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Role of New NEP 2020 in Comparison with Global Education and its Perspective on Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS)

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Abstract

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 represents a landmark reform in India's education system, introduced to align national learning goals with global standards while reviving the essence of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS). This policy envisions a holistic, multidisciplinary, and flexible educational framework that nurtures creativity, critical thinking, and ethical values among learners. In comparison with global education models, NEP 2020 emphasizes inclusivity, lifelong learning, and digital integration, reflecting principles seen in advanced educational systems worldwide. However, what distinguishes it is its rootedness in India's cultural and intellectual heritage. By integrating traditional Indian philosophies, sciences, arts, and languages into the modern curriculum, NEP 2020 seeks to balance global competitiveness with indigenous wisdom. This paper explores the comparative dimensions of NEP 2020 with global education practices and critically examines its role in preserving, revitalizing, and mainstreaming Indian Knowledge Systems in contemporary academic and research domains.

Keywords: National Education Policy 2020, Global Education Standards, Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS), Multidisciplinary Learning, Holistic Education, Cultural Integration, Indigenous Knowledge, Global Competitiveness, Educational Reform, Sustainable Development, Value-Based Education, Research and Innovation, Liberal Education, Skill Development, Digital Learning, Curriculum Flexibility, Foundational Literacy, Global Citizenship, Vishwa Guru

Introduction

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is a comprehensive framework introduced by the Government of India to transform the entire education system, from early childhood to higher education. It replaces the 1986 policy and emphasizes holistic, multidisciplinary, and skill-oriented learning. NEP 2020 aims to make education more flexible, inclusive, and aligned with the needs of the 21st century while promoting critical thinking, creativity, and digital literacy. It focuses on foundational literacy and numeracy, the use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction till Grade 5, and a 5+3+3+4 school structure replacing the old 10+2 system. The policy also promotes research, innovation, and internationalization in higher education. Uniquely, NEP 2020 integrates Indian

Knowledge Systems (IKS), traditional arts, and values, preserving India's cultural heritage. Overall, it envisions an equitable, globally competitive, and value-based education system to make India a "knowledge superpower."

Global Education Standards

Global Education Standards refer to internationally recognized benchmarks that define the quality, effectiveness, and equity of education systems worldwide. These standards aim to ensure that learners across nations acquire essential knowledge, skills, and values needed for global citizenship and sustainable development. Organizations such as UNESCO, OECD, and the World Bank play a key role in formulating and assessing these standards through frameworks like Education for All (EFA), Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), and the

Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). Global education emphasizes holistic learning, critical thinking, creativity, technological competence, and inclusivity. It promotes access to quality education regardless of gender, geography, or socioeconomic background. Many countries align their national education policies with these standards to enhance international collaboration, student mobility, and employability. Ultimately, global education standards seek to build a knowledge-based, equitable, and interconnected world through lifelong learning and innovation.

Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS)

Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) represent the vast, diverse, and ancient intellectual traditions of India that encompass science, philosophy, art, literature, medicine, mathematics, governance, and spirituality. Rooted in centuries of scholarly pursuit and cultural evolution, IKS emphasizes a holistic understanding of life, integrating knowledge with ethics, sustainability, and well-being. Ancient universities such as Nalanda, Takshashila, and Vikramshila were global centers of learning that embodied these principles. IKS includes profound contributions such as Ayurveda in medicine, Yoga in physical and mental discipline, Vastu Shastra in architecture, Jyotish Shastra in astronomy, and Chanakya Niti in political thought. Fields like mathematics (zero, decimal system) and metallurgy also reflect India's scientific advancements. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 recognizes the importance of IKS in creating a balanced education system that blends traditional wisdom with modern scientific inquiry. By integrating IKS into contemporary curricula, students can develop a deeper understanding of Indian heritage, environmental ethics, and sustainable living practices. This approach not only preserves indigenous knowledge but also promotes innovation grounded in cultural identity. Thus, IKS serves as a bridge between India's ancient intellectual legacy and modern global education, nurturing both wisdom and progress.

Multidisciplinary Learning and Holistic Education

Multidisciplinary learning and holistic education are core principles of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, aiming to transform the Indian education system into one that fosters creativity, critical thinking, and lifelong learning. Multidisciplinary learning allows students to choose subjects across streams, such as science, arts, commerce, humanities, and vocational courses, breaking the rigid boundaries of traditional education. This flexibility encourages interdisciplinary knowledge, problem-solving abilities, and adaptability, aligning India's education system with global standards observed in liberal education models of the USA, Europe, and other leading nations. Holistic education goes beyond academic learning to focus on the overall development of learners, including emotional, social, ethical, physical, and cognitive growth. NEP 2020 emphasizes experiential learning, vocational training, and value-based education, ensuring students develop practical skills, social responsibility, and cultural awareness. Integrating Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS), such as Yoga, arts, philosophy, and environmental ethics, enriches holistic learning by connecting students with India's intellectual and

cultural heritage. Together, multidisciplinary and holistic approaches create well-rounded individuals capable of addressing complex real-world challenges, contributing to innovation, and participating meaningfully in society. They also bridge global best practices with India's traditional knowledge, making education inclusive, future-ready, and culturally rooted.

Cultural Education

Cultural education under the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasizes connecting learners with India's rich heritage, traditions, and values while fostering global awareness. It integrates Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS), including classical arts, literature, philosophy, music, dance, and local languages, into the curriculum. Cultural education promotes ethical values, social responsibility, and environmental consciousness, enabling students to appreciate diversity and intercultural understanding. By combining traditional knowledge with modern education, NEP 2020 aims to develop well-rounded, culturally rooted, and globally competent citizens. This approach ensures education is not only skill-oriented but also preserves India's identity in a rapidly globalizing world.

Indigenous knowledge: Indigenous knowledge refers to the traditional wisdom, practices, and innovations developed by communities over centuries, reflecting a deep understanding of local environments, culture, and society. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasizes integrating Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) into curricula, promoting subjects such as Ayurveda, Yoga, classical arts, astronomy, and sustainable agricultural practices. Recognizing indigenous knowledge ensures the preservation of cultural heritage, fosters contextual learning, and encourages sustainable problem-solving rooted in local realities. By combining indigenous wisdom with modern education, NEP 2020 aims to create learners who are both globally competent and deeply connected to India's intellectual and cultural legacy.

Global Competitiveness and Educational Reforms

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 aims to enhance global competitiveness by aligning India's education system with international standards and preparing students for the challenges of the 21st century. Emphasizing critical thinking, creativity, digital literacy, and multidisciplinary learning, NEP encourages learners to acquire skills that meet global workforce demands. Initiatives like the Academic Bank of Credits, flexible curricula, online education platforms, and international collaborations foster mobility, innovation, and lifelong learning. The policy represents a significant educational reform, restructuring school and higher education systems to be more inclusive, flexible, and research-driven. By integrating Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) alongside modern sciences, NEP ensures students gain a unique advantage, combining traditional wisdom with contemporary knowledge. These reforms aim to produce globally competent citizens who can contribute to international innovation while retaining cultural identity, making India a knowledge-driven economy and a hub for sustainable development and global intellectual leadership.

Sustainable Development and Value-Based Education:

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasizes sustainable development and value-based education as central pillars for shaping responsible and socially conscious citizens. Sustainable development in education focuses on equipping learners with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to address global challenges such as climate change, resource management, social inequality, and environmental degradation. NEP 2020 integrates sustainability concepts through experiential learning, project-based activities, and interdisciplinary approaches, encouraging students to develop practical solutions while understanding ecological balance and community well-being. Value-based education under NEP 2020 emphasizes ethical reasoning, empathy, social responsibility, cultural awareness, and moral integrity. By incorporating Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS), including teachings from philosophy, Yoga, Ayurveda, and classical literature, the policy nurtures respect for cultural heritage and human values alongside modern scientific learning. This dual focus ensures education is not merely skill-oriented but holistic, transformative, and rooted in ethics. Combining sustainable development with value-based education enables learners to become globally aware, culturally grounded, and socially responsible individuals. By fostering environmental stewardship, ethical conduct, and civic engagement, NEP 2020 prepares students to contribute meaningfully to sustainable societies while preserving India's intellectual and moral legacy.

Research and Innovation

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasizes research and innovation as critical drivers for India's knowledge economy and global competitiveness. The policy envisions a robust research ecosystem across schools, higher education institutions, and vocational training centers. Establishment of the National Research Foundation (NRF) aims to promote interdisciplinary, high-quality research and foster a culture of curiosity, critical thinking, and problem-solving. NEP encourages integration of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) with modern scientific methods, enabling exploration of traditional wisdom in areas such as Ayurveda, mathematics, astronomy, arts, and environmental practices. By promoting experiential learning, technology-driven research, and international collaborations, the policy aligns Indian education with global standards while nurturing indigenous innovation. It also encourages students to undertake research-based projects, innovation challenges, and entrepreneurship activities, making learning practical and impactful. Through these reforms, NEP 2020 aims to develop a generation of innovators and researchers who are both globally competent and rooted in India's intellectual heritage, driving sustainable development and knowledge creation.

Liberal Education and Skill Development

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasizes liberal education and skill development as integral components of a modern, globally competitive education system. Liberal education promotes multidisciplinary learning, critical thinking, creativity, ethical reasoning, and intellectual flexibility, allowing students to explore diverse

subjects beyond traditional boundaries. This approach aligns India with global education trends in countries such as the USA and Europe, where liberal education fosters holistic development and innovation-driven learning. Skill development under NEP 2020 focuses on 21st-century competencies, including problem-solving, digital literacy, communication, entrepreneurship, and vocational expertise. By incorporating experiential learning, internships, and project-based activities, the policy ensures that students acquire practical knowledge alongside theoretical understanding. NEP also integrates Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS), such as Yoga, Ayurveda, classical arts, and indigenous sciences, providing learners with culturally rooted skills that enhance creativity and contextual understanding.

Together, liberal education and skill development create well-rounded, adaptable individuals capable of addressing complex societal and global challenges. By balancing global competencies with indigenous wisdom, NEP 2020 fosters a workforce that is not only technically proficient but also ethically grounded, culturally aware, and capable of contributing meaningfully to sustainable development and innovation.

Digital Learning and Curriculum Flexibility

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasizes digital learning and curriculum flexibility to modernize India's education system and align it with global standards. Digital learning integrates technology into classrooms, promoting e-learning platforms, virtual labs, online assessments, and AI-driven education tools. This approach enhances accessibility, personalized learning, and interactive teaching, ensuring that students in urban and rural areas can acquire knowledge at their own pace. By incorporating digital literacy from foundational levels, NEP prepares learners for the technology-driven workforce of the 21st century, fostering skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and computational understanding. Curriculum flexibility under NEP 2020 allows students to choose subjects across streams, adopt multidisciplinary pathways, and pursue vocational or skill-based courses alongside traditional academics. The Academic Bank of Credits (ABC) enables seamless entry, exit, and credit transfer between institutions, promoting lifelong learning. Flexibility also includes integration of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS), allowing students to study Yoga, Ayurveda, arts, and classical literature alongside modern sciences. Together, digital learning and flexible curricula create a student-centric, adaptive, and globally competitive education system, blending technology, interdisciplinary knowledge, and indigenous wisdom. This empowers learners to thrive in a dynamic world while remaining rooted in India's cultural and intellectual heritage.

Foundational Literacy and Global Citizenship

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasizes foundational literacy and numeracy as the cornerstone of effective learning. Recognizing that early acquisition of reading, writing, and arithmetic skills is critical for lifelong education, NEP prioritizes age-appropriate, evidence-based interventions in the formative years (ages 3–8) through programs such as Early Childhood Care and Education

(ECCE). Foundational literacy ensures that learners build strong cognitive and analytical skills, which are essential for advanced learning, multidisciplinary studies, and problem-solving in a globalized world. NEP 2020 also promotes global citizenship education, preparing students to engage responsibly with a rapidly interconnected world. By incorporating sustainability, cultural awareness, ethics, human rights, and intercultural understanding into curricula, learners develop a sense of social responsibility and empathy. Integration of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS), including traditional values, ethics, arts, and environmental practices, complements global perspectives, ensuring that students are both culturally grounded and globally competent. By combining foundational literacy with global citizenship, NEP fosters well-rounded individuals capable of critical thinking, effective communication, and ethical decision-making. This dual focus equips learners to navigate local and international challenges, contributing meaningfully to society, innovation, and sustainable development, while preserving India's intellectual and cultural heritage.

India as a Vishwaguru

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 envisions India as a "Vishwaguru" a global leader in knowledge, education, and innovation. By reforming the education system to be holistic, multidisciplinary, and globally competitive, NEP seeks to position India as a center of learning that combines modern scientific advancements with India's rich intellectual heritage. The policy emphasizes research, innovation, digital learning, and international collaborations, enabling Indian students and institutions to contribute meaningfully to global knowledge creation. A distinctive aspect of this vision is the integration of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS), including classical arts, literature, philosophy, Yoga, Ayurveda, and sustainable practices. By promoting indigenous wisdom alongside contemporary education, NEP strengthens India's cultural identity and showcases its civilizational contributions on the world stage. Through these initiatives, India aims to produce globally competent, ethically grounded, and culturally rooted citizens, fostering innovation, sustainable development, and leadership. NEP 2020 thus lays the foundation for India to reclaim its historical status as a Vishwaguru in education and knowledge.

Conclusion

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 represents a transformative blueprint for India's education system, aiming to align it with global standards while preserving the country's unique cultural and intellectual heritage. By emphasizing holistic, multidisciplinary, and skill-oriented learning, NEP fosters the development of learners who are not only academically competent but also ethically grounded, socially responsible, and culturally aware. The policy's integration of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS)-including Yoga, Ayurveda, classical arts, literature, philosophy, and sustainable practices-ensures that students remain connected to India's civilizational legacy while engaging with contemporary knowledge and technology. NEP 2020's focus on foundational literacy, global citizenship, digital learning, curriculum flexibility, and

research innovation aligns India with international benchmarks, promoting global competitiveness and facilitating knowledge exchange across borders. At the same time, initiatives like the Academic Bank of Credits, vocational education, and experiential learning empower students with practical skills, adaptability, and lifelong learning capabilities.

By combining global best practices with indigenous wisdom, NEP 2020 addresses both the demands of a knowledge-driven global economy and the preservation of India's intellectual identity. It envisions the creation of well-rounded individuals capable of innovation, leadership, and sustainable development, positioning India as a Vishwaguru in education and knowledge. Overall, NEP 2020 offers a comprehensive, inclusive, and forward-looking framework that harmonizes modern education with India's rich heritage, laying the foundation for a globally competent and culturally rooted generation.

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