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Evaluation of the National Education Policy 2020 in India in the light of inclusive and sustainable development

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Abstract
The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 represents a paradigm shift in the Indian education landscape, aiming to transform the system from a colonial legacy to a more holistic, flexible, and multidisciplinary framework. This paper critically evaluates the NEP 2020 through the dual lenses of inclusive development and sustainable development. By analyzing the policy's structural reforms, pedagogical shifts, and access provisions, the study assesses its potential to address systemic inequalities and integrate sustainability into the educational ethos. The research utilizes a qualitative methodology, reviewing policy documents, academic literature, and government reports. The findings suggest that while NEP 2020 introduces visionary frameworks—such as the 5+3+3+4 structure, the emphasis on Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), and the integration of vocational education—significant challenges persist regarding implementation, funding, linguistic diversity, and the digital divide. The paper concludes that for NEP 2020 to truly foster inclusive and sustainable development, it must navigate the complexities of federalism, ensure equitable resource distribution, and resist the commodification of education.

Keywords: Inclusive development, sustainable development, national education policy 2020 (nep 2020)

Introduction

Education is the cornerstone of human development and a critical catalyst for sustainable growth. In India, the education system has undergone several transformations since independence, yet it continues to grapple with issues of access, equity, quality, and relevance. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 [1], approved by the Union Cabinet of India on July 29, 2020 [3], is the third major policy intervention after 1968 and 1986. It aims to overhaul the Indian education system to meet the demands of the 21st century, aligning with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically SDG 4 (Quality Education).

The concept of inclusive development goes beyond mere access; it demands the removal of barriers that prevent marginalized groups—based on gender, caste, disability, or geography—from participating fully in the educational process. Simultaneously, sustainable development in education involves fostering environmental consciousness, economic viability, and social equity through the curriculum and institutional practices. NEP 2020 [1] explicitly references these concepts, aiming to create an equitable and vibrant knowledge society.

This research paper evaluates the efficacy of NEP 2020 [1] in achieving these dual objectives. It interrogates whether the policy's structural and pedagogical reforms are sufficient to dismantle deep-rooted socio-economic disparities and integrate sustainability as a core value. The paper argues that while NEP 2020 [1] offers a robust theoretical framework for inclusivity and sustainability, its success is contingent upon overcoming implementation hurdles, including financial constraints, infrastructural deficits, and the need for a paradigm shift in pedagogical delivery.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

1. Historical Context of Education Policies in India

The trajectory of Indian education policy has been a reflection of the nation's evolving socio-political landscape. The Kothari Commission (1964-66) laid the foundation for a national system of education, emphasizing the integration of education with life and work. The National Policy on Education (NPE) 1986 and its revision in 1992 focused on universalization of elementary education and the removal of disparities. However, scholars like Tilak (2018)[22] argue that despite these policies, the sector suffered from under-investment and a colonial hangover of rote learning, leading to a crisis of quality and equity. The NEP 2020 [1] emerges as a response to these historical shortcomings and the changing global economic order.

2. Theoretical Framework: Inclusive and Sustainable Development

In the context of education, Inclusive Development draws from the capabilities approach proposed by Amartya Sen (1999) [20], which emphasizes expanding human freedoms and capabilities. In education, this translates to ensuring that every individual, regardless of background, has the opportunity to realize their potential. UNESCO (2015) further expands this in the "Education 2030 [24]" framework, stressing that inclusion must address all forms of exclusion and marginalization.

Sustainable Development in education is often conceptualized through Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), defined by the UN as a learning process that empowers learners to take informed decisions and responsible actions for environmental integrity, economic viability, and a just society (UNESCO, 2017). In the Indian context, this involves integrating local ecological knowledge with modern scientific education to foster stewardship.

3. Review of Existing Studies on NEP 2020 [21]

Early analyses of NEP 2020 highlight its ambitious scope. Agrawal (2021) [17] praises the policy's focus on Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) as a game-changer for social equity. However, critics like Nanda (2021) raise

concerns regarding the policy's push towards privatization and the potential erosion of federalism, arguing that the centralization of standards might undermine regional inclusivity. Furthermore, studies by the Centre for Policy Research (CPR) have flagged the financial feasibility of the policy, noting that achieving the target of 6% GDP allocation for education has remained elusive in previous decades. This paper builds upon these critiques to specifically analyze the intersection of inclusivity and sustainability.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research design focusing on policy analysis. The primary data sources include the official NEP 2020 [1] document, government reports (such as the Unified District Information System for Education Plus), and secondary academic literature indexed in Scopus and Google Scholar. The analysis is deductive, applying the theoretical frameworks of inclusive and sustainable development to the specific mandates of NEP 2020 [1]. The evaluation criteria include:

1. **Accessibility:** Measures to reach the last mile (rural, tribal, disabled).
2. **Equity:** Provisions for gender, caste, and economic parity.
3. **Curriculum Relevance:** Integration of sustainability and vocational skills.
4. **Implementation Feasibility:** Infrastructure, funding, and teacher training.

NEP 2020: Structural Reforms and Inclusivity

1. The 5+3+3+4 Structure and Early Childhood Care

One of the most significant structural shifts in NEP 2020 [1] is the reorganization of school education from the 10+2 system to the 5+3+3+4 system, aligning with global standards. This structure brings children aged 3-6 into the formal education fold under the purview of the school education system, integrating the Anganwadi system with formal schooling.

Inclusivity Analysis: This reform is profoundly inclusive. Research indicates that the foundational years (0-8) are critical for cognitive development. By universalizing Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), the policy aims to bridge the gap between children from affluent and disadvantaged backgrounds before they even enter primary school. According to Mistry (2021) [17], this intervention can significantly reduce the dropout rates among marginalized communities, particularly Scheduled Tribes (ST) and Scheduled Castes (SC), by providing a nurturing learning environment early on. However, the inclusivity of this reform depends on the infrastructure of Anganwadis, which currently suffer from poor sanitation and lack of trained facilitators. Without upgrading these centers, the policy risks creating a two-tier ECCE system.

The transition to the 5+3+3+4 structure is not merely a change in nomenclature but a fundamental restructuring of the cognitive and developmental trajectory of the Indian child. The first five years (Foundational Stage) comprise three years of preschool (ages 3-6) and Grades 1 and 2. This aligns the Indian system with the global consensus on the importance of the "Golden Age" of childhood.

Cognitive and Social Inclusivity: Research in developmental psychology suggests that 90% of brain development occurs before the age of five. In India, children from marginalized communities often enter Grade 1 with a significant "school readiness" deficit compared to their peers from affluent backgrounds who have access to pre-schooling. By institutionalizing ECCE under the school education department, NEP 2020 [1] aims to level the playing field.

The Balvatika (preparatory class) concept is designed to be play-based and activity-based. This is crucial for inclusivity because rote-based instruction, which is prevalent in under-resourced schools, alienates young learners. The policy mandates that the pedagogy in the foundational stage will be based on the 5+3+3+4 structure's specific learning outcomes, emphasizing numeracy, literacy, and executive function through storytelling and play.

Implementation Challenges: However, the inclusivity of this reform is heavily dependent on the Anganwadi system. Anganwadis were originally designed as nutrition and health centers, not educational institutions. While they have a massive reach (over 1.3 million centers), they lack educational infrastructure. The policy envisions a convergence of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Women and Child Development. This inter-ministerial coordination is historically difficult. Without dedicated classrooms, learning materials, and teachers trained in early childhood pedagogy, the ECCE component risks becoming a "holding bay" rather than a "learning space." Furthermore, the transition from Anganwadi workers (who are community volunteers) to trained preschool teachers requires a massive skilling initiative. The policy proposes a 2-year Diploma in Early Childhood Care and Education (DECE) for these workers, but the scale of this upskilling is daunting.

2. Universal Access and Equity Provisions

NEP 2020 emphasizes the "Right to Education" for all children aged 3-18. It mandates the provision of quality education to the most disadvantaged groups, including Samarth (children with special needs).

Inclusivity Analysis: The policy explicitly mentions the socio-economically disadvantaged groups (SEDGs), which include first-generation learners, girls, children with disabilities, and those from linguistic minorities. The provision for "Special Education Zones" (SEZs) in areas with high concentrations of SEDGs is a targeted approach to equity. Furthermore, the policy proposes a Gender Inclusion Fund to build the nation's capacity to provide equitable quality education for all girls.

However, the challenge lies in the implementation of these funds. Historically, gender gaps in education have been more pronounced at the secondary and higher education levels due to social norms and safety concerns. While the policy provides the financial mechanism, the actual utilization and monitoring at the state level remain variable. Additionally, the focus on "board exams" and "high-stakes testing" has been criticized for potentially alienating students from rural backgrounds who may not have access to the same coaching resources as their urban counterparts (Tak, 2021).

3. Multilingualism and Cultural Inclusivity

NEP 2020 recommends that the medium of instruction should be the mother tongue/local language until at least Grade 5, and preferably till Grade 8.

Inclusivity Analysis: This is a radical step toward linguistic inclusivity. In a country with over 19,500 dialects and 121 scheduled languages, the dominance of English in education has historically created a class divide. By validating regional languages as mediums of instruction, the policy aims to democratize knowledge and reduce the cognitive load on young learners (NCF, 2022)[10]. This aligns with the "Vygotskian" perspective that learning is most effective in one's Zone of Proximal Development, facilitated by familiar language.

However, this reform faces practical hurdles. The lack of high-quality textbooks and trained teachers in regional languages, particularly in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) subjects, poses a significant challenge. Furthermore, there is a concern that this move might inadvertently limit the mobility of students who wish to pursue higher education in English-medium universities, unless parallel provisions for English language acquisition are robustly implemented.

The emphasis on mother tongue instruction is a direct challenge to the "English-medium elite" culture that has dominated Indian education. The policy cites research indicating that children learn best when taught in their home language until at least Grade 5.

Cognitive Benefits: This approach supports cognitive development by allowing children to grasp complex concepts in a language they understand deeply. It reduces the "language barrier" that often causes children to drop out in the early grades. For tribal children, this is particularly significant. The policy encourages the development of bilingual teaching-learning materials in regional languages and tribal dialects.

Sociolinguistic Inclusivity: From a sociological perspective, validating regional languages in education is an act of decolonization. It restores dignity to languages historically marginalized by the colonial administration and the post-colonial elite. It promotes social cohesion by reducing the linguistic hierarchy that equates English with intelligence and regional languages with backwardness.

The English Language Dilemma: However, the policy navigates a delicate balance. While emphasizing mother tongue instruction, it also acknowledges the importance of English as a global language. The policy suggests that English can be introduced as a subject from Grade 3, but the medium of instruction for core subjects should be the local language. This creates a complex pedagogical challenge. Teachers in rural India are often not fluent in academic English, but they may also lack the training to teach complex scientific concepts in the local dialect. The curriculum development bodies (like SCERTs) face the Herculean task of creating high-quality technical vocabulary in regional languages. Without this, students may face a "linguistic trap" where they learn concepts in their mother tongue but cannot transition to higher education, which is predominantly English-medium.

NEP 2020 and Sustainable Development

1. Curriculum Integration of Environmental Education

Sustainable development requires that citizens possess the knowledge, skills, and values necessary to live in harmony with the environment. NEP 2020 [1] mandates the integration of environmental education across the curriculum, from primary to higher education.

NEP 2020's approach to sustainability is not limited to adding a chapter on climate change to the science textbook. It advocates for a "Whole Institution Approach," meaning that sustainability must permeate the school's culture, infrastructure, and operations.

Curriculum Integration: The policy suggests integrating topics like climate change, sustainable development, and circular economy into subjects like Geography, Science, and even Mathematics. For example, a math problem could involve calculating the carbon footprint of a school bus or the water savings from a rainwater harvesting system. This contextualizes learning and makes it relevant to the student's immediate environment.

Experiential Learning: The policy places a heavy emphasis on experiential learning, such as visits to local ecosystems (forests, water bodies) and engagement in projects like tree planting and waste segregation. This aligns with the principles of "Education for Sustainable Development" (ESD), which prioritizes values and behavior change over mere knowledge acquisition.

Infrastructure Sustainability: Furthermore, the policy mandates that schools should become models of sustainable practices. This includes using renewable energy (solar panels), managing waste, and conserving water. In a country where many schools lack basic electricity, this is a visionary goal. However, it presents an opportunity for "green infrastructure" development. By retrofitting existing schools and building new ones with sustainable materials, the education sector can lead by example. The challenge is funding. While the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) offers subsidies for solar installations, the administrative burden on schools to access these funds is high. A streamlined mechanism is required to make schools "Net Zero" energy campuses.

Sustainability Analysis: The policy moves away from treating environmental education as a standalone subject to integrating it as a cross-cutting theme. This aligns with the "Whole Institution Approach" advocated by UNESCO. For instance, the new curriculum includes topics on climate change, water conservation, and sustainable lifestyles. The policy also emphasizes experiential learning, such as kitchen gardens and waste management projects in schools.

This integration is vital for India, which is highly vulnerable to climate change. By instilling sustainability values early, the policy aims to create a generation of environmentally conscious citizens. However, the efficacy of this integration depends on the teachers' own understanding of sustainability. Current teacher training programs (like the Diploma in Elementary Education) have limited modules on environmental pedagogy. Therefore, without a massive overhaul of teacher training curricula, environmental education risks becoming a tokenistic addition rather than a transformative force.

2. Vocational Education and Economic Sustainability

NEP 2020 introduces vocational education from Grade 6, with internships in local trades. This is a departure from the previous academic-vocational divide.

Sustainability Analysis: Economic sustainability is a pillar of sustainable development. By integrating vocational skills with general education, the policy aims to reduce the "skills gap" that plagues the Indian workforce. The National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF) is mapped to the school curriculum to ensure that students acquire employable skills by the time they complete secondary education.

This shift is crucial for India's "demographic dividend." With millions of youth entering the workforce annually, the lack of employable skills leads to underemployment and economic instability. By making vocational education flexible and integrated, NEP 2020 [1] aims to destigmatize manual labor and promote dignity of work. However, the sustainability of this model depends on industry-academia linkages. Currently, there is a disconnect between what is taught in vocational courses and the actual demands of the market. Effective implementation requires active participation from local industries and MSMEs (Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises), which is yet to be fully realized.

3. Higher Education and Research for Sustainable Solutions

The policy envisions a multidisciplinary approach to higher education, breaking down rigid silos between Arts, Sciences, and Vocational subjects. It aims to increase the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) to 50% by 2035.

Sustainability Analysis: Sustainable development requires interdisciplinary research. Climate change, for example, cannot be solved by science alone; it requires inputs from economics, sociology, and ethics. NEP 2020's push for multidisciplinary education fosters this holistic thinking. The policy also emphasizes "Indian Knowledge Systems" (IKS), including traditional medicine, architecture, and ecology, which often embody sustainable practices.

Furthermore, the establishment of the National Research Foundation (NRF) is intended to fund research in areas of national priority, including sustainable technologies. However, the current allocation for research in India remains low (approx. 0.7% of GDP). Without substantial funding and autonomy for the NRF, the vision of a research-intensive education system that drives sustainable innovation may remain unfulfilled.

Critical Evaluation: Challenges to Inclusivity and Sustainability

While the theoretical framework of NEP 2020 [1] is robust, a critical evaluation reveals several fault lines that threaten its inclusive and sustainable goals.

1. The Digital Divide and the COVID-19 Catalyst

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of digital education, a component emphasized in NEP 2020 [1] through the creation of the Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing (DIKSHA) and online platforms. While digital education offers flexibility and access, it exacerbates existing inequalities.

According to the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2021 [2], only 11% of rural households had access to a laptop or desktop, and internet connectivity remained a major hurdle. The policy's reliance on "blended learning" assumes a level of digital infrastructure that is absent in tribal belts and remote villages. Without bridging this digital divide, the push for digital education risks excluding the very populations the policy aims to include. Furthermore, the environmental impact of increased electronic waste (e-waste) due to the proliferation of digital devices in education needs to be addressed to ensure the sustainability of this model.

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed the stark digital divide in India. While NEP 2020 [3] envisions a digital-first approach through platforms like DIKSHA (Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing), the reality on the ground is uneven.

Access and Affordability: According to the National Sample Survey (NSS), only 4% of rural households have a computer, and less than 15% have internet access. The policy's push for online courses and virtual labs assumes a level of connectivity that is absent in vast swathes of the country. This creates a "digital exclusion" where the poorest are left behind.

Gender and Digital Access: The digital divide also has a gendered dimension. In many households, if there is only one smartphone, it is often controlled by male members. Girls may have restricted access to devices due to social norms or safety concerns. Without targeted interventions to provide devices and connectivity to girls and marginalized communities, digital education will widen the gender gap.

Environmental Impact of Digitalization: From a sustainability perspective, the rapid digitization of education has an environmental cost. The manufacturing of devices (laptops, tablets) involves the extraction of rare earth minerals, often under poor labor conditions. The energy consumption of data centers and the disposal of e-waste are significant environmental concerns. A sustainable digital education policy must include a lifecycle assessment of the hardware and promote the use of energy-efficient software and renewable energy for data centers.

2. Funding and Resource Allocation

The policy recommits to the target of allocating 6% of GDP to public expenditure on education. Historically, this target has never been met. The 2023-24 budget allocation for education was approximately 2.64% of GDP (including state and central shares). The financial architecture of NEP 2020 [1] is its weakest link. The commitment to allocate 6% of GDP to education is reiterated, but the trend since 2014 shows stagnation around 3-3.5%.

Central vs. State Funding: Education is a concurrent subject, meaning both central and state governments share the financial burden. However, states bear the brunt of expenditure on school education (approx. 80%). In recent years, states have faced fiscal stress due to GST implementation and the pandemic. This limits their ability to invest in the ambitious reforms proposed by NEP 2020 [21].

Cost of Implementation: The transition to the new curriculum structure requires massive capital expenditure:

1. **Infrastructure:** Upgrading schools to accommodate the 5+3+3+4 structure, including pre-primary sections.
2. **Teacher Recruitment:** Filling the millions of vacant teaching positions (particularly in STEM and special education).
3. **Training:** Continuous professional development for existing teachers.
4. **Digital Infrastructure:** Providing devices and internet connectivity.

Without a clear roadmap for mobilizing these funds—perhaps through a dedicated "Education Cess" or increased private sector CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) contributions—the policy risks becoming an unfunded mandate.

Impact on Inclusivity: Inadequate funding directly impacts inclusive development. Underfunded schools in rural areas lack basic infrastructure—drinking water, toilets, and electricity—making them inhospitable for girls and children with disabilities. Without a concrete roadmap to mobilize the 6% GDP allocation, the ambitious goals of NEP 2020 [1] may remain on paper.

Impact on Sustainability: Sustainable initiatives, such as building green schools, installing solar panels, and maintaining ecological gardens, require capital investment. In a resource-constrained environment, these "soft" sustainability goals are often the first to be compromised in favor of "hard" infrastructure like buildings.

3. The Role of Privatization and Commercialization

NEP 2020 advocates for the "light but tight" regulation of private schools and encourages public-private partnerships (PPPs). While this may improve infrastructure, it poses a threat to inclusive education. NEP 2020 [1] attempts to strike a balance between public and private education. It encourages private investment while emphasizing the need for regulation.

The PPP Model: The policy promotes Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) to bridge infrastructure gaps. While this can bring in capital and efficiency, it raises questions of equity. Private partners typically seek a return on investment, which often translates to higher fees or a focus on profitable courses, neglecting socially necessary but less lucrative disciplines like humanities or vocational trades in rural areas.

Regulatory Vacuum: The policy proposes a single regulator for higher education (HECI), but the regulation of school fees remains largely with state governments, which have varying degrees of effectiveness. In states like Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu, fee regulation acts exist but are often circumvented by schools charging "capitation fees" under different heads. If NEP 2020 does not mandate a uniform fee structure for schools receiving any form of government aid (direct or indirect), the goal of inclusivity will be undermined by the commercialization of education.

The "Choice" Argument: Proponents argue that privatization increases "choice" for parents. However, for low-income families, this choice is illusory. They are often forced to choose low-fee, low-quality private schools over government schools due to the perceived failure of the public system. NEP 2020 [1] aims to revitalize government schools to make them the preferred choice, but this requires a massive improvement in quality and governance, which is a long-term endeavor.

Critics argue that the policy's emphasis on autonomy and choice may lead to a surge in fees in private institutions, making them inaccessible to low-income groups. The policy's silence on the fee regulation of private schools is a significant gap. If quality education becomes a commodity sold to the highest bidder, the goal of equity is compromised. Moreover, the commercialization of education often prioritizes profit over sustainability, leading to resource-intensive infrastructure that ignores ecological footprints.

4. Teacher Education and Capacity Building

The success of any education policy rests on the shoulders of teachers. NEP 2020 [1] proposes a 4-year integrated B.Ed. degree by 2030 and continuous professional development.

Challenges: Currently, there is a massive shortage of trained teachers, particularly in special education and STEM fields. The transition to the new curriculum requires retraining millions of teachers in multidisciplinary pedagogy, digital literacy, and inclusive practices. The timeline for this transition is aggressive. Without adequate investment in teacher training institutes (TCRs) and robust mentorship programs, the implementation of NEP 2020 [1] will face a severe quality deficit.

Policy Recommendations

To maximize the potential of NEP 2020 [1] in fostering inclusive and sustainable development, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. **Strengthening Federal Cooperation**
   - **Mechanism:** Establish a "National Council for Education Implementation" comprising representatives from the Centre, States, and Union Territories. This body should meet quarterly to resolve implementation bottlenecks.
   - **Fiscal Federalism:** The Finance Commission should be mandated to link a portion of grants to states based on their performance in implementing NEP 2020 reforms, particularly in ECCE and digital infrastructure.
2. **Targeted Funding for SEDGs**
   - **Scholarship Portals:** Create a unified, transparent digital portal for all scholarships to ensure last-mile delivery without leakage.
   - **Inclusive Infrastructure Fund:** A specific fund should be created to retrofit government schools with ramps, accessible toilets, and learning aids for children with disabilities (divyang).
3. **Bridging the Digital Divide**
   - **Community Hubs:** Instead of individual devices, the policy should focus on creating "Digital Learning Hubs" at the Panchayat level, equipped with high-speed internet and devices, supervised by community volunteers.
   - **Low-Tech Solutions:** Recognize that high-tech is not always the solution. The policy should invest in low-tech alternatives like Interactive Audio Instruction (IAI) via radio and mobile phones, which have proven effective in rural India.
4. **Green School Certification**
   - **Curriculum Linkage:** The certification should not just be about infrastructure but also curriculum. Schools that integrate sustainability into 50% of their subjects should receive higher ratings.

- **Incentives:** Certified schools should receive tax breaks or additional grants, creating a market incentive for sustainability.

5. Teacher Capacity Building:

- **Micro-Credentials:** Instead of long, expensive courses, teachers should be offered "micro-credentials" in specific skills (e.g., "Inclusive Classroom Management," "Digital Pedagogy") through online platforms like DIKSHA.

- **Mentorship Networks:** Establish a "Master Teacher" cadre who spend 50% of their time mentoring teachers in neighboring schools, ensuring peer-to-peer learning.

Conclusion

The National Education Policy 2020 [1] is a document of immense potential. It correctly identifies the gaps in the Indian education system and proposes solutions that are aligned with global best practices. Its focus on holistic, flexible, and multidisciplinary education is the need of the hour. However, the transition from a rigid, exam-centric system to a fluid, competency-based system is a tectonic shift.

The evaluation of NEP 2020 [1] through the lenses of inclusive and sustainable development reveals that while the policy is theoretically sound, the path is strewn with obstacles. Inclusivity is threatened by the digital divide, the commercialization of education, and the lack of adequate funding for marginalized groups. Sustainability is challenged by the resource intensity of implementation and the need for a behavioral shift toward environmental stewardship.

Ultimately, the success of NEP 2020 [1] depends on political will, administrative efficiency, and societal participation. It requires a move away from viewing education as a mere tool for employment to seeing it as a means of holistic human development. If implemented with integrity and a focus on equity, NEP 2020 [23] can indeed transform India into a global knowledge superpower that is both inclusive and sustainable. If implemented poorly, it risks widening the very inequalities it seeks to bridge. The next decade will be decisive in determining which path India takes.

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