# NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY 2020: THE KEY TO DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA

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# Education for Sustainable Development: Reviewing Curriculum Integration

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#### **Abstract**

Education is addressed by SDG4, which is one of the seventeen sustainable development objectives list by the United Nations. SDG 4's primary objective is to guarantee inclusive, equitable, and universal education for all individuals by the year 2030. With respect to India, the SDG4 is approached with great seriousness. Examining the numerous approaches to curriculum incorporation in the education system to promote sustainable development, this paper focuses primarily on role of NEP (2020) in accomplishing the SDGs' targets.

Keywords: NEP 2020, SDGs, Education, Curriculum, Integration.

#### 1 Introduction

Sustainable development, which entails the equitable coexistence of environmental stewardship, social progress, and economic advancement, is a cornerstone of modern foreign policy objectives. The foundation of the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations is a collection of seventeen interrelated objectives designed to tackle an extensive array of urgent global issues by the year 2030. One of the key objectives that significantly influences the progress of various other SDGs is SDG 4, which pertains to the universal provision of high-quality education. The United Nations has acknowledged that education is a potent catalyst for change, with the capacity to disrupt cycles of poverty, advance gender parity, stimulate economic expansion, and cultivate well-informed and involved individuals on an international scale. The 2020 National Education Policy (NEP 2020) of India is a landmark document with the capacity to reshape the educational environment of the country. NEP 2020

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is an all-encompassing framework that tackles a multitude of crucial concerns, such as the revision of curricula, advancements in pedagogy, integration of technology, and the promotion of equal educational opportunities. In addition to its capacity to influence the trajectory of India's educational system in the coming years, the policy is significant for its ability to harmonise the country's ambitions with international agendas, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).(Tushar Dhar Shukla et al., 2023).



Figure 1 Sustainable development goals (Deepa Pillai, 2023)

#### 1.1 Sustainable Development Goals Related To NEP 2020

India's inaugural education policy of the twenty-first century, National Education Policy (NEP), was implemented in 2020. With a vision for education that promotes sustainable development, the NEP is anticipated to put India on the path to achieving Goal 4—quality education—by providing all citizens with an inclusive and equitable education. NEP has placed particular emphasis on the necessity of restructuring the complete education system in India in order to ensure the expeditious attainment of established goals and objectives. The goal of NEP 2020 is to provide environmental education that is both thorough and integrative, including topics such sustainable living and development, waste management, biodiversity, sanitation, climate change, and environmental protection. Ensuring environmental education is a mandatory component of the curriculum, NEP has placed special emphasis on training and sensitising teacher trainers and educators regarding sustainable development. The

objective of the NEP is to deliver education in a manner that not only ensures sustainable livelihoods but also stimulates the national economy.

Prior to the NEP, efforts and emphasis were placed on advancing sustainable education via education. Priority areas in the realm of formal education and teacher training have already been identified by the "Pacific Education for Sustainable Development Framework" in order to enhance teachers' comprehension and knowledge of sustainable practices, with an especially strong emphasis on advancing quality education. Nationally and globally, "education for sustainable development" (ESD) has been a significant area of emphasis. Due to the recent introduction of NEP, the policy's comprehensive and efficient implementation still has a considerable distance to travel. Until then, the nation may continue to observe and implement effective approaches while striving to ensure that the NEP and ESD components are seamlessly integrated into curriculum methodology and are accessible and implemented across all educational institutions in India.

**SDG-4:** SDG-4 targets the promotion of opportunities for continuous learning and the assurance of quality education that is inclusive and equitable for all. By means of the subsequent provisions, the NEP endeavours to attain these objectives.

- "Multi-Disciplinary Approach
- Education and Skills Integration
- Making education more inclusive
- Effective Regulation
- Allowing Foreign Universities."

Large-scale advancements have been made in India in pursuit of universal education. A fundamental right to education for all children between the ages of six and fourteen has been established through the implementation of a number of crucial programmes and policies mandated by the Constitution. The Indian education system has received a much-needed boost from initiatives like Right to Education (RTE) and Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (SSA). Although primary education enrollment rates have increased substantially across the nation, the issue of learning outcomes quality continues to require attention. SDG 4, which pertains to education, is a sustainable development achievement.

#### 1.2 The relationship between education and sustainability

The extent and quality of education that advocates for sustainable development are critical determinants of a sustainable future, as they are intricately linked to sustainability. Through raising awareness, promoting responsible and ethical conduct, and cultivating analytical and problem-solving abilities, education is vital to the creation of a more sustainable world.

**Education promotes sustainability literacy**: An education imparts to students the understanding, abilities, and perspectives required to comprehend the interdependence of environmental, economic, and

social systems. It provides individuals with the knowledge and skills necessary to address the world's complex challenges in a sustainable manner.

**Education fosters sustainable behavior**: Education can influence the values and attitudes of individuals, thereby impacting their conduct in relation to sustainable livelihoods. Enabling individuals to comprehend the ramifications of their behaviours on the economy, society, and environment facilitates their ability to make well-informed decisions that promote sustainability.

**Education supports sustainable development**: A multidisciplinary approach is necessary for sustainable development, and education is crucial to producing workforce capable of resolving complex problems in a sustainable manner. Essential to sustainable development are skills and knowledge that can be acquired through education, including renewable energy, ecological technology, and sustainable agriculture.

**Education promotes environmental stewardship**: By fostering conservation practices, educating about environmental issues, and demonstrating the responsible application of natural resources, education can foster environmental stewardship. Individuals can be empowered to assume responsibility for safeguarding the environment and establishing more sustainable world through education.

# 1.3 National Education Policy 2020 and Sustainable Development in Education

In India, National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 acknowledges the necessity of integrating sustainability principles into all levels of education and stresses the significance of education in promoting sustainable development. Sustainable development is recognised as an essential focal point in the NEP, which incorporates a number of provisions aimed at advancing sustainable development within the realm of education.

**Integration of environmental education:** The NEP stresses the importance of environmental education integration at all educational levels, from elementary to tertiary. This consists of fostering an understanding of environmental concerns, encouraging sustainable conduct, and cultivating the competencies required for sustainable progress.

**Inclusion of sustainability in teacher training:** Teachers are instrumental in advancing sustainable development in education, as acknowledged by the NEP, which stresses the importance of incorporating sustainability principles into teacher preparation programmes.

**Promotion of experiential learning:** Practical and hands-on learning experiences are encouraged by the NEP in order to foster the attitudes and competencies required for sustainable development.

**Focus on vocational education:** Vocational training and development of skills initiatives that are applicable to the local environment and foster sustainable livelihoods are strongly supported by the NEP.

Use of technology for sustainability: The NEP encourages use of technology in education to raise awareness and encourage sustainable behaviour in recognition of the potential of technology to advance sustainable development.

#### 1.4 NEP 2020 addresses and integrates Education for Sustainable Development

# 1) Holistic and Multidisciplinary Education

Interdisciplinary Learning: The approach to holistic as well as multidisciplinary education taken by NEP 2020 entails the dismantling of conventional subject silos. Students can develop a more comprehensive understanding of the interrelatedness of real-world challenges by incorporating disciplines such as science, social studies, economics, as well as environmental education. As an illustration, a climate change lecture would encompass not solely the scientific dimensions of greenhouse gases, but also delve into the economic ramifications, social justice concerns, and mitigation and adaptation policies. This interdisciplinary framework promotes the development of students' ability to think holistically and analytically regarding the interplay and mutual impact of various fields.

**Flexible Curricula:** The policy promotes curricular flexibility, which grants students the freedom to choose subjects from various academic streams in accordance with their personal interests and professional ambitions. This adaptability is especially crucial for ESD, as it allows students to customise their education with regard to subjects that emphasise sustainability. An illustration of this would be a student who, with an interest in sustainable development, enrols in environmental science, economics, as well as sociology courses, thereby acquiring a comprehensive understanding of the various sectors in which sustainable practices can be applied.

#### 2) Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving Skills

**Inquiry-Based Learning:** As a result of its emphasis on inquiry-based learning, NEP 2020 motivates pupils to conduct research, inquiry, and exploration. This approach is critical for ESD as sustainability challenges frequently necessitate inventive resolutions and profound comprehension. Through the encouragement of inquiry-based learning, pupils acquire the ability to analyse information critically, pose relevant inquiries regarding sustainability challenges, and investigate and experiment with diverse solutions.

**Project-Based Learning:** The policy encourages project-based learning, in which pupils engage in endeavours that tackle environmental concerns at the local level. By requiring students to apply theoretical knowledge to real-world scenarios, this experiential method promotes a more profound comprehension of sustainability. Students could, for instance, devise a school recycling programme or participate in community service initiatives aimed at reducing plastic usage, thereby gaining direct experience with sustainable practices and tangible evidence of their efforts.

#### 3) Environmental Awareness and Education

Climate Change: All levels are required to incorporate climate change education in accordance with NEP 2020. This entails comprehending the scientific principles underlying climate change, its worldwide and regional ramifications, as well as approaches for adaptation and mitigation. Acquiring knowledge regarding climate change enables pupils to develop into well-informed members of society, capable of engaging in dialogues and undertaking initiatives that seek to address this worldwide emergency.

**Biodiversity:** In addition, the curriculum addresses the threats to biodiversity, the value of conservation efforts, and the importance of biodiversity. Biophilia education fosters in pupils an admiration for the diversity of life on our planet and a comprehension of the vital functions that various species perform within ecosystems. This information is crucial in cultivating a sense of accountability with regard to the conservation of biodiversity.

**Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):** Student NEP 2020 provides an introduction to the Sustainable Development Goals (UNEPs) of the United Nations and emphasises the significance of education in their realisation. Acquiring knowledge of the SDGs enables pupils to perceive their education within the wider framework of international endeavours to eradicate poverty, safeguard the environment, and guarantee universal prosperity.

# 4) Integration of Local Contexts and Knowledge

**Local Environmental Issues:** As a result of incorporating local contexts into the curriculum, pupils gain knowledge of environmental concerns that are pertinent in their own communities. By adopting a localised approach, education becomes more pertinent and influential, as it enables students to establish direct connections with and actively participate in the topics under study. For instance, pupils might investigate the ramifications of deforestation within their locality or scrutinise indigenous methods of water conservation.

**Community Involvement:** NEP 2020 promotes the integration of local communities into sustainability education curricula. This may involve community service initiatives, field excursions to nearby natural sites, or collaborations with local organisations. Community involvement offers students invaluable practical knowledge and experience in effectively tackling environmental issues, thereby solidifying the concepts and principles that are acquired within the academic setting.

#### 5) Teacher Education and Capacity Building

**Teacher Training:** In order to proficiently impart ESD, educators must possess a comprehensive understanding of sustainability subjects. Comprehensive teacher training programmes that address environmental science, sustainable practices, as well as pedagogical strategies for ESD are emphasised by NEP 2020. This enables educators to effectively incorporate sustainability principles into their lessons and motivates learners to actively confront these pressing concerns.

**Continuous Professional Development:** Additionally, the policy emphasises the significance of continuous professional development for educators. This entails offering consistent opportunities for educators to enhance their expertise and competencies in the field of sustainability education. Ongoing education guarantees that educators maintain knowledge of the most recent advancements in sustainable practices and efficacious pedagogical approaches, thereby equipping them to deliver education of the utmost calibre.

# 6) Technology and Digital Learning

**Digital Resources:** NEP 2020 utilises technological advancements to improve ESD by creating and distributing digital resources. These resources may comprise virtual simulations, online courses, interactive modules, and courses that address various facets of sustainability. Digital resources facilitate the acquisition of current information and cutting-edge educational instruments, thereby enhancing the overall learning experience.

**Online Platforms:** The policy endorses the utilisation of digital platforms as a means to link students with educational content and global sustainability initiatives. Students are afforded the opportunity to engage in global collaborations, access an abundance of information, and partake in international initiatives via these platforms. Students are better able to comprehend universal nature of sustainability challenges as well as the significance of concerted effort when they adopt this global perspective.

# 7) Experiential and Outdoor Learning

**Field Trips and Outdoor Education:** NEP 2020 promotes the organisation of outdoor educational activities and field excursions by schools, as experiential learning is a fundamental element of ESD. Students may get a deeper awareness of natural systems and human influences via these activities, which enable them to observe and participate with the environment firsthand. An excursion to a national park, for instance, can provide students with a tangible means to learn about biodiversity and conservation efforts.

**School Gardens and Eco-Clubs:** The policy advocates for the establishment of eco-clubs and school gardens, wherein pupils can engage in endeavours such as refuse management, conservation initiatives, and horticulture. These initiatives facilitate experiential learning and cultivate a sense of environmental stewardship and accountability. Through active participation in sustainability initiatives, students cultivate pragmatic proficiencies and foster a more profound reverence for the environment.

# 2 Literature Review

(Leder, 2018) The Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) approach places significant emphasis on the cultivation of knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes that are indispensable in the pursuit of establishing a future characterised by sustainability. Environmental Sustainability Development (ESD) endeavours to enable students to engage in proactive measures and arrive at well-informed judgements that address urgent worldwide issues, including but not limited to climate change, biodiversity depletion, and social inequality. Sustainability education (ESD) encompasses a wide range of academic levels, disciplines, and subjects, including early childhood, tertiary, and beyond. It promotes lifelong education and civic engagement while fostering critical thinking, innovation, and creativity.

(Draghici, 2019) Education is widely recognised as the most significant factor in determining the course of human history, as its prospective impact on the economy and ecology is a crucial factor in guaranteeing a sustainable future. In this particular framework, Education for Sustainable Development arises as an essential focal point for the evolving age of scientific investigation and study. A

comprehensive assessment was conducted on the methods, primary objectives, and global well-being implications of Education for Sustainable Development in the broader domain of education. This research offered a global outlook on these crucial elements. The educational and sustainable development goals indices were defined using specific criteria to highlight their distinct functions in monitoring and evaluating growth in these important areas.

(Ram, 2021) Education policy is the means by which a society can achieve a quality education, which is the foundation for its development. Additionally, the NEP 2020 aligns with Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 2030) of the United Nations, which unequivocally declares that equitable education serves as the bedrock for sustainable development over the long term. The government has guaranteed the success of the nation's self-reliance campaign by promoting universal education by distinguishing SDG targets from NEP. NEP 2020 will fortify the nation's entire populace through the acquisition of new competencies and information. In addition, it contains explicit references to a phased revision of the preprimary through higher education systems in India, as well as curricular and institutional reforms that will assist the country in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Consistent with the aforementioned SDG principles, the NEP 2020 is constructed upon five pillars: accessibility, affordability, equity, quality, as well as accountability. The primary aim of NEP 2020 is to position India as a "superpower of global knowledge" through the provision of high-quality education, promotion of innovation, and development of a robust research culture that heavily relies on technology.

(M Raman & Ghoshal, 2021) The purpose of this research is to conduct an analysis of the New Education Policy (NEP), which was formulated as a replacement for the National Policy on Education of 1986. The NEP has the potential to serve as an extensive structure for primary and secondary education, as well as vocational education, in both rural and urban areas of India. The present investigation is founded upon a qualitative examination of a variety of secondary sources of data. This study assessed and validated the effectiveness of multiple exit points that have been implemented as part of NEP-2020. These exit points benefit students by more accurately indicating their level of education and subsequent employability, thereby assisting India in better capitalising on its demographic dividend.

(Sunita & Asst., 2022) The acquisition of knowledge and skills via education improves health and well-being, decreases destitution, and increases employment prospects; thus, education is a fundamental human right. By means of education policy, a society can achieve the educational standard that forms the foundation of all progressive movements. Equally essential to societal advancement is the concept of sustainable development. The objective of sustainable development is to reduce adverse environmental effects that are attributable to human activities. The premise underlying the concept of sustainable development is that contemporary societies must ensure that the requirements of their members are met without compromising the ability of future generations to do the same.

(Kumar Choudhary, 2022) Concurrently ensuring the well-being of the planet's inhabitants and the sustainability of its resources is one of the most essential and crucial responsibilities in the contemporary era. There is a discernible necessity to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of education within educational institutions. In order to accomplish this, each member of the school community's constituent

body must be educated on the importance of sustainability and recognise their critical position in the present day. It is critical to recognise that education plays a pivotal role in achieving sustainable development, and mere discourse on the notion of "sustainable development" within educational institutions and colleges fails to advance the cause. We must all rise and commence tackling this, not individually but collectively. It is necessary to reevaluate and revisit every aspect of education that is currently being provided in schools. The curriculum of educational institutions has been formulated with sustainable education in mind over time; however, its effective implementation remains a challenge.

(Murali Korada, 2023) Educating instructors is crucial for the development of a cohort that will influence the subsequent generation. Preparing teachers necessitates the incorporation of knowledge and perspectives from multiple disciplines, the cultivation of ethical and moral values, and the refinement of practical skills under the guidance of esteemed mentors. Given the interdisciplinary nature of teacher education and the need for instruction in both pedagogy and high-quality content, it is imperative that all teacher education programmes be carried out inside composite multidisciplinary institutions. The Policy's overarching goal is to cultivate in students a profound sense of national pride that transcends mere intellect, spirit, and actions; additionally, it seeks to foster the development of competencies, values, skills, and attitudes that promote a conscientious dedication to human rights, sustainable development, and worldwide welfare. By doing so, students will exemplify the qualities of an authentic global citizen. However, parallel to this, coordination and integration throughout all educational phases and institutions must be impeccable.

(Yadav, 2023) Sustainable development has grown into a catchphrase, but it is impossible to create an economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable world without putting it into practice. In no way can we disregard the consequences of climate change. Presently the most populous nation globally, India's materialistic lifestyles and rapid industrialization pose a grave threat to environmental sustainability and sustainable development. The objective of sustainable development policy is to reconcile divergent elements such as climate change and economic progress. The promotion of inclusive and equitable quality education is a key objective of SDG 4. NEP (2020) has placed particular emphasis on SDG 4, which is to guarantee high-quality education within the nation. Consequently, this essay emphasises the significance of quality education in advancing sustainable development and focuses primarily on role of quality education and the NEP (2020) in accomplishing the objectives of sustainable development.

(Deepa Pillai, 2023) The influence of education on the trajectory of a nation is among the most critical. Presently, governments and the general public recognise the significance of an educated populace. Economic and social progress is contingent upon the education of the populace. In contrast to this, progress would be extremely difficult if the populace were illiterate. The condition of illiteracy is associated with incompetence, incapability, adherence to superstitions, and deceptive convictions. Thus, influencing their transformation would prove to be a challenging endeavour. There is a worldwide recognition that education may only partially mitigate the existing disparities. As a consequence, the

United Nations (UN) has formulated a set of sustainable development goals (SDGs) with the aim of effecting global change by 2030.

(Radha & Arumugam, 2023) For the sake of excellent education and sustainable development at India's universities, this article explains why it would be a good idea to link the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 with the SDGs. Concerning the advancement of learning outcomes, the promotion of access to high-quality education, and the encouragement of innovation and research, the NEP 2020 as well as the SDGs both have comparable aims. More than that, higher education institutions in India can assist their students in developing the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to contribute to sustainable development within India and around the world by incorporating the SDGs into their operations and curricula. Additionally, instances of Indian higher education institutions that have embraced and integrated the SDGs into their operations and curricula are presented in the article. It is anticipated that the alignment of NEP 2020 with the SDGs will encourage the integration of SDGs to higher education in India.

(Tushar Dhar Shukla et al., 2023) This research paper aims to perform an exhaustive examination of the complex correlation that exists between the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations and India's National Education Policy 2020. The central emphasis of this analysis pertains to the collaborative effort in providing high-quality education that is accessible to all individuals, overcoming any obstacles. By conducting a thorough analysis of the core principles of NEP 2020 and comparing it with relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), this paper aims to provide valuable perspectives on India's progress towards achieving its objective of creating an educational environment that is inclusive and provides equal opportunities for all students. The clarification of this correlation highlights the mutually beneficial connection that exists between domestic policy frameworks and the comprehensive international agenda for the sustainable development. Furthermore, this investigation illuminates the approaches and frameworks that form the foundation of India's diverse endeavours to establish a unified course towards cultivating an educational environment that not only promotes learning but also enables individuals to actively participate in the discourse on sustainable development.

(Rao, 2024) National education policy 2020 is an initiative to close the defects in our current education system that was conceived by the newly formed government at the time. The primary objective of this strategy is to realign the education system with a greater emphasis on practical application rather than theoretical frameworks. A review and specific research study have been conducted in this paper to determine the advantages and disadvantages, in addition to other factors, that can be accomplished with the implementation of the 2020 education policy. The literature review that commences the paper provides an overview of prior research and scholarly viewpoints concerning the NEP. It describes modifications to the school curriculum, assessment methodologies, teacher education, as well as governance structures, among other significant aspects of the policy. Additionally, the historical context, policy discourse, as well as global influences that have shaped the NEP's development are examined in the literature review.

# 3 Conclusion

The incorporation of Education for Sustainable Development into NEP 2020 signifies a holistic strategy aimed at equipping students with the necessary skills to confront forthcoming obstacles. This paper provides a concise overview of the relationship between the SDGs and the education system as outlined in NEP 2020. The policy seeks to foster a generation of knowledgeable, accountable, and proactive individuals by emphasising experiential learning, critical thinking, and local context integration. To achieve the goals and promote a sustainable culture in the school system, it is essential that these requirements be put into practice effectively.

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