

## THE ROLE OF THE LIBRARY AND LIBRARIAN IN DIFFERENT STAGES OF SCHOOL EDUCATION UNDER NEP-2020, NCF-AND NCF-SE-2023

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### **Abstract :**

*The National Education Policy 2020 (NEP-2020) and the National Curriculum Framework for School Education 2023 (NCF-2023) envision a transformation of India's educational landscape by fostering holistic, multidisciplinary, and inclusive learning across the four stages of school education: Foundational, Preparatory, Middle, and Secondary. Libraries and librarians are central to realizing this vision, serving not merely as repositories of books but as dynamic learning ecosystems.*

*This paper examines the evolving role of school libraries and librarians within the 5+3+3+4 curricular structure proposed by NEP and operationalized through NCF-SC. Stage-specific functions are analysed, including fostering early literacy at the Foundational Stage, supporting experiential learning at the Preparatory Stage, embedding information literacy in the Middle Stage, and preparing students for research, careers, and lifelong learning at the Secondary Stage. Cross-cutting roles such as multilingual resource development, digital literacy facilitation, teacher support, and community engagement are also discussed. The paper concludes with recommendations for policy, training, and implementation strategies that position libraries and librarians as integral partners in India's educational transformation.*

**Keywords :** NEP-2020, NCF, NCF-SE, Multidisciplinary, Digital Literacy.

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### **Introduction :**

India's National Education Policy 2020 (NEP-2020) sets forth an ambitious vision for a learner-centric, holistic, and multidisciplinary education system. Among its structural reforms is the reorganization of school education into a 5+3+3+4 curricular structure — the Foundational, Preparatory, Middle, and Secondary stages — designed to align pedagogical practices with child development (Ministry of Education, 2020). The subsequent National Curriculum Framework for School Education 2023 (NCF-2023) provides a concrete curricular roadmap for operationalizing these reforms. Within this framework, libraries and librarians assume a transformative role: moving beyond passive custodianship of resources to become active facilitators of literacy, inquiry, digital skills, and community participation (NCERT, 2023).

### **Review of literature :**

**Government of India, Ministry of Education. (2020).** *National Education Policy 2020*. New Delhi: Government of India. Outlines the policy framework that elevates the role of libraries

and librarians as enablers of foundational literacy, digital learning, and multilingual education across schooling stages.

**National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT). (2023).** *National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCF-SE), 2023*. New Delhi: NCERT. Provides curricular guidance aligning libraries with stage-wise pedagogy, stressing teacher-library collaboration, multilingual access, and inclusive resources.

**Jayamma, K. V. (2023).** The role of libraries in implementing the New Education Policy. *Journal of Library & Information Science Review*, 12(2), 45–52. Reviews NEP directives and highlights how school libraries can support reading culture, literacy, and holistic education in the Indian context.

**Otero Martínez, T. (2024).** Investing in school libraries and librarians to improve outcomes. *Policy Perspectives on Education*, 18(1), 33–40. University of Maine.

**New York State Education Department. (n.d.).** *Roles of the School Librarian: Teacher, Leader, Instructional Partner, Information Specialist, Program Administrator*. Albany, NY. Provides an internationally recognized professional framework illustrating multifunctional librarian roles that can inform NEP/NCF implementation.

**Sharma, R., & Kulkarni, A. (2023).** Transforming libraries under NEP 2020: Challenges and opportunities. *Indian Journal of Educational Development*, 41(3), 112–119. Discusses systemic challenges such as inadequate staffing, digital divides, and resource constraints, while recommending reforms for libraries under NEP and NCF.

### Methodology :

The research adopts a conceptual policy analysis approach, relying primarily on official documents such as NEP-2020 and NCF-2023, supplemented by scholarly literature and commentaries on the evolving role of libraries in education. Secondary sources include research papers, policy analyses, and news reports that highlight implementation challenges, especially in multilingual and resource-constrained contexts (Khan, 2022; Reddy, 2021). This qualitative synthesis identifies key expectations placed on libraries and librarians and translates them into practical, stage-specific roles.

### The four-stage framework of school education :

The NEP-2020 introduced a developmentally aligned curricular structure, operationalized in the NCF-SC (NCERT, 2023): 1) Foundational Stage (Ages 3–8; Preschool to Grade 2): Focus on play-based, activity-driven, and language-rich learning. 2) Preparatory Stage (Ages 8–11; Grades 3–5): Formalization of subjects begins with an emphasis on literacy, numeracy, and experiential learning. 3) Middle Stage (Ages 11–14; Grades 6–8): Subject specialization deepens, and interdisciplinary learning is introduced. 4) Secondary Stage (Ages 14–18; Grades 9–12): Multidisciplinary learning, critical thinking, career orientation, and

preparation for higher education.

### **Foundational Stage (Ages 3–8) :**

The Foundational Stage prioritizes early literacy, language acquisition, and joyful learning through stories, play, and interaction. Libraries act as story centres with picture books, multilingual resources, and parent-engagement initiatives. Librarians serve as storytellers, facilitators, and trainers for teachers and parents in building a strong reading culture.

### **Preparatory Stage (Ages 8–11) :**

At this stage, literacy and numeracy are consolidated while subject-based learning begins. Libraries offer graded reading lists, bilingual readers, and resource kits for science and social studies. Librarians co-plan lessons, guide book clubs, and introduce students to catalogues, digital literacy, and safe internet practices.

### **Middle Stage (Ages 11–14) :**

This stage emphasizes inquiry-based learning, project work, and conceptual understanding. Libraries provide project resource packs, makerspaces, and disciplinary texts. Librarians lead information literacy modules on source evaluation and referencing, support teachers in designing rubrics, and mentor students on interdisciplinary exploration.

### **Secondary Stage (Ages 14–18) :**

Secondary education focuses on multidisciplinary choice, career readiness, and higher-order thinking. Libraries offer research-level resources, career corners, and digital scholarship tools. Librarians mentor capstone projects, provide training in advanced digital literacy, and support teachers' professional development.

### **Cross-Cutting Functions :**

Across all stages, libraries foster multilingualism, digital access, inclusion, and teacher support. They act as community hubs for lifelong learning, providing accessible materials and fostering equity.

### **Challenges :**

Challenges include resource shortages, lack of trained librarians, inadequate local-language content, digital divide issues, and the marginalization of libraries within school structures.

### **Recommendations :**

Recommendations include mandating minimum standards for libraries, creating certification for teacher-librarians, developing multilingual resource hubs, integrating library

assignments into assessment, and leveraging partnerships for capacity building.

### Conclusion :

The transformation envisioned by NEP-2020 and NCF-2023 requires reimagining libraries as core pedagogical spaces. From nurturing early literacy at the Foundational Stage to mentoring independent research at the Secondary Stage, libraries are indispensable. With sufficient investment, training, and integration, libraries can catalyze India's vision of an equitable and lifelong learning society.

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