Evaluating of the Cornerstones of National Education Policy 2020 in the Current Educational Scenario: A Cross-Sectional Study

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Abstract
The Indian education system has undergone a major reform with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which aims to build a more diverse, adaptable, and holistic framework. NEP 2020 promotes a curriculum that incorporates vocational education at an early age, ensuring children acquire practical skills in addition to academic knowledge, while placing an emphasis on critical thinking and creativity. The goal of the policy is to address the learning gaps caused by the COVID-19 pandemic by emphasizing core literacy and numeracy. The NEP's emphasis on digital literacy and technological integration is especially pertinent given the state of education today. The relevance of digital infrastructure and teacher training has been highlighted by the shift to online and hybrid learning methods. In addition, the NEP's adaptable entry and exit points for higher education encourage lifelong learning and flexibility, which are critical in a labor market that is changing quickly. The execution of these reforms is nevertheless fraught with difficulties, especially in rural areas where resource and infrastructural shortages are severe. If the NEP 2020 is to fulfill its revolutionary potential throughout the heterogeneous terrain of Indian education, it is imperative that these inequities be addressed. A sample of 247 was collected from teachers and members of education system. The factors that Evaluate the Cornerstones of National Education Policy 2020 in the Current Educational Scenario are Holistic and Multidisciplinary Education, Emphasis on Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), Technological Integration (ICT) and Vocational Education and Skills Development.

Keywords: National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, Indian education system, Vocational education, Critical thinking, Digital literacy, Technological integration.

Introduction
The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 seeks to improve critical thinking, digital literacy, and holistic development in order to revolutionize the Indian educational system. Addressing the various needs of pupils throughout India requires its application in the current educational environment. According to Aithal & Aithal (2020) the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 aspires to reinvent the Indian education system by adopting a number of reforms that center on "critical thinking," "creativity," and "holistic development." The curriculum and pedagogy will be restructured to encourage experience learning and lessen the focus on rote learning, which is one of the main plans of NEP 2020. Designed to give pupils both intellectual and practical skills, this policy places a strong emphasis on incorporating vocational education into the regular curriculum at a young age. The goal of the strategy is to promote lifelong learning and flexibility in a working environment that is changing quickly by introducing a multidisciplinary approach at the higher education level with flexible

entry and departure points. However, the implementation of these reforms will only be possible if resource and infrastructure-related barriers are overcome, especially in rural areas where educational facilities often lag behind urban ones.

The COVID-19 pandemic's effects on higher education have been highlighted by Jena (2020), highlighting the importance of the NEP's focus on "digital literacy" and "technology integration." A strong digital infrastructure and teacher preparation are essential for ensuring efficient teaching and learning procedures, as demonstrated by the sudden move to online and hybrid learning models. Supporting the use of technology in education at all levels, from basic to higher education, is how the NEP 2020 tackles this. This covers building virtual labs, utilizing AI-based technologies to provide individualized learning experiences, and creating digital repositories of educational materials. Yet many students in rural and economically deprived areas lack access to crucial gadgets and internet connectivity, making the digital divide a major obstacle that still exists today. In order to reasonably realize the NEP's vision of a cutting-edge educational system, it is imperative that this divide be addressed.

The transition from one level of schooling to another in rural India is a major barrier to the NEP 2020, as noted by Alcott et al. (2020). The program places particular emphasis on "foundational literacy and numeracy" in order to bridge the learning gaps that are sometimes exacerbated throughout the transition from home to pre-primary and primary education. A few strategies to close these gaps that the NEP proposes are the development of "school readiness" programs, the use of mother tongue/local language as the primary language of instruction in the early years, and the introduction of early childhood care and education (ECCE) as a foundational stage of learning. These steps aim to provide children with a strong foundation for learning so that they are prepared for the next stages of their education. However, the implementation of these policies will be very expensive in terms of infrastructure, curriculum development, and teacher training—particularly in rural areas where there are often limited educational facilities. By 2020, all children in India must have access to an equitable and superior education, and this can only be achieved by conquering these challenges.

Literature Review

One of the main pillars of NEP 2020, according to Joshi et al. (2021), is the incorporation of "online teaching and assessments." The epidemic of coronavirus has prompted educators to utilize digital platforms for teaching and assessment, which has expedited the uptake of online learning. Although there are now more options and accessibility thanks to this change, there are still gaps in students' and teachers' digital infrastructure and technical knowledge. They emphasize that, while e-learning can fill in gaps in more conventional settings, it necessitates a large investment in digital infrastructure and ongoing professional development for educators. The aforementioned assessment highlights the need for policy frameworks that provide fair access and assistance to all parties concerned, while simultaneously advancing online education.

A second pillar of NEP 2020 that was assessed by Pathak and Pathak (2021) was improving "faculty motivation and academic outcomes." By encouraging educators to be innovative and to pursue ongoing professional development, the policy seeks to raise the standard of instruction. In order to motivate faculty members to conduct research and use cutting-edge teaching techniques, the NEP 2020 incorporates policies like professional development programs, academic independence, and performance-based rewards. The way these policies are implemented within institutions will determine how effective they are, though. The policy offers a strong foundation for enhancing faculty motivation, but the authors contend that the adoption and integration of these measures into operational strategies by educational institutions is necessary for the policy to be successful. When NEP 2020 is examined in this light, institutional support and governance become even more important in realizing the goals of the program.

The influence that NEP 2020 could have on how Indian higher education develops was examined by Yenugu (2022). It is the goal of the policy's emphasis on "multidisciplinary education and research" to dismantle established academic divisions and advance a more integrated method of instruction. In order to prepare students for the quickly evolving work market, this paradigm shift attempts to give them a variety of skill sets. To stimulate creativity and innovation, NEP 2020 promotes the creation of interdisciplinary institutions, adaptable curricula, and research-focused education. In order to achieve these objectives, considerable adjustments must be made to the current framework and philosophy of education. Depending on

how well these research-focused, interdisciplinary projects are executed throughout the educational spectrum, NEP 2020's ability to bring about a paradigm change will be determined. While structural reforms and efficient implementation are necessary, evaluating this element reveals the policy's potential to completely transform higher education in India.

The implementation of the "National Education Policy 2020" (NEP 2020) in India marked a significant shift in the country's educational strategy, with a heavy focus on global competitiveness, inclusivity, and innovation. As per Varma et al. (2021), NEP 2020 aims to improve the "indigenous ingenuity" component of the curriculum to revitalize the Indian education system and augment its contribution to the "global knowledge economy." This policy places a strong emphasis on comprehensive, multidisciplinary education in an effort to bridge the knowledge gap between academics and practitioners. By encouraging the use of regional languages and arts, NEP 2020 seeks to preserve and enhance India's rich cultural heritage. Critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills are also emphasized, giving students even more tools to help them navigate and contribute to a world that is changing rapidly. The policy adopts an innovative and adaptable strategy to offer a learning environment that is both flexible and pertinent to the demands of contemporary society.

A significant development is the way NEP 2020 is being implemented within the framework of "hybrid learning". Incorporating "hybrid learning paradigms," which fuse traditional classroom instruction with digital learning techniques, is one way that Roy and Sharma (2024) show how the policy might revolutionize legal education. With this strategy, accessibility is improved and educational continuation is guaranteed even in the event of unforeseen circumstances, such as the COVID-19 epidemic. With its focus on digital literacy and the integration of technology into the classroom, NEP 2020 prepares students for the demands of the contemporary workforce while also keeping pace with global trends. The goal of the policy is to democratize education by introducing virtual classrooms and online resources, hence enhancing access and equity. The implementation of this hybrid approach will only be possible if the digital divide is addressed and all students have access to the required technology infrastructure.

Malika (2030) focused on the need for an "inclusive education system" in NEP 2020 by highlighting the policy's role in creating high-quality instruction that meets a range of learning requirements. Through the promotion of an "inclusive and equitable" learning environment, the policy pushes for the inclusion of children with disabilities in regular education. Noting its crucial influence on learning and development throughout life, it also emphasizes the significance of early childhood care and education. As part of its "inclusive education" agenda, NEP 2020 aims to promote a more inclusive society by tackling gender inequities and helping economically disadvantaged pupils. The strategy seeks to create an environment that fosters "critical thinking," "creativity," and "problem-solving" abilities in order to close the gap between old educational practices and modern requirements, according to Bhardwaj et al. (2024). In order to give students a more flexible and well-rounded educational experience, NEP 2020 places a strong emphasis on removing the traditional divisions between various academic streams, such as the arts, sciences, and vocational courses. By preparing students for the intricacies of the contemporary world, this integrative method guarantees that they possess the abilities required for both professional and personal success in addition to their academic proficiency. The policy also emphasizes the value of "experiential learning," which refers to applying students' knowledge in real-world settings to improve comprehension and retention of concepts.

Objective
To identify "Evaluating of the Cornerstones of National Education Policy 2020 in the Current Educational Scenario"

Study's Methodology
247 respondents are considered for this study which was collected from teachers and members of education system. Random sampling method was used to collect data and examined by "Explanatory Factor Analysis" for results.

Findings of the Study
Below table shows demographic details of participants it shows that 58.30% are male, and 41.70% are female participants. Regarding age of the respondents, 33.60% are between 30 to 35 years, 29.55% are 35 to 40 years, and 36.85% are above 40 years of age. About Educational department, Teachers are 30.36%, Principals are 37.65%, and Administration are 31.99%.

Details of Participants

Variable	Participants	% age
Gender of Participants		
Male	144	58.30%
Female	103	41.70%
Total	**247**	**100**
Age in years		
30 to 35	83	33.60%
35 to 40	73	29.55%
Above 40	91	36.85%
Total	**247**	**100**
Educational department		
Teachers	75	30.36%
Principals	93	37.65%
Administration	79	31.99%
Total	**247**	**100**

"Factor Analysis"

"KMO and Bartlett's Test"

| "Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy"		.775
"Bartlett's Test of Sphericity"	"Approx. Chi-Square"	4172.194
	df	91
	Significance	.000

"KMO and Bartlett's Test", value of KMO is .775

"Total Variance Explained"

"Component"	"Initial Eigenvalues"			"Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings"		
	"Total"	"% Of Variance"	"Cumulative %"	"Total"	"% Of Variance"	"Cumulative %"
1.	6.205	44.323	44.323	**3.726**	26.612	26.612
2.	2.563	18.310	62.633	**3.692**	26.372	52.984
3.	1.986	14.189	76.822	**2.509**	17.918	70.903
4.	1.470	10.503	87.325	**2.299**	16.422	**87.325**
5.	.473	3.376	90.701			
6.	.405	2.893	93.594			
7.	.246	1.754	95.348			
8.	.179	1.282	96.630			
9.	.158	1.127	97.756			
10.	.124	.884	98.641			
11.	.068	.485	99.125			
12.	.057	.406	99.531			

| 13. | .042 | .301 | 99.832 | | | |
| 14. | .024 | .168 | 100.000 | | | |

All the four factors are making contribution in explaining total 87.325% of variance. The variance explained by Holistic and Multidisciplinary Education is 26.612%, Emphasis on Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) is 26.372%, Technological Integration (ICT) is 17.918%, and Vocational Education and Skills Development is 16.422.
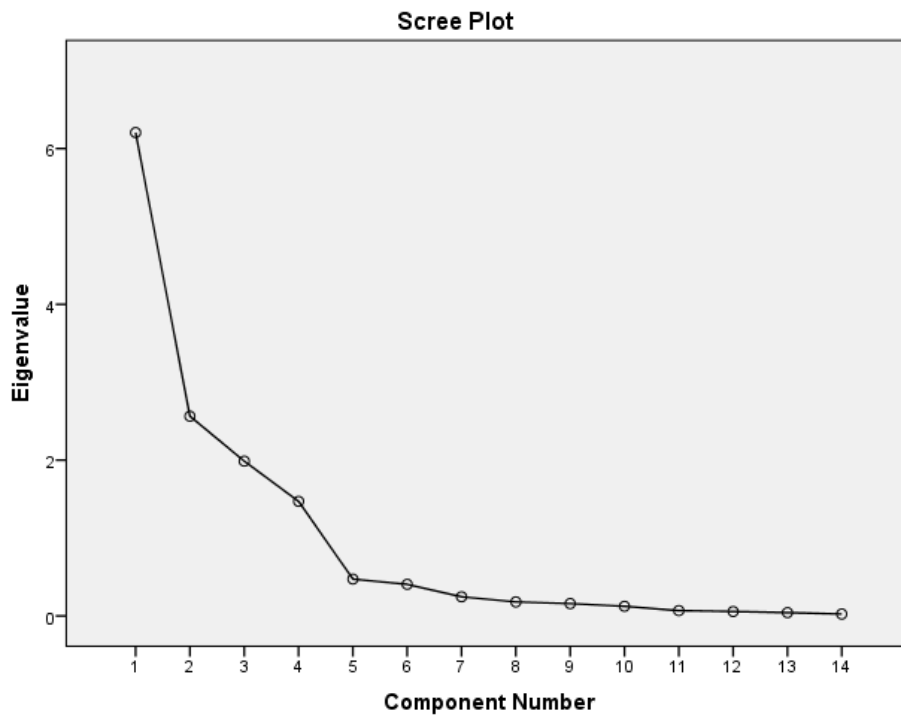
ScreePlot

"Rotated Component Matrix"

S. No.	Statements	Factor Loading	Factor Reliability
	Holistic and Multidisciplinary Education		.956
1.	Policy offers students flexibility in choosing subjects	.954	
2.	Encourages holistic development and critical thinking	.897	
3.	Requires significant infrastructural and curriculum changes in schools and colleges	.881	
4.	Effectively implement multidisciplinary education	.870	
	Emphasis on Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)		.968
1.	Stresses ECCE as the foundation for lifelong learning and development	.958	
2.	It enhances candidate experience by providing immediate responses	.927	

3.	Aim to increase gross enrollment ratios in preschool education	.910	
4.	Emphasis is positive, work on challenges like ensuring quality ECCE infrastructure, and trained educators	.909	
	Technological Integration (ICT)		**.879**
1.	NEP 2020 advocates for leveraging technology for enhanced learning experiences	.905	
2.	Effective integration requires robust infrastructure and digital literacy among students and educators	.848	
3.	Pandemic accelerated digital adoption in education	.827	
	Vocational Education and Skills Development		**.837**
1.	NEP 2020 promotes vocational education from an early age to prepare students for future employability	.926	
2.	Vocational education pathways need collaboration between educational institutions, industry, and skill development agencies	.925	
3.	Vocational Education ensure relevance, quality, and alignment with market needs	.656	

Factors and the associated variables

The first factor of the study is Holistic and Multidisciplinary Education, the variables it includes are Policy offers students flexibility in choosing subjects, encourages holistic development and critical thinking, requires significant infrastructural and curriculum changes in schools and colleges, and effectively implement multidisciplinary education. Emphasis on Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) is the second factor of the study, the variables it includes are Stresses ECCE as the foundation for lifelong learning and development, It enhances candidate experience by providing immediate responses, Aim to increase gross enrollment ratios in preschool education, and Emphasis is positive, work on challenges like ensuring quality ECCE infrastructure, and trained educators. Third factor is Technological Integration (ICT), it includes variables like NEP 2020 advocates for leveraging technology for enhanced learning experiences, Effective integration requires robust infrastructure and digital literacy among students and educators, and Pandemic accelerated digital adoption in education. Vocational Education and Skills Development is the last and fourth factor, variables come under this factor are NEP 2020 promotes vocational education from an early age to prepare students for future employability, Vocational education pathways need collaboration between educational institutions, industry, and skill development agencies, and Vocational Education ensure relevance, quality, and alignment with market needs.

"Reliability Statistics"

"Cronbach's Alpha"	"Number of Items"
.895	14

Total reliability of 14 items that includes variables for Evaluating of the Cornerstones of National Education Policy 2020 in the Current Educational Scenario is 0.895

Conclusion

In order to adapt and update the educational system to the needs of the twenty-first century, the National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) is a major change in India's educational landscape. Students will be better prepared for problems in the future thanks to the policy's emphasis on experiential learning, critical thinking, and holistic development. From the very beginning, a solid educational foundation is ensured by the emphasis on early childhood care, foundational literacy, and multilingualism. NEP 2020 aims to match education with the changing requirements of the business and society by integrating vocational education and encouraging curricular flexibility. Furthermore, by guaranteeing chances for all students, regardless of their socioeconomic background, the policy's dedication to inclusivity and equity aims to close the

achievement gap. Ongoing evaluation and adjustment will be necessary as the policy is put into practice in order to deal with new issues and guarantee that the desired results arrive. Ultimately, NEP 2020 represents a forward stride toward an equal, inclusive, and progressive educational system that cultivates a culture of creativity, critical thinking, and lifelong learning—all vital for India's advancement in the modern global setting. The factors that Evaluate the Cornerstones of National Education Policy 2020 in the Current Educational Scenario are Holistic and Multidisciplinary Education, Emphasis on Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), Technological Integration (ICT) and Vocational Education and Skills Development.

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