

Emphasizing Holistic and Multidisciplinary Education in the Light of NEP 2020

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Abstract

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 represents a paradigm shift in India's education system by placing holistic and multidisciplinary education at the core of learning. The policy redefines education as a process of all-round development—intellectual, social, ethical, emotional, and physical—rather than the mere acquisition of subject-specific knowledge. By encouraging learners to engage with diverse disciplines such as sciences, humanities, arts, commerce, vocational studies, and Indian knowledge systems, NEP 2020 seeks to foster broader perspectives and a deeper understanding of real-world challenges. Holistic multidisciplinary education plays a crucial role in enhancing employability, creativity, and innovation by aligning educational outcomes with evolving societal and economic needs. However, the effective implementation of this approach faces several challenges, including curriculum restructuring, teacher preparedness, assessment reforms, and infrastructural limitations, particularly at the grassroots level.

This paper examines the implementation of multidisciplinary education in accordance with the guidelines of NEP 2020, with a special focus on its benefits for holistic development and the challenges involved in translating policy vision into practice. The study highlights the need for systemic support and capacity building to ensure that NEP 2020 successfully transforms Indian education into a multidisciplinary, inclusive, and future-ready system capable of nurturing responsible citizens and globally competent professionals.

Key words: Holistic, Multidisciplinary, NEP, Contemporary Relevance, Global citizenship.

Introduction

The National Education Policy 2020 represents a transformative shift in India's education system by placing *holistic and multidisciplinary education* at its core. Moving away from rote learning and rigid subject boundaries, NEP 2020 envisions education as a process that nurtures the intellectual, emotional, social, ethical, and physical development of learners.

Holistic education under NEP 2020 aims to develop well-rounded individuals rather than narrowly trained specialists. It recognizes that true learning goes beyond academic achievement and includes values, life skills, creativity, critical thinking, and emotional intelligence. By integrating co-curricular activities, sports, arts, community engagement, and vocational exposure into mainstream education, the policy seeks to foster balanced personalities capable of lifelong learning.

The need to inculcate a multidisciplinary approach in education has been felt for quite some time now, but the basic idea has so far remained confined to theories and discussions. But lately, there has been an upsurge in its application in the classroom. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 aims at bringing about a multidisciplinary approach in education – firstly in schools and then eventually in colleges as well. Multidisciplinary education is a concept that has been embraced by the Indian government through the new National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.

This approach to learning looks at how different disciplines can interact and overlap with each other to create a comprehensive understanding of a subject. A multidisciplinary approach in education is often seen as the ideal way to tackle complex problems and will be essential for India's continued success in the global economy. With the NEP 2020, India is well positioned

to build on its current educational system and move towards a more multidisciplinary approach. It is necessary to provide the modus operandi how Holistic Multi Disciplinary Education will be implemented at the grass root level in the light of NEP 2020 guidelines.

What is really the supreme objective of education? Training in the art of living with zest and grace and decency so that you may be equipped to work, in cooperation with others, for the cause of the good life. All the different arts and sciences, the classical and modern disciplines, the skills and the techniques which form part of your curriculum are really the means to an end and not an end in themselves—the end of leading the 'good life' and of making it possible for others to do so. A holistic and multidisciplinary education would aim to develop all capacities of human beings –intellectual, aesthetic, social, emotional in an integrated way. Assessment of educational approaches in undergraduate education that integrates humanities and arts with science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) have consistently showed positive learning outcomes, including increasing creativity and innovation, critical thinking, team work and better communication skills.

Research is also improved and enhanced through holistic and multidisciplinary education approach. This example will make it clear, for example a scholar enrolled for integrated PhD programme in the discipline of Education is interested to conduct a study on assessing the scientific temper of university students, for accomplishing his objectives he needs to construct a standardized scientific temper scale, he can take a co-guide from Department of Psychology and for validating the items of scientific temper scale he needs experts from the Department of Science. If he wants to adapt the scale for Urdu speaking population / sample he needs to translate the items into Urdu for which he has to approach Department of Urdu. To translate interdisciplinary research into reality we need to have a common Board of Research Studies, University has to give a serious thought to it. University of Kashmir will have to focus on research and innovation by setting up start up incubation centers; technology development parks; innovative centers in frontier areas of research; industry-academic linkages; interdisciplinary research by integrating humanities, science and social science research.

A key pillar of NEP 2020 is *multidisciplinary education*. Learners are encouraged to explore subjects across sciences, humanities, arts, commerce, and vocational domains without artificial separations. The introduction of flexible curricula, multiple entry and exit options, and the Academic Bank of Credits empowers students to design personalized learning pathways aligned with their interests and career aspirations. This approach mirrors real-world problem-solving, which rarely fits neatly into a single discipline.

At the higher education level, NEP 2020 promotes multidisciplinary universities and colleges, phasing out narrow single-stream institutions. The integration of Indian Knowledge Systems alongside modern disciplines further enriches learning by connecting tradition with contemporary relevance. Such exposure cultivates cultural rootedness while preparing students for global citizenship.

In a rapidly changing world driven by technology, innovation, and complex social challenges, holistic and multidisciplinary education equips learners with adaptability, creativity, and critical thinking skills. By emphasizing these principles, NEP 2020 lays the foundation for an inclusive, flexible, and future-ready education system—one that not only enhances employability but also shapes responsible, thoughtful, and empowered citizens.

Purpose of Multidisciplinary Education

As a part of holistic development students will be provided an opportunity for internship with local industry, business for a longer exposure so that they may actively engage with practical side of their learning and as a by-product further improves their employability. Even the great scientist or the artist or the scholar, who devotes himself to research or to some form of creative activity and who appears to be primarily concerned with knowledge or scholarship, is really, in the final analysis, serving the cause of man's progress towards better things. He is serving or he should be serving. It is necessary to add this alternative because one knows of many scientists and other men of thought who are as blind to the social consequences of their work as many businessmen, industrialists and political manipulators. This may be due to a number of factors. It may be that their education has been so narrowly specialized or divided into compartments that they have been prevented from seeing the wood for the trees.

They know their little Chemistry, Physics, History, Literature, Engineering or Medicine but have failed to see its relationship to life, its meaning and purpose. It is the tragedy of our education that it fails to train students in the inter relationships of different subjects and experiences and their bearing on life's purpose. Or, may be, education has failed to quicken the social conscience and we are not concerned much about the impact of their activities on collective welfare. It also happens, in many cases, that a technologist or professional worker starts with high ideals and social awareness but his whole environment, social and professional, is so saturated with wrong values and attitudes that he is unable to resist their downward pull and ends up in being caught in that demoralizing atmosphere. As future citizens and possibly as scientists, artists and thinkers, this question is important for each one of us. The problem, as you will see, is both educational and social.

Education should be so oriented that it will give you a balanced and synoptic view of the world in which you live and inculcate in you ideals, values and standard of efficiency which will aid in tackling successfully its difficult and growing problems. May I confess to you that education all over the world, and particularly in our country, is not performing this function satisfactorily and a large majority of students go out of schools and colleges without their minds being lit up by the vitalizing flame of thought or their hearts being moved by a touch of compassion for the human race? At the same time, if you are to maintain your proper moral and social balance in the world, it is necessary that the community should so organize its activities and social institutions that educated men and women are able to find proper self-expression in them and the values that they have acquired in universities are not perverted by the impact of anti-social or unethical forces. Various measures are being adopted to improve the quality of education being provided for you but there are so many material and psychological difficulties that it will take a long time before really satisfying system of education can come into being.

One such measure is the introduction of the scheme of multidisciplinary education in the universities and colleges under which an attempt is made to break down the narrow specialism which divides humanities from Sciences, and Sciences from Social Studies, and fine Arts and Music from both. At present the students have a little understanding of their field of specialization but are practically illiterate in other related fields often

without any apology-without realizing that they have been deprived of anything of value. They acquire a certain amount of information, large or small which does not usually pass into well assimilated knowledge and knowledge rarely puts on the mantle of wisdom which has been described as the 'grace of knowledge'. It would be worthwhile to elucidate these three words briefly, 'Information' connotes a collection of miscellaneous facts, data and statistics, which are not properly integrated or inter-related, which do not light up any problems and which are mainly held together by memory. In the case of schools and colleges, information is usually acquired because it is necessary to pass examinations and it is painfully stored in the memory but not assimilated in the mind.

Knowledge, on the other hand, is the result of the mind working actively on information, establishing inter-relationships and so fully mastering it that it can use it for achieving any desired results. It is something that becomes a part of one's mind and personality, a tool with the help of which one can find one's way in life. Wisdom is more difficult to define. It is knowledge, applied with understanding to life. It is experience which has become mature and mellow. It is a delicate instrument, as it were, which enables us to distinguish between right and wrong, to differentiate between what is spuriously attractive and what is of abiding value, what is mainly of selfish interest and what has social significance and, in every case, to show loyalty to the higher values, to choose the right ends and means, however powerful may be the appeal on the other side. It also involves the capacity to take the long-range view and -discount the pressure of the immediate. So, wisdom becomes the quintessence of human experience, knowledge wedded to the right values.

Education would be necessary for the fullness of life and cultivation of personality even if people did not have the over-all problem of earning a livelihood. But many students neither know nor care whether, and how far, the education they are receiving is enriching their mind or deepening their personality. This article is an attempt to break through the crust of their indifference and, possibly, cynicism and make them active participants in the process of their education. It is addressed to the readers. I would like to take you into confidence and place all my cards on the table. My effort is to make you realize that you are living in a new kind of world where the old landmarks and means of physical and intellectual locomotion have almost vanished, where old

comfortable grooves have become irrelevant, where slackness, laziness, slipshod work and inefficiency will not pay, where properties of the world stage have been, and are being, so radically reshuffled that we need not merely a new compass but a new heart and a new mind to take our bearings and find our way.

Implementation of multidisciplinary education in NEP 2020

The implementation of multidisciplinary education is a cornerstone of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, introduced by the Ministry of Education. NEP 2020 envisions a transformative shift from rigid, discipline-based learning to a holistic, flexible, and learner-centric education system that prepares students for the complex demands of the 21st century.

1. Curriculum Restructuring and Flexibility

NEP 2020 promotes the integration of arts, humanities, sciences, commerce, and vocational subjects across all levels of education. Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are encouraged to offer flexible curricula with multiple entry and exit points, enabling students to combine majors and minors across disciplines according to their interests and career goals.

2. Institutional Transformation

Single-discipline colleges are to be gradually transformed into large multidisciplinary institutions. Universities are encouraged to function as knowledge hubs where teaching, research, and innovation across disciplines coexist, fostering creativity and critical inquiry.

3. Holistic and Experiential Learning

The policy emphasizes experiential learning methods such as project-based learning, internships, community engagement, and research-based assignments. These approaches help learners connect theoretical knowledge with real-world applications across multiple domains.

4. Integration of Indian Knowledge Systems and Skill Education

Multidisciplinary education under NEP 2020 includes the integration of Indian knowledge systems, ethics, environmental studies, and life skills. Vocational education and skill-based learning are introduced early;

ensuring learners acquire practical competencies alongside academic knowledge.

5. Faculty Development and Collaboration

Effective implementation requires continuous professional development of teachers. NEP 2020 encourages faculty collaboration across departments, interdisciplinary research, and innovative pedagogical practices to support multidisciplinary teaching.

6. Assessment Reforms

Assessment systems are redesigned to move beyond rote learning. Competency-based, formative, and continuous assessments are emphasized to evaluate students' understanding, creativity, and problem-solving abilities across disciplines.

7. Use of Technology and Digital Platforms

Technology plays a vital role in enabling multidisciplinary education through digital resources, online courses, and blended learning models, expanding access and promoting self-paced, lifelong learning.

Need for Systemic Support and Capacity Building under NEP 2020

The successful transformation of Indian education into a multidisciplinary, inclusive, and future-ready system, as envisioned by the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, critically depends on robust systemic support and sustained capacity building at all levels. Institutional restructuring, curriculum integration, and pedagogical innovation require coordinated policy implementation, adequate funding, and strong governance mechanisms led by the Ministry of Education. Continuous professional development of teachers, academic leaders, and administrators is essential to equip them with interdisciplinary pedagogical skills, digital competencies, and learner-centric approaches.

Equally important is the creation of supportive infrastructure—both physical and digital—to enable experiential learning, research collaboration, and inclusive access for learners from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. Capacity building must also extend to assessment reforms, academic credit mobility, and industry-academia partnerships to align education with evolving global and workforce demands. Without sustained systemic support, the vision of NEP 2020 risks

remaining aspirational; with it, the policy has the potential to nurture responsible citizens and globally competent professionals capable of contributing meaningfully to national development and a rapidly changing world.

Role of NEP for Indian Education System

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 represents a transformative vision for India's education system by placing holistic and multidisciplinary education at the core of learning. Introduced by the Ministry of Education, NEP 2020 seeks to move beyond rote learning and rigid disciplinary boundaries, emphasizing the comprehensive development of learners—intellectual, emotional, social, ethical, and physical.

1. Concept of Holistic and Multidisciplinary Education

Holistic education focuses on the all-round development of individuals, nurturing critical thinking, creativity, values, and life skills alongside academic knowledge. Multidisciplinary education complements this approach by integrating diverse disciplines such as sciences, humanities, arts, commerce, and vocational studies. Together, they enable learners to understand complex real-world problems from multiple perspectives and develop adaptable skill sets.

2. Key Provisions of NEP 2020 Supporting Multidisciplinary

NEP 2020 advocates flexible curricula, multiple entry and exit options, and the Academic Bank of Credits (ABC) to facilitate interdisciplinary learning pathways. Higher Education Institutions are encouraged to evolve into multidisciplinary universities and colleges, offering broad-based undergraduate education with opportunities for major–minor combinations and research exposure.

3. Pedagogical Reforms and Experiential Learning

The policy emphasizes learner-centric pedagogy, experiential learning, project-based assignments, internships, and community engagement. These methods promote deeper understanding and application of knowledge across disciplines, fostering innovation and problem-solving abilities.

4. Inclusion, Equity, and Indian Knowledge Systems

Holistic and multidisciplinary education under NEP 2020 is closely linked with inclusivity and equity. The integration of Indian Knowledge Systems, environmental education, ethics, and value-based learning strengthens cultural rootedness while preparing students for global citizenship. Special focus is placed on supporting learners from marginalized and diverse backgrounds.

5. Challenges and the Way Forward

While NEP 2020 offers a strong framework, its effective implementation requires systemic support, faculty capacity building, institutional autonomy, and adequate infrastructure. Collaboration between government bodies, academic institutions, industry, and society is essential to translate policy vision into practice.

Conclusion

Emphasizing holistic and multidisciplinary education in the light of NEP 2020 marks a paradigm shift in India's educational philosophy. By fostering flexibility, inclusivity, and innovation, the policy aims to nurture responsible citizens and globally competent professionals equipped to meet the challenges of a rapidly evolving world. Holistic and multidisciplinary education under NEP 2020 represents a paradigm shift from content-centric to learner-centric education. If implemented effectively, it has the potential to transform Indian education into an inclusive, flexible, and future-ready system that nurtures innovation, equity, and excellence.

The emphasis on holistic and multidisciplinary education under the **National Education Policy 2020** represents a decisive shift toward reimagining education as a means of comprehensive human development rather than mere knowledge acquisition. By integrating diverse disciplines, promoting flexibility in learning pathways, and fostering critical thinking, creativity, ethical values, and life skills, NEP 2020 seeks to prepare learners for the complexities of a rapidly changing global society. However, the success of this vision depends largely on effective implementation, sustained institutional support, continuous teacher capacity building, and curricular innovation. When these conditions are met, holistic and multidisciplinary education can transform India's education system into

an inclusive, learner-centric, and future-ready framework—one that not only enhances employability but also nurtures responsible citizens capable of contributing meaningfully to national progress and global well-being.

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