

EXPLORING POSSIBILITIES FOR LIBRARIES IN NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY (NEP) 2020 FRAMEWORK

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Abstract:

National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is making waves across India which will revamp the entire education system of the country. Although Libraries have found a little place in NEP 2020 policy document, but the major objectives of NEP 2020 rightly align with the libraries functioning and services framework. This paper is an attempt to explore various possibilities which already existed or can be value added to justify and consolidate that Libraries will always remain a major backbone supporting counterpart even in the ever-changing policy dynamics as well in the changing disruptive environment.

Keywords: National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, multidisciplinary, knowledge hub, Libraries, HEI

Introduction :

With the arrival of National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, there has been a vital shift in the Indian education system aligned with the aspirational goals of UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 2030. (Editorial, 2022)The policy will lead to complete overhaul of educational framework ensuring cognitive, social, cultural and holistic development of the students by accentuating their creative potential and critical thinking. In this way NEP will accelerate progress towards foundational skills, higher order skills and soft skills as well and the institution will have to restructure the pedagogy, permitting variety of subject selection options. Ensuring equitable and inclusive education for all, NEP is committed in removing stratification due to social category gaps in getting accessibility, participation and getting benefitted by devised learning outcomes at all levels of education. NEP policy is both global and local in its outlook.

Libraries as the Harbinger for knowledge posteriority :

"Libraries have a recognized social function in making knowledge publicly available to all. They serve as local centres of information and learning, and are local gateways to national and global knowledge" (National Knowledge Commission, 2007; p. iii). India is emerging as a major influence in the global knowledge economy and hence role of libraries in this transformation holds a big place. With NEP 2020, now libraries in India are on the verge of major overhaul changes to serve as most accessible modern information system set up at the right time, with the help of right infrastructure and is administered by the right type of qualified people and providing the right type of variety of information in unique and all-inclusive manner. (IFLA Council and General Conference: Conference Proceedings, 2000)

Libraries and NEP 2020 :

India faces the challenges of actually preparing a perspective plan from scratch i.e., from collection development to networking through IT solutions, and will need a complete blueprint to develop library ecosystem during the coming centuries. To fructify all that has been stated in NEP and to advocate libraries role as the major contributor in NEP 2020 implementation, there is a felt need to frame a National Policy of Libraries and Information Systems and Services, suited to the new environment

It is evident that libraries serve at least three major roles in educational system.

- First, Libraries serve a practical role in sharing expensive resources free to all at one place (Physically or virtually). Physical resources such as books and periodicals, films and videos, software and electronic databases, and specialized tools such as projectors, graphics equipment and cameras are shared by a community of users.
- Human resources in libraries, including librarians and staff, play a vital role in supporting instructional programs by promptly addressing the needs of teachers and students. They actively engage in activities that enhance knowledge dissemination through both responsive services and proactive initiatives.
- Libraries primarily offer on-demand services, such as managing reserve materials, responding to reference queries, conducting bibliographic instruction, creating media packages, suggesting relevant books or films, and guiding users on material utilization. These services contribute significantly to meeting the immediate information needs of library users.
- Libraries take a proactive stance in facilitating the selective distribution of information to faculty and students. They organize thematic events, collaborate with instructors to plan instruction, and introduce innovative teaching methods and tools. Through these efforts, libraries enable instructors and students to access valuable materials and expertise, fostering a dynamic environment for learning and knowledge-sharing. (Gary Marchionini, April 95)

In the digital era, the role of libraries has become more complex and multidimensional. With NEP 2020 implementation being the major concern of the government, there are steps to revamp the educational system to match the global standards along with connectiveness with our cultural roots and legacy for which libraries have to adopt changes and customize its services in all types of libraries on a broader scale to facilitate adaptation to the NEP 2020 requirements. Libraries can primarily focus on the following aspects of library framework:

- a. Library space and environment
- b. Library services (Inclusive and Exclusive)
- c. Library Organizational setup
- d. Library components and resources
- e. Infrastructure for information facilitation setup
- f. Knowledge Management best practices

All initiatives focussed on the above will create a compatible structure wherein libraries can contribute immensely to fulfil the broader NEP 2020 vision and mission which is as under: “National Education Policy 2020 envisions an India-centric education system that contributes directly to transforming our nation sustainably into an equitable and vibrant knowledge society by providing high-quality education to all”.

How Libraries should restructure and become NEP compatible :

1. The main thrust while reforming educational policies was on making higher educational institutions (HEI) multidisciplinary universities, professional and skill based colleges and knowledge and lifelong learning hubs. This will lead to wider scope for choices of subjects to the students and accordingly educational institutes will gradually phase out ways to multidisciplinary with major focus on research orientation.
Libraries can further these requirements by focusing on collection development policy wherein library collection will not be limited by any stream or faculty but infuse a multidisciplinary approach in resource management as well as this will help to promote resource sharing amongst educational institutes which cater to varied streams and faculty. Libraries will become the hot spot for pooling of knowledge resources and dissemination in a democratic way. Local Libraries will have to gear up exhaustively to collaborate in many ways for resource sharing breaking the boundaries of stream or faculty obligations.
2. NEP 2020 envisages achieving equitable and inclusive quality education for all by way of bridging any sort of gaps in access, participation and learning outcomes at all levels of education.
Libraries, since time immemorial have been service agency providing free access to knowledge resources at large without any differentiation. This practice of libraries will be more strongly advocated with the role of libraries as major facilitator for providing costly resources and services in various forms and formats to all stakeholders irrespective of any bias. Equity of access and inclusiveness is thus an inherent part of libraries functioning. But libraries can go one step further and act as liaison agent by including flexibility and uniqueness in strategies for encouraging non-participatory members to get attracted towards using libraries for their education, knowledge requirement and research.
3. NEP focusses on strengthening the skills component in education and integrating skill-based education in mainstream formal education. Thus, Training and capacity building programs for professional education and skill building activities, events and initiatives should form the part and parcel of library. As libraries have been always on the forefront in applying latest technology in its functioning, libraries can very well initiate lead in digital and technological upskilling training to teachers as well as students. Libraries are not only single point of contact for getting knowledge resources about latest technological tools but also taking part in practical orientation session by way of their functioning and also helping in facilitating tutorials for the same. Digital literacy is the emerging area where libraries have a major share of responsibility and in this way, libraries can majorly contribute in achieving NEP objectives.
4. The NEP 2020 policy firmly advocates for developing a strong culture and knowledge creation and flourishing research platform for the youths and hence NEP 2020 mandate to foster research and innovation as top priority. Similarly, interdisciplinary research is the prima facie focus of NEP 2020. Libraries has been the place wherein knowledge resources and users are clubbed together with the basic motto of satisfying the knowledge urge of user either through reference or referral services in a timely manner. Research support services provision by libraries unleashes the unique potential role which libraries can play in consolidating research ecosystem in the country. As

Libraries and LIS professionals are taught and are well versed with literature search techniques, bibliographical work, referencing styles, abstracting techniques, content analysis, information retrieval tools and techniques know-how, it is apparent that libraries can work as major support system for quality research in variety of ways.

5. Extensive use of technology is the prime priority of NEP 2020. Use and application of various cutting-edge technologies as Artificial intelligence, immersive technologies, artificial intelligence, AR/VR, natural language processing, big data, QR Code in the library workspace will lead to setting an example before all in advocacy of use of technology for all in educational set up. (Patil, 2020)
6. NEP 2020 advocates the use of multilingual approach in its education system and also as part of qualification parameters for employment opportunities. Libraries being the agent of proliferation of voice of locals by way of their rich collection in local languages. Hence again libraries can integrate multilingual approach with their collection development policies. Libraries timely reforms to support multilingual can be in the form of encouraging local authors as well as translators in their work of intellectual writing.
7. NEP has set a goal that by 2025, at least 50 % of learners shall have exposure to vocational skills and hence employability skills modules consisting of communication skills, self-management skills, ICT skills, entrepreneurship skills and skills will be mandatory part of vocational courses. Libraries can take lead in many ways in inculcating formal, informal and professional skills in the students. As libraries stand as the strong connector as well as incubator zone where idea generators, ideation process and idea formulation into concept can occur in most conducive manner because of the very strong trinity of knowledge resources, library patrons and the library itself. Libraries act as a provider of maker's space for creative idea sharing and interactions.
8. Digital skilling should become the core programme of all the skill development activities. Hosting digital literacy programs for learners to eradicate the existing digital divide. Technology-based innovative options like Apps for learning, Massive Open online courses, distance and Open Learning modules, Educational channels, OER, Open books, Open Science, Up skilled and ICT equipped libraries and Life long learning Education Centres and facilities like NDLI etc in the nation.
9. Library or knowledge resource collection should support equitable and inclusive education. There is need of development of accessible and language appropriate teaching learning material. Also serving all-inclusive with equity of access and participation for those with disabilities
10. Community engagement practices are the intrinsic part of education as envisioned in NEP 2020 for establishing interconnectedness with the society. As Libraries are service organization, they can emerge as major hand holding counterpart for carrying out many community engagement initiatives. Country is strongly focusing on taking the 'Reading Culture' and 'Reading Habit' to a pinnacle and many major initiatives are being heralded in this direction. Libraries hold the supreme responsibilities in this regard wherein they can work as 'Reading Coach'; 'Reading Consultant' or 'Reading Advisor'

for the improvisation of reading habit of the society. All the different types of libraries can work together in collaboration by bridging their basic area of services and users and working together to fulfill this national cause. Many initiatives like adoption of few neglected libraries for their development, resource support help to these under developed libraries, books and user exchange initiatives amongst these different types of libraries, intellectual fest and fairs of users and library professionals of different types of libraries, integration of libraries in every extracurricular activities of educational institutes can work wonder in exploring the big dimensions of community engagement as projected in NEP 2020 by libraries being contributing in a good manner.

Thus, to create a system which will penetrate into the actual information need of the majority of Indian people, libraries can work in each and every segment of NEP 2020 highlighted parameter.

Libraries reforming: NEP 2020 way :

As per IFLA report on India libraries, the library ecosystem in educational set up is characterised by the following:

- India boasts the highest number of libraries globally, featuring dense networks of public and academic libraries compared to regional and global norms.
- There is a lack of data on staffing levels, raising concerns about the adequacy of resources for supporting readers, students, and researchers.
- Indian libraries are actively contributing to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), such as enhancing access to resources and technology in rural areas and bolstering research performance.
- In terms of the Development and Access to Information framework, India performs well in rights but requires further efforts to increase online connectivity and address inequalities, scoring around the average in skills. (IFLA, 2021)

If libraries are really major stakeholder in the education system then it is equally important that libraries can emerge as major game changer in the NEP 2020 full-fledged implementation in the country, if following areas are given due attention:

- At the nexus of physical and intellectual infrastructure is the interface to the digital library ecosystem of the libraries wherein tools for finding, managing, using, and publishing electronic information must be both powerful and easy to use. Digital libraries must provide a mix of software and people to provide reference assistance and question answering services. The libraries in this way will go beyond reference to serve as teachers on demand supplementing users with appropriate curated information variety at a single point.
- **As a Formal, Informal and Professional Learning hub:** Libraries play a dual role in society by serving both social and intellectual functions. Beyond their practical purpose of resource sharing, libraries provide a physical space where individuals, including teachers and learners, can convene outside traditional classroom settings. This allows for interaction among people with diverse perspectives, fostering a knowledge space that transcends individual disciplines or affinity groups. Browsing a library catalog offers a global perspective for those engaged in specialized studies, presenting opportunities for unexpected insights. Libraries serve as hubs of interdisciplinary,

accommodating learners from various fields. Digital libraries further enhance this interdisciplinary aspect by providing access to diverse information resources beyond physical boundaries, facilitating connections among individuals with formal, informal, and professional learning goals.

- **Beyond Physical Barriers:** Libraries synergise and combine technological tools and information resources to allow remote access, breaking down the physical and time barriers to meet the needs of specific communities of learners. As per NEP 2020, libraries not only allow its users to browse through a wider ranges of materials and accordingly proliferate their knowledge through extensive communication beyond the boundaries of formal learning environment. Also libraries equally is made equipped to provide an ecosystem to aid and nourish as a informal as well as professional learning space
- **Libraries as centre for cultural posteriority:** Libraries play a pivotal role in preserving culture by way of organizing important artefacts and ideas, including significant works in literature, art, and science. It is crucial to safeguard and make these works accessible for future learners as libraries serves as the common connector of past, present and future. While traditionally seen as places for printed materials, libraries in education set up can often function as museums and idea laboratories. Preservation is achieved through meticulous storage, borrowing policies, and maintenance. Moreover, libraries facilitate access to materials by employing indexes, catalogs, and other finding aids, enabling learners to locate relevant items according to their needs.
- **Inclusiveness and Libraries:** As per NEP 2020, libraries should equip themselves with their collection and amenities to serve as an open platform for new learning opportunities for global rather than strictly local communities. Libraries in this way will in the forefront to put in practice ‘inclusiveness’ as highlighted in NEP 2020. Libraries can be hub for adult and life long learning platform as it can equip itself well to supplement as well as complement need of learners from scratch to the end. Examples set by initiatives like National Digital Library of India with its motto as ‘One Library for All’ encourages to participation by the libraries in the same way by utilising their immense potentialities to assist educational framework of the country through different ways and means of library support services.
- **ICT support system and libraries:** In this changing scenario IT and emerging technologies has boosted many service organisation and so the libraries. While incorporating ICT in its routine functioning in different sectors will ensure understanding of user actual needs, networking and resource sharing, coping strategies in new environment, adjusting to challenges and risks as information generator and disseminator and many other issues.
- **Different roles in NEP 2020 frame:** Libraries have the potential to develop initiatives for sharing resources, offer apprenticeships for acquiring new skills, conduct IT training programs, and provide consultation services for retro-conversion and the enhancement of IT infrastructure. Combining these elements will form the foundation for creating a comprehensive plan and shaping a vision for university libraries across the nation.
- **Future professionals** in the information field will function as knowledge navigators rather than mere collectors of information. In the Indian context, the upcoming generation of librarians will need to confront and overcome challenges and risks to sustain their presence in the information industry across various sectors. The primary

challenge for Indian librarians lies in their ability to adapt and interchange roles seamlessly between different sectors.

If education system of any country forms the major backbone of any countries economy and development, then libraries are the protagonist in proactively supporting in achieving the objectives of education system. Libraries provide parallel boosting mechanism by which education policies reaches its ultimate goals. NEP 2020 can be earmarked as a new era of refinement of our country education system. Although library is featured to a minimal extend in NEP 2020 but by and large the whole NEP 2020 can be explored thoroughly to find ample areas wherein prima facia libraries can contribute immensely or exclusively in accomplishing the projection of NEP 2020. The services provided by the Libraries presents a set of advantages to play most significant role in study, research, education and skill development and form an important component in the full implementation of NEP 2020 in all nook and corners of the country.

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