



Cover Page



THE NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY, 2020 IN THE CONTEXT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS, 2030

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Abstract

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) adopted by the United Nations as part of the sustainable development by 2030 is very important for multidisciplinary learning in higher educational institutions in India. At present the National Education Policy (NEP), 2020 has implemented all over the higher educational institutions of India aiming to provide multidisciplinary higher educational institutions by 2035. Providing quality education, improving learning outcomes and fostering innovation and research are some common important aspects of the NEP, 2020 and are interlinked with the Sustainable Development Goals. The NEP, 2020 and the SDGs share common objectives related to promoting access to quality education, improving learning outcomes and fostering innovation and research. The paper wants to show the interlinkage between SDGs and NEP, 2020 for providing multidisciplinary learning and solution towards gender inequalities and increase in enrolment ratio in India. The paper is carried out on the basis of secondary sources data using literature review and some government reports.

Key words: Sustainable Development Goals; National Education Policy, 2020; Multidisciplinary Higher Education, Gender Inequality, Gross Enrolment Ratio

1. Introduction:

The United Nations in 2015 adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which are also known as the Global Goals with the aim of a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that by 2030 all people enjoy peace and prosperity. There are seventeen goals (17) viz, no poverty, zero hunger, good health and well-being, quality education, gender equality, clean water and sanitation, affordable and clean energy, decent work and economic growth, industry, innovation and infrastructure, reduced inequalities, sustainable cities and communities, responsible consumption and production, climate action, life below water, life on land, peace, justice and strong institutions and partnership for the goals. The creativity, knowhow, technology and financial resources from all of society is necessary to achieve the SDGs in every context (*Sustainable Development Goals*, n.d.). The SDGs have 17 agendas covering around 169 targets and is applicable to all the countries and regions of the globe.

The National Education Policy, 2020 has implemented in India in order to increase the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) to 50% by 2035, promoting holistic and multidisciplinary education, integrating vocational training, allowing multiple entry and exit options and introducing an Academic Bank of Credits for flexible learning. The policy also emphasizes equity and inclusion, focusing on Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs), alongside reforms for increased institutional autonomy and accountability (*Nep 2020 in Higher Education Features - Google Search*, n.d.).

The NEP 2020 and the SDGs share common objectives related to promoting access to quality education, improving learning outcomes and fostering innovation and research. The paper wants to show the interlinkage between SDG's and NEP, 2020 for providing multidisciplinary learning and solution towards gender inequalities and increase in enrolment ratio in India. The paper is carried out on the basis of secondary sources data using literature review and some government reports.

2. Review of Literature:

For wide understanding about the knowledge of Sustainable Development Goals, 2015 and National Education Policy, 2020 of the Ministry of Education under Government of India and in order to find out the research gaps literature review has been done as under-



Cover Page



By integrating the SDGs into the curricula and operations higher education institutions in India can help their students to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes required to contribute to sustainable development in India and the rest of the world. The alignment of NEP 2020 with the SDGs is expected to further encourage the integration of the SDGs into higher education in India (Radha & Arumugam, 2023).

NEP, 2020 was framed to achieve UN Sustainable Development Goal four for inclusive and equitable quality education along with promoting lifelong learning opportunities which is an example of a responsible leadership initiative, taken to make the Indian education system in line with the needs and requirements of the global competition and provide sustainable growth opportunities for individuals (Krishna et al., 2024).

The National Education Policy (NEP), 2020 is based on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that focus on enhancing the value addition across the education system. It is a paradigm change in the Indian education system as it encourages holistic and multidisciplinary learning that is aligned with global sustainable development goals (SDGs). The policy aids in the development of skills such as creativity, critical thinking and care for the environment through the inclusion of vocational literacy, skill competence and curriculum focused on sustainability. Shiwani & Kumar (2025) discussed how the SDG and NEP has the capacity to create behavioral change, community participation and employability in sustainable industries. The research shows that to construct a sustainable, equitable and resilient future aligning education reform with sustainability goals is of urgent importance. They concluded that NEP 2020 could be a catalyst for attainment of various SDGs that will re-shape India as a sustainable, inclusive and knowledge-based society (Shiwani & Kumar, 2025).

The NEP 2020 is also consistent with Goal 4 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, 2030 which states unequivocally that equal access to education is the foundation of long-term development. By separating SDGs targets from NEP, the government has ensured the success of the nation's self-reliance campaign by providing equal education to all. NEP, 2020 will strengthen all the citizens of the country by enhancing their skills and knowledge. The Digital India Campaign is helping to transform the entire nation into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy. If we have to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, then we need to improve the education system. Technology is an important tool to improve the education system (Ram, 2021).

The NEP 2020 is also in the line of Goal 4 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, 2030 which clearly believes quality education as the base of sustainable development. Education for sustainable development is a lifelong learning process and very important aspect of quality education. The development of information, skills, values and behaviour are essential to build a sustainable world. Here, the researcher studied about the role of NEP, 2020 for achieving quality education and also analyse how quality education is foundation for achieving every goal of Sustainable Development 2030 (Patil, 2022).

In order to establish a perfect harmony with the ideals of the United Nations SDG, 2030 plan for sustainable development, the new education system of India has been built on the five founding pillars viz, access, equity, affordability, accountability and quality. In order to create a new system that is in line with the aspirational goals of 21st century education including SDG 4 the New Education Policy of India 2020 proposes the revision and revamping of all aspects of the educational structure including its regulation and governance. This article offers insights on the NEP 2020's main components and how they relate to the 2030 targets for the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Abrol, n.d.).

3. Objectives of the Study:

The main objectives of the study are as follows-

- (i) To find out the interlinkage between Sustainable Development Goal and NEP, 2020
- (ii) To find out how NEP 2020 in higher education can help in attaining UN Sustainable Development Goals, 2030



Cover Page



4. Methodology of the Study:

The study is a qualitative study which uses only secondary sources data from different research articles and publications including government publications like All India Survey of Higher Education (AISHE), 2015-16 and 2021-22.

The present study uses only descriptive method to analyze interlinkage between Sustainable Development Goal and NEP, 2020 and how NEP, 2020 can help in attaining UN Sustainable Development Goals, 2030.

5. Findings and Discussion:

The NEP, 2020 is founded on the five guiding pillars of Access, Equity, Quality, Affordability and Accountability. It will prepare our youth to meet the diverse national and global challenges of the present and the future. In school education the policy has emphasized upon Quality Education across all stages of School Education. Quality education is not only a life-changing but also a mind-crafting and character-building experience that positively impacts on citizenship. Empowered learners not only contribute to many growing developmental imperatives of the country but also participate in creating a just and equitable society. Regarding higher education the NEP, 2020 focuses on multidisciplinary and holistic education, institutional autonomy, promotion of quality research through establishment of National Research Foundation, continuous professional development of teachers, integration of technology, internationalization of higher education, restructuring of governance and regulatory architecture, multidisciplinary curricula, engaging blended, pedagogy, valid reliable and blended assessment and availability of content in Indian languages. The policy is expected to bring long-lasting positive impact on the education system and making India a global hub of skilled manpower (*National Education Policy | Government of India, Ministry of Education, n.d.*).

Goal 4 for sustainable development goals implies access to quality education which is an important integral part of NEP, 2020. The Education for all has always been an integral part of the sustainable development agenda. There is growing international recognition of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) as an integral element of quality education and a key enabler for sustainable development (*THE 17 GOALS | Sustainable Development, n.d.*). The goal 4 of UN SDG has 10 targets-

- (i) All girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education
- (ii) All girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education
- (iii) Equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university
- (iv) Substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship
- (v) Elimination of gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations
- (vi) By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy
- (vii) Ensuring all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development
- (viii) Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all



Cover Page



- (ix) By 2020, substantially expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries for enrolment in higher education, including vocational training and information and communications technology, technical, engineering and scientific programmes
- (x) Substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers

Along with goal 4 of SDG, the gender equality and increase of gross enrolment ratio in higher education are also integral part of NEP, 2020.

The outcome of NEP, 2020 regarding quality education, gender equality, gross enrolment ratio and technical skill can be shown as under-

According to All India Survey of Higher Education 2015-16 and 2021-22 reports there is a sharp increase in higher educational institutions and gross enrolment ratio from 2015-16 to 2021-22 for access to quality education in India. In 2021-22 Universities, Colleges and Standalone Institutions increased to 1168, 45473 and 12002 respectively from 799, 39071 and 11923 respectively in 2015-16. In 2021-22 there is a 26.5 percent increase in total enrolment in higher education from 2014-15. The total enrolment in higher education increases from 3.42 crore in 2014-15 to 4.33 crores in 2021-22. Again, there is a 32 percent increase in female enrolment from 2014-15 to 2021-22. The enrolment in higher education of the socially weak communities like SC, ST, OBC also increased to 15.3, 6.3 and 37.8 percent from 2014-15 to 2021-22.

The gross enrolment ratio in 2014-15 was 23.7 which increased to 28.4 in 2021-22. Similarly, the gross enrolment ratio of SC and ST increases from 18.9 and 13.5 in 2014-15 to 25.9 and 21.2 in 2021-22. Regarding gender inequality in higher education it is found that there is no any gender inequality because the gender parity index is found as 1.01 as per AISHE Report 2021-22 (*AISHE Final Report* | AISHE | India, n.d.).

6. Conclusion:

Education for all is the common slogan for every development agenda right from UN Millennium Development Goals, 2000, UN Sustainable Development Goals, 2015 and National Education Policy, 2020 adopted by Government of India. Today, sustainability becomes the common word in development of a region. Education is the primary indicator of development which is interconnected with every goal of development like gender inequality, quality, access, health and sanitation etc. The NEP, 2020 which has five pillars like Access, Equity, Quality, Affordability and Accountability will surely help to attain sustainability regarding quality education, gender equality, technical skill and access to education in general and higher education in particular.

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Cover Page



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