



ASSESSING THE POTENTIAL CHALLENGES AND OUTCOMES OF THE NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY (NEP) 2020: A COMPREHENSIVE STUDY ON HOLISTIC SCHOOL EDUCATION IN INDIA

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Abstract

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 represents a transformative effort to redefine school education in India through a holistic and inclusive approach. This comprehensive study assesses the potential challenges and outcomes of NEP 2020, focusing on its impact on holistic school education. The policy advocates for an integrated curriculum that blends academic learning with vocational training, arts, and sports, and emphasizes Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE). It introduces innovative assessment reforms and promotes the use of technology through the National Educational Technology Forum (NETF).. Additionally, high student-teacher ratios and infrastructure issues further complicate the policy's rollout. However, NEP 2020 holds potential for substantial benefits, such as improved educational outcomes, enhanced employability, and a more inclusive and culturally relevant education system. Achieving these outcomes will depend on addressing the identified challenges and creating a supportive environment for effective policy implementation. This study highlights the need for targeted strategies to overcome these obstacles and realize the transformative goals of NEP 2020 in enhancing school education across India.

Key words: *Curriculum, ECCE, GER, Pedagogy.*

1. Introduction

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 represents a transformative shift in India's educational landscape, aiming to redefine school education through a holistic and inclusive approach. NEP 2020 advocates for an integrated curriculum that blends academic learning with vocational training, arts, and sports, fostering a more engaging and comprehensive educational experience.

A significant focus is placed on Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), recognizing the critical role of early development in shaping future learning. The policy introduces innovative assessment reforms, transitioning from rote memorization to competency-based evaluations that better reflect students' understanding and skills. NEP 2020 also emphasizes the integration of technology in education through the National Educational Technology Forum (NETF), enhancing both teaching and learning experiences. Furthermore, the policy highlights the importance of continuous professional development for teachers and advocates for inclusive education, ensuring equitable access to quality education for all students, including those from marginalized and disadvantaged backgrounds.

By incorporating vocational education into the mainstream curriculum and improving school infrastructure, NEP 2020 seeks to address the diverse needs of students and prepare them for a rapidly evolving world. This comprehensive approach aims to create a dynamic and effective educational system that supports the holistic development of every child.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 envisions an education system that integrates Indian ethos and values while equipping students with the skills needed to excel globally. This policy aims to



transform India into an equitable and dynamic knowledge society by ensuring high-quality education for all, ultimately elevating the country to a global knowledge superpower.

A central feature of NEP 2020 is its focus on cultivating a profound respect for Fundamental Duties and Constitutional values among students. The curriculum and pedagogy are designed to foster a strong connection between learners and their country, promoting awareness of their roles and responsibilities in a rapidly changing world. The policy aims to instil a deep-rooted pride in being Indian, not only intellectually but also in spirit and action. It seeks to nurture knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes that support a responsible commitment to human rights, sustainable development, and global wellbeing, thus developing truly global citizens.

NEP 2020 emphasizes the development of ethical and Constitutional values to produce learners who are both academically proficient and socially responsible. This holistic educational approach is expected to significantly contribute to India's transformation into an equitable, vibrant knowledge society and enhance its global stature as a leader in education and innovation.

2. A Comprehensive Study on Holistic School Education in India

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 aims to transform India's education system by promoting holistic school education. However, its successful implementation faces several significant challenges. One of the primary challenges is funding and resource allocation. The NEP is estimated to require an investment of approximately ₹6 lakh crore over the next decade to effectively implement its reforms (KPMG, 2021). This substantial financial commitment is crucial for enhancing infrastructure, training teachers, and developing educational resources.

Another major challenge lies in the quality of teaching and teacher training. Currently, only 69% of teachers in India are professionally trained (DISE, 2019-20), indicating a significant gap in teacher preparedness. This lack of qualified educators can hinder the effective implementation of NEP 2020's innovative pedagogical approaches, which emphasize experiential and inquiry-based learning. Additionally, infrastructure issues persist, with around 36% of schools in India having a student-teacher ratio that exceeds the recommended limit of 30:1 (DISE, 2019-20). Such overcrowding poses a challenge to providing the individualized attention necessary for holistic education.

Awareness and acceptance of NEP 2020 among stakeholders also present hurdles. A survey revealed that only 25% of parents are aware of the key features of the policy (Centre for Policy Research, 2021). This lack of awareness may lead to resistance to change among parents and educators, further complicating the implementation process. Furthermore, the shift toward holistic learning requires significant changes in teaching methodologies, and overcoming resistance to adopting new practices will be essential for a successful transition.

Despite these challenges, the potential outcomes of NEP 2020 are promising. One of the most significant expected benefits is the improvement in learning outcomes. Implementing competency-based assessments could enhance educational results by up to 25% (Brookings Institution, 2020). This highlights the policy's focus on skills and competencies, which can lead to better educational achievements. Additionally, NEP 2020 aims to achieve a 100% Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in school education by 2030 (NITI Aayog, 2020). If this goal is met, it could significantly increase access to quality education for all children, particularly those from marginalized groups.



The emphasis on skill development and employability is another critical aspect of NEP 2020. According to a survey by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII, 2021), 65% of employers expressed satisfaction with the skills of graduates from institutions that have implemented vocational education programs. This indicates that the policy's focus on skill development can enhance employability and better prepare students for the job market. Furthermore, NEP 2020 promotes the integration of technology in education, which can facilitate personalized learning experiences and drive growth in the ed-tech sector, creating more employment opportunities. Finally, the policy's commitment to cultural relevance and inclusivity is noteworthy. A study found that 82% of parents' support integrating Indian knowledge systems into the curriculum (Centre for Policy Research, 2021). This reflects a positive reception towards culturally relevant education, which can foster a sense of identity and belonging among students.

3. Review of Literature

The study on existing reviews pertaining to the study are presented here.

Das, Prajanma (2019): In *The New Indian Express*, Das presented a critical perspective on NEP 2020 from the Student Federation of India (SFI). The article argued that the policy might undermine the existing educational framework by introducing changes that could exacerbate inequalities and negatively impact the quality of education. Das outlined six key concerns raised by SFI, emphasizing the policy's potential drawbacks.

Chopra, Ritika (2020): Chopra's article in *The Indian Express* provided a detailed analysis of NEP 2020. It outlined the policy's main objectives and proposed reforms, including integrating early childhood education, revising the curriculum, and focusing on holistic development. Chopra highlighted both the potential benefits and criticisms of NEP 2020, offering a comprehensive overview of its implications for Indian education.

Dr. D. P. Sharma (2020): Dr. Sharma's study on *Eduvoice* addressed various challenges facing the Indian education system. It focused on obstacles to implementing NEP 2020, including issues with infrastructure, teacher training, and curriculum updates. The article provided insights into how these challenges could affect the successful rollout of the policy.

Jebaraj, Priscilla (2020): Jebaraj's article in *The Hindu* explained the key proposals of NEP 2020, such as the new 5+3+3+4 schooling model and changes in higher education. The article detailed the policy's goals of improving educational quality, accessibility, and inclusivity, while also discussing the potential impact of these changes on the education system.

Krishna, Atul (2020): Krishna's article on *NDTV* highlighted significant features of NEP 2020, including reforms in both school and higher education. It summarized the policy's objectives to enhance learning outcomes, integrate vocational training, and foster multidisciplinary approaches. The article provided a clear overview of how NEP 2020 aimed to transform India's educational landscape.

Kulkarni, Sagar (2020): Kulkarni's report in *Deccan Herald* focused on the 5-3-3-4 model introduced by NEP 2020, which restructured the traditional schooling system. The article explained the rationale behind this model and its expected benefits, including a more flexible and comprehensive educational approach that supported early childhood education and skill development.



Nandini, ed (2020): In Hindustan Times, Nandini discussed the major changes proposed by NEP 2020 for both school and higher education. The article emphasized the policy's focus on curriculum reform, digital education, and improved learning outcomes. It provided a broad overview of how NEP 2020 aimed to address existing challenges and enhance the overall educational framework in India.

Biswas (2023): Biswas described NEP 2020 as a transformative policy aimed at overhauling India's education system to enhance quality and accessibility from preschool through higher education. The policy emphasized holistic development, flexibility, and innovation, introducing key initiatives such as early childhood education, vocational integration, multilingualism, and the establishment of a National Research Foundation. Despite the significant potential, challenges persisted, including the need for substantial investment, improved infrastructure, a shortage of trained teachers, and ensuring quality education in remote areas.

Mainul S.K. (2023): Mainul analyzed NEP 2020, highlighting its potential to transform India's education system through reforms in curriculum, assessment, teacher education, and governance. The study identified key benefits such as inclusivity, digital literacy, skill development, and holistic student growth. However, challenges such as infrastructural constraints, equity gaps, and resistance to change were noted, with policy recommendations provided to address these issues and ensure effective implementation.

Mehta (2024): Mehta explored the goals of NEP 2020, which aimed to modernize and equitize India's education system. The policy sought to address poor literacy and numeracy at the primary level, decrease dropout rates in middle and secondary schools, and promote a multidisciplinary approach in higher education. Key reforms included shifting from the 10+2 to the 5+3+3+4 educational structure, integrating early childhood education into formal schooling, and streamlining the curriculum to foster critical thinking and 21st-century skills. However, the implementation of these reforms presents challenges. Adjustments to align the curriculum with the National Curriculum Framework are required, and educators must revise learning content and textbooks to reflect the updated curriculum and pedagogical approaches.

The reviews collectively highlight NEP 2020's transformative goals to modernize and enhance India's education system through initiatives like early childhood education, a revised schooling structure, and improved vocational training. While the policy promises significant benefits, including better educational access and quality, it faces challenges such as funding gaps, infrastructure needs, and resistance to change. Successful implementation will require addressing these issues and ensuring effective stakeholder coordination.

4. Objectives and Methodology

The study focuses on the following objectives.

1. To study on School Education in India with aspects as per National Education Policy, 2020.
2. To present a comparative study on School Education as per NEP 1986 and NEP 2020
3. To present the challenges faced in Education Industry as per NEP, 2020 policy.

The study is based on secondary sources of data retrieved from the reports of Ministry of Education, Government of India and Department of Education at state level, journals, newspaper articles and web references.



5. Study on School Education

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 aims to transform school education in India, ensuring high-quality learning for all children from early childhood through secondary education. A key objective of the policy is to universalize access to schooling from preschool to Grade 12, with a strong emphasis on foundational literacy and numeracy. It proposes a comprehensive approach to education that includes a new curricular and pedagogical framework, as well as significant reforms in assessment and teacher education. One of the cornerstones of NEP 2020 is the focus on Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE). Recognizing the critical importance of early learning, the policy advocates for the establishment of a National Curricular and Pedagogical Framework for ECCE, aimed at children aged 3 to 6 years. This framework will promote a play-based, activity-oriented, and discovery-driven learning environment, laying a solid foundation for lifelong learning.

To address the urgent need for foundational literacy and numeracy, the policy sets a target for achieving universal proficiency in these essential skills by 2025, particularly by the end of Grade 3. To support this initiative, NEP 2020 proposes the creation of a National Mission on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy, which will focus on ensuring that every child attains these critical competencies early in their educational journey.

The NEP introduces a new curricular and pedagogical structure, organized as a 5+3+3+4 system, which corresponds to different age groups: 38 years (Foundation Stage), 811 years (Preparatory Stage), 1114 years (Middle Stage), and 1418 years (Secondary Stage). This restructured approach aims to provide a more holistic and integrated educational experience, fostering not only academic knowledge but also essential life skills. In terms of curriculum design, the policy emphasizes the need for a more engaging and enjoyable learning experience. It advocates for the development of core competencies such as critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration, alongside ethical reasoning and digital literacy. This focus on holistic education aims to prepare students for the complexities of the modern world. Assessment reforms are another significant aspect of NEP 2020. The policy encourages a shift from high-stakes examinations to a more formative and competency-based assessment system. To facilitate this transition, it proposes the establishment of a new National Assessment Centre, known as PARAKH (Performance Assessment, Review, and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development), which will set standards for student evaluation and assessment.

Improving the quality of teacher education is also a priority in NEP 2020. The policy aims to enhance teacher training programs by establishing a National Mission for Mentoring, which will provide support and motivation for educators. Continuous professional development opportunities will be made available to ensure that teachers are well-equipped to deliver high-quality education. Equitable and inclusive education is a fundamental principle of NEP 2020. The policy emphasizes the need to ensure access and participation for all children, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds and children with disabilities. Initiatives such as the establishment of a Gender Inclusion Fund and Special Education Zones in underserved areas aim to promote inclusivity in the education system.

Lastly, NEP 2020 advocates for efficient governance and regulation of schools. It proposes the decentralization of school governance through the creation of School Complexes or Clusters, which will enhance resource utilization and administrative effectiveness. Additionally, the establishment of a State School Standards Authority (SSSA) is recommended to set standards for school regulation and accreditation, ensuring accountability and quality in education.



Table-1: Aspects on School Education as per NEP, 2020

Sl.No.	Aspect	Details
i-iv	Educational Structure	Transition from 10+2 system to 5+3+3+4 system, including:
		i. Foundational Stage: Ages 3-8 (Preschool and Grades 1-2)
		ii. Preparatory Stage: Ages 8-11 (Grades 3-5)
		iii. Middle Stage: Ages 11-14 (Grades 6-8)
iv. Secondary Stage: Ages 14-18 (Grades 9-12)		
v.	Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)	Inclusion of early childhood education as part of formal education, aiming for universal access.
vi.	Curriculum Reforms	Reduction of curriculum content to focus on critical thinking and holistic development.
vii.	Multidisciplinary Approach	Encouragement of a multidisciplinary approach in higher education, integrating various fields of study.
viii.	Vocational Education	Introduction of vocational education from Grade 6, with a target of 50% of students receiving vocational training by 2025.
ix.	Assessment Reforms	Shift to competency-based assessments, including formative assessments and periodic examinations.
x.	Teacher Training	Emphasis on enhancing teacher quality with continuous professional development and upgrading teacher qualifications.
xi.	Language Policy	Promotion of multilingualism, including the study of regional languages and the mother tongue.
xii.	Technology Integration	Use of technology in teaching, learning, and assessment processes.
xiii.	Inclusion and Equity	Focus on improving access and quality of education for marginalized and disadvantaged groups.
xiv.	National Educational Technology Forum (NETF)	Establishment to integrate technology into education, improving digital infrastructure and resources.
xv.	National Assessment Centre 'Sampoorna'	Establishment of a central body for assessing educational outcomes and standards across the country.

Source: Ministry of Education, Government of India. (2020). *National Education Policy 2020*.
https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/NEP_Final_English_0.pdf

6. School Education – Differences in NEP 1986 V/s NEP 2020

An endeavour is made to understand the key aspects of NEP, 1986 and NEP, 2020. The key aspects are compared and presented in table-2.



Table-2: NEP 1986 V/s NEP 2020

Aspect	National Policy on Education 1986 (NPE 1986)	National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020)
Curriculum and Pedagogy	Emphasized a rigid and standardized curriculum.	Advocates for a flexible and dynamic curriculum that is adaptable to local contexts.
	Focused on rote memorization and theoretical knowledge.	Promotes experiential learning, critical thinking, and problem solving skills.
	Limited scope for creativity and critical thinking.	Encourages project based and inquiry based learning approaches.
Medium of Instruction	Predominantly English in urban areas, with regional languages often neglected.	Strong emphasis on using the mother tongue or regional languages as the medium of instruction, especially in early grades.
	Limited emphasis on mother tongue in early education.	Supports multilingual education to enhance comprehension and cognitive development.
Assessment and Evaluation	Relied heavily on high stakes examinations at the end of each educational stage.	Encourages a shift to formative and competency based assessments that evaluate understanding and application of knowledge.
	Focused on summative assessments, often leading to stress and rote learning.	Introduces the concept of continuous and comprehensive evaluation throughout the academic year.
Teacher Training	Limited emphasis on continuous professional development for teachers.	Prioritizes continuous professional development and training for teachers, including workshops and mentorship programs.
	Teacher training programs often lacked practical exposure and updated pedagogical methods.	Encourages innovative teaching practices and the use of technology in classrooms.
Multidisciplinary Learning	Subjects taught in isolation without integration or real world application.	Promotes a multidisciplinary approach where subjects are interconnected, allowing for holistic learning experiences.
	Limited opportunities for interdisciplinary projects.	Encourages students to engage in projects that draw from multiple disciplines.
Holistic Development	Primarily focused on academic achievements and examination results.	Emphasizes the overall development of the child, including cognitive, social, emotional, and physical aspects.
	Limited attention to social, emotional, and physical development.	Encourages activities that promote life skills, creativity, and emotional intelligence.
Early Childhood Education	Limited focus on early childhood education, often seen as an informal phase.	Recognizes the critical importance of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) for children aged 3-6.



	No structured framework for early childhood learning.	Proposes a National Curricular and Pedagogical Framework for ECCE to ensure quality learning experiences.
Technology Integration	Minimal use of technology in education; often limited to urban schools.	Strong emphasis on integrating technology in teaching and learning processes.
	Lack of infrastructure and training for teachers to use technology effectively.	Encourages digital literacy and the use of online resources, tools, and platforms for enhanced learning.
Regulatory Framework	Centralized governance with strict regulations and oversight on schools.	Advocates for decentralized governance, allowing for greater autonomy and flexibility for schools.
	Limited autonomy for schools in curriculum design and administration.	Proposes the establishment of School Complexes or Clusters for better resource sharing and collaboration.
Flexibility in Learning Paths	Limited choice in subjects and rigid pathways for students.	Offers flexibility for students to choose subjects based on their interests and aspirations.
	Students often required to follow a predetermined curriculum without options.	Encourages personalized learning paths and vocational education options alongside traditional academics.

Source: Ministry of Education, Government of India. (2020). *National Education Policy 2020*. https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/NEP_Final_English_0.pdf

Figure-1 compares the previous and new academic structures of the Indian education system, highlighting changes in the pedagogical and curricular approach.

Previous Academic Structure:

1. Secondary: 2 years (Ages 16-18)
2. Middle: 10 years (Ages 6-16)
3. Foundational: 3 years (Anganwadi/pre-school/Balvatika) (Ages 3-6)

New Pedagogical & Curricular Structure

1. Secondary: 4 years (Class 9 to 12) (Ages 14-18)
2. Middle: 3 years (Class 6 to 8) (Ages 11-14)
3. Preparatory: 3 years (Class 3 to 5) (Ages 8-11)
4. Foundational: 2 years (Class 1 & 2) (Ages 6-8) + 3 years (Anganwadi/pre-school/Balvatika) (Ages 3-6)

Key Changes

1. Extended Secondary Education: The duration of secondary education has been extended from 2 years to 4 years.
2. Introduction of Preparatory Stage: A new preparatory stage, covering ages 8-11, has been introduced between the foundational and middle stages.
3. Enhanced Early Childhood Education: The foundational stage now integrates both pre-school (Anganwadi/Balvatika) and the early years of primary education (Class 1 & 2).

- The revised structure aims to offer a more comprehensive and age-appropriate education, emphasizing early childhood development and a more gradual transition through the learning stages.

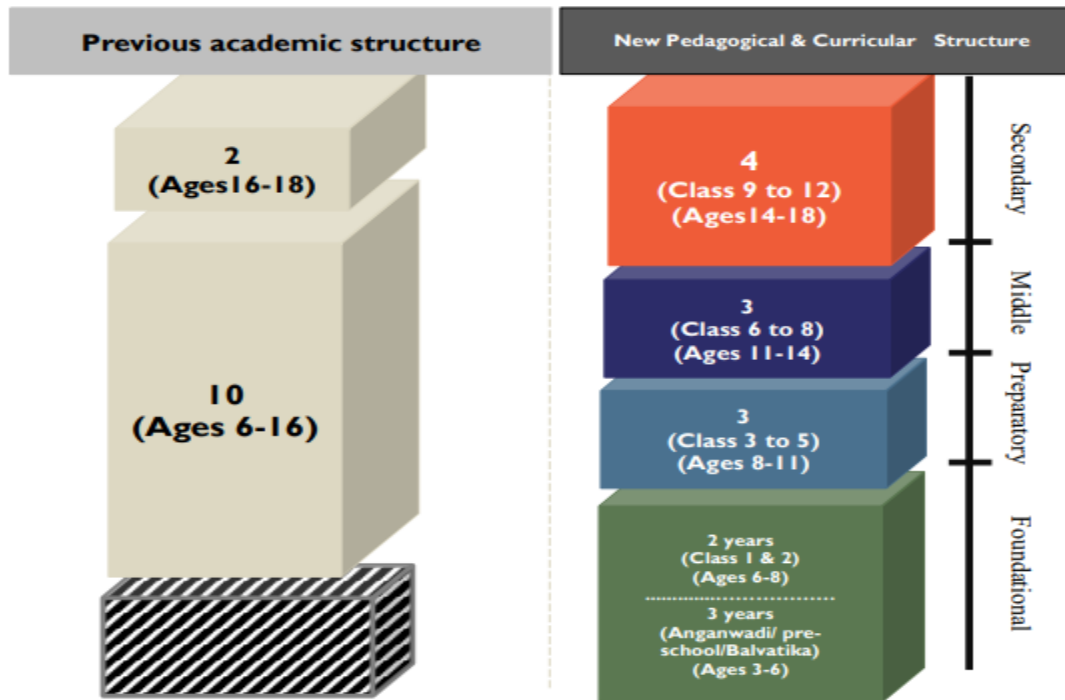


Figure-1: comparison of School Education, NEP 1986 V/s NEP, 2020

7. Potential Outcomes and Challenges of NEP, 2020

The implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 faces several challenges, including inadequate funding, with India's public spending on education at 3.1% of GDP, compared to the global average of 4.9%, and an estimated additional investment of ₹6 lakh crore required over the next decade. Capacity building remains a hurdle, as evidenced by a Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of 26.3% in higher education, and a high student-teacher ratio in 36% of schools.

Quality of teaching is also a concern, with only 69% of teachers professionally trained and high attrition rates, particularly in rural areas. Resistance to change is notable, with 42% of teachers and 75% of parents unfamiliar with key aspects of NEP 2020. Coordination and governance are complex, given the vast number of schools and higher education institutions, many of which lack basic infrastructure.

Despite these challenges, NEP 2020 has the potential to improve access and equity by achieving a 100% GER in school education by 2030, enhance education quality through competency-based assessments, and boost skill development and employability. The policy also aims to promote Indian knowledge systems and internationalize higher education, with potential outcomes including a reduction in the gender gap, creation of new jobs, preservation of linguistic diversity, and attraction of international students. Success will depend on addressing these challenges and creating a supportive environment for effective implementation.



8. Challenges faced in Education Industry

Neha (2024) highlights several challenges in implementing NEP 2020. Key issues include:

1. **Investment and Resources:** Adequate financial investment is needed for school and college infrastructure, teacher training, educational technology, and curriculum reforms to meet policy goals by 2030.
2. **Lack of Trained Teachers:** There is a shortage of qualified teachers who are trained to handle new curriculum requirements and technological advancements in education. This shortage hampers the ability to achieve educational targets, such as 100% enrollment in school education and 50% enrollment in higher education.
3. **Vocational Education:** NEP 2020 aims to introduce vocational education from Class 6, but challenges include insufficient funding, a lack of trained personnel, and changing negative perceptions towards vocational training.
4. **Equity and Inclusivity:** Ensuring equity and inclusivity for diverse students requires significant financial resources for qualified teachers, infrastructure, and support services. Changing societal attitudes towards these students is also essential for achieving inclusivity.
5. **Infrastructure Shortages:** India faces a shortage of schools and universities. To meet the policy goals of 100% Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) in school education by 2030 and 50% GER in higher education by 2035, substantial increases in educational infrastructure are needed.
6. **Duration of Teacher Education:** The proposed one-year teacher education program may compromise quality due to insufficient time for theoretical and practical training, as well as internships. Extending the duration of this course could enhance its effectiveness.

Overall, addressing these challenges is crucial for the successful implementation of NEP 2020.

9. Conclusions

The successful implementation of NEP 2020 hinges on overcoming significant challenges, including securing adequate funding, improving teacher quality and infrastructure, and increasing stakeholder awareness. Addressing these issues is crucial for achieving the policy's goals of enhancing learning outcomes, achieving universal enrolment, and integrating skill development and technology in education. Despite these challenges, NEP 2020 promises substantial benefits, including improved educational achievements, greater employability, and a more inclusive and culturally relevant education system.

In conclusion, while NEP 2020 presents significant challenges such as funding gaps, inadequate teacher training, and resistance to change, it offers transformative potential for improving educational access, quality, and equity. Addressing these obstacles effectively is crucial for realizing the policy's goals of enhanced employability, increased enrolment, and preservation of cultural diversity. The success of NEP 2020 will ultimately depend on a concerted effort to overcome these hurdles and foster a supportive educational environment.

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