter in the long history of well-intentioned but imperfectly implemented educational reforms.

The history of Indian education is a long, layered, and often contentious narrative. It is a palimpsest in which the ancient ideals of holistic and spiritual development embodied in Gurukuls and Viharas were gradually overwritten by the administrative imperatives of medieval empires, and eventually reshaped entirely by the colonial enterprise. The colonial period dominated by Macaulay's vision and Wood's dispatch transformed education into a tool for producing a subservient bureaucratic class, a legacy that independent India has grappled with for over seven decades.

Post-independence, India has consistently strived to reclaim and redefine education as a vehicle for national development, social justice, and democratic empowerment. Commissions and policies from the Kothari Commission's ideal of a common school system to the rights-based approach of the Right to Education Act have pursued the twin goals of equitable access and quality. Yet, many structural challenges remain entrenched. The English-vernacular divide recalls colonial-era debates, while the disparity between elite private institutions and under-resourced government schools reflects the lingering logic of exclusion rooted in the filtration theory. Curriculum reform continues to be mired in ideological disputes, making it difficult to craft content that is both inclusive and culturally grounded.

Understanding this complex historical inheritance is crucial for evaluating the significance of contemporary reforms, particularly the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. Positioned as the most comprehensive and coherent educational reform since independence, NEP 2020 aims to break from both colonial residues and the inertia of post-colonial frameworks. Its emphasis on integrating Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) seeks to cultivate cultural confidence and decolonize the curriculum in ways earlier policies only alluded to. Its technology-driven approach aspires to expand both the reach and quality of education, while its overhaul of curricular and pedagogical structures targets deep-rooted issues such as rote memorization and exam-centric learning.

However, bridging the gaps between visionary policy and tangible change remains the policy's greatest challenge. The promotion of IKS must guard against ideological distortion; the digital-first strategy must contend with the nation's vast digital divide; and the success of pedagogical reforms hinges on sustained investment in teacher training.

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