

Professional development, career prospects and under graduates: the perspectives of New Education Policy

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ABSTRACT

It is crucial to create an environment that supports students' success in higher education as many graduates' view education as equipping them for a life of financial independence and tackling challenging social, political, and cultural issues. In light of this, India's National Education Policy 2020 (NEP) seeks to enhance teacher preparation, career education, and holistic learning in order to change India's educational system and create a more equitable and inclusive future. This paper investigates India's NEP for graduate education's transforming power and its consequences for empowering graduate students' academic and professional paths. By critically examining the policy's key higher education-related clauses, this study finds possibilities and obstacles in building a more complete, flexible, and globally competitive graduate education system. The paper investigates how graduate students' experiences and results may be shaped by the NEP's focus on multidisciplinary education, research culture, faculty development, and internationalisation. It also offers strategic implementation frameworks to connect institutional practices with policy intentions, therefore aiming to create well-rounded graduates ready for the changing needs of industry, academia, and society.

Keywords: *National Education Policy 2020, Graduate Education, Multidisciplinary Education, Academic Research, Professional Development, Higher Education Reform.*

Introduction

India's rich educational history has been significantly shaped by the legacy of the ancient universities of Nalanda and Taxila, which were important hubs of learning for thousands of years (Ayyar, 2018). However, the Gurukul system, which offered thorough interdisciplinary education (Mishra & Aithal, 2023), was the public education model used in ancient India (In fact, it was a residential system in which students lived and studied under the guidance of a guru rather than a public education model in the contemporary sense). The British colonial era introduced a formal education system focusing on English and Western knowledge (Bansal, 2017). The Charter Act of 1813 and Wood's Dispatch Act

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facilitated modern education, promoting private institutions and girls' education (Pratheesh, 2024). Post-independence, India expanded access, established universities, and promoted scientific research, focusing on indigenous knowledge systems and liberal arts education for holistic youth development (Ghosh, 2002). India implemented several National Education Policies since independence, aiming for free and compulsory education, socialism, democracy, and secularism, and modernizing the education system with inclusive education and flexible examinations.

The NEP 2020 is such a significant document aims to transform the Indian education system by addressing challenges of access, equity, quality, and relevance (Govinda, 2020). Since it was introduced, it has been clear that it is one of the most important aspects of the Indian educational system. In fact, the strategy takes the method of applying and separating all Indian educational ideals together. Graduate students benefit greatly from this specific approach in terms of their education. Professional competencies research skills, and specialised knowledge were gained at graduate school. In fact, Indian graduate programs were previously attacked for their theoretical emphasis and flexibility rather than their practical methods and for limiting students' access to real-world experience (Heleta, 2016). In fact, this tends to create an imbalance between students and teachers. Academic libraries, particularly graduate school libraries, are essential in helping graduate students become better students and better individuals, as is seen not just in the current situation. In addition to serving as repositories of conventional knowledge, academic libraries in India serve as a source of implicit, explicit, and tacit knowledge for both teachers and students.

NEP seeks to promote instructional excellence, institutional autonomy, and flexible research integration through a variety of reforms (Kaur, 2024). The purpose of the study is to demonstrate how these rules might affect graduate students' academic and professional lives. There were certain challenges in implementing new structures and approaches in the previous Indian higher education system. The NEP frameworks give pupils a wide range of opportunities to succeed. In order to help teachers, students, and education administrators move from an outdated viewpoint to a new one that offers tangible advantages, this study aims to provide insights (Asif & Singh, 2022).

This study explores the role of academic libraries in India's educational evolution, focusing on the tension between tradition and modernization. It examines how these libraries are redefining their roles as active enablers of policy-driven reforms, bridging theory-practice divides, and acting as policy amplifiers. The research uses mixed-methods analysis to evaluate how libraries can transform policy rhetoric into actionable frameworks for student empowerment. It also explores how libraries foster policy-responsive skill development and address systemic barriers through strategies like decentralized resource allocation and librarian-led mentorship programs.

Research methodology

This study utilises qualitative content analysis of the National Education Policy 2020 document, concentrating on aspects pertaining to higher education, graduate degrees, research, and professional development (Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, n.d.). The analysis is enhanced by a comparative examination of pertinent literature about global graduate education reform, exemplary practices in graduate student development, and theoretical frameworks for educational policy implementation.

- How do the NEP's provisions address existing challenges in graduate education in India?
- What specific mechanisms does the policy propose for enhancing graduate students' academic and professional development?
- What implementation challenges can be anticipated, and how might they be addressed?
- How does the policy align with or diverge from global trends in graduate education reform?

NEP 2020: key provisions Impacting Graduate Education

The National Education Policy 2020 in India aims to develop learners' respect for constitutional values, national pride, and accountability in a changing world. The policy proposes a five + three + three + four pattern for the school system, including Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) from age three. The schooling system will shift from regular to summative assessment, with AI-based software tracking students' growth. The NEP also aims to improve rural schools' service environment, address the digital divide, and provide local housing and allowances for teachers (Rajeev, 2023). The policy will also incentivize outstanding teachers through a merit-based structure of tenure, promotion, and salary. By 2030, teacher education will move into multidisciplinary colleges and universities, with a minimum degree qualification of a 4-year integrated B.Ed. degree. The policy emphasizes the importance of continuous reform and reworking to meet societal needs.

Restructuring graduate programs

The NEP 2020 proposed significant reforms to graduate education through concepts such as multiple admission and departure points, a credit transfer system, and an academic credit bank. Section 11.9 of the policy stipulates that higher education institutions would evolve into a more practice-oriented and adaptable framework, allowing students to design their own academic and co-curricular pursuits.

This freedom enables graduate students to augment autonomy in their educational proficiency, personal interests, and professional ambitions. The availability of research-focused master's degree programmes will cater to academically motivated students and those pursuing professional

advancement. The organised adaptability responds to persistent critiques of the uniform paradigm of graduate education in India.

Multidisciplinary education

Multi-display education is seen as a vital tool for the National Education Policy (NEP). By 2030, it is expected that all higher education institutions would evolve into multifunctional entities, hence enhancing student enrolment (Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, n.d.). The shift from segregated discipline programmes to an integrated learning environment fosters wider intellectual views and transferable skills for students. Multidisciplinary methodologies are essential for education, especially in library and information science. Information workers excel at the intersection of diverse knowledge domains, training, experience, and transcending traditional disciplinary boundaries. Interdisciplinary training is essential for librarians supporting the research requirements of users.

The establishment of comprehensive multi-disability higher education institutions and integrated multidisciplinary teaching and research entities will enable graduate students to engage with various information domains and methodological frameworks. The integration of interdisciplinary courses will notably aid students in addressing complex societal concerns and transcending traditional limitations.

Research and innovation focus

The national education policy regards research as a fundamental component of graduate education and aims to cultivate a robust research environment. It requires the establishment of a National Research Foundation to fund outstanding researchers and aggressively promote research in universities and other higher education organisations (Nic, n.d.). This offers significant benefits for graduate students by furnishing them with sponsored research opportunities and poster assistance in surgical environments. An unacademic library serves as a crucial hub for aiding research through digital reporting tools, research data management services, and bibliometric analysis. Their prompt focus allows academic libraries to strengthen their roles as research collaborators instead than mere data providers. The program indicates that higher education institutions will prioritise research and innovation by creating centres and technology hubs where graduate students can transform their academic expertise into practical applications and entrepreneurial ventures. These regulations address a global trend in entrepreneurship and research that will effectively assist students in understanding a knowledge-based economy.

Faculty development and teaching quality

The NEP supports comprehensive faculty development initiatives, recognising that teacher quality will profoundly influence graduate student development. The policy requires that all new recruits receive comprehensive mentorship in teaching and research from a senior faculty member throughout their induction

training. This training and membership guarantee an enhanced educational experience for graduate students. The need for faculty development in implementing student-centred learning approaches in grassed education is essential (Kulal et al., 2024). The educational training of activities will impact graduate students' growth of critical thinking and research skills.

Internationalisation of higher education

The NEP promotes the globalisation by facilitating high-performing Indian universities to establish campuses abroad, while also permitting chosen universities from the top 100 globally to operate within India. These projects provide graduate students with possibilities for global exposure, cross-cultural collaboration, and international networking without the requirement of studying abroad. Globalisation influences academic library services and collections, indicating that libraries must adjust to accommodate the growing diversity of student populations with worldwide information requirements (Shahjahan & Edwards, 2022). Academic libraries are establishing specialised services for overseas graduate students, such as multilingual reference support and culturally tolerant environments.

The policy promotes research and teaching collaborations, as well as faculty and student exchanges with esteemed foreign institutions, thereby broadening graduate students' perspectives beyond national borders.

Empowering graduate students' academic trajectories

Empowering graduate students entails increasing self-awareness, guiding career decisions, and giving tools for navigating academics and beyond. This encompasses employment exploration, skill evaluation, goal planning, self-reflection, mentoring and support, encouraging a growth mindset, recognizing triumphs, developing resilience, and lifelong learning. This study discusses the subject in light of the discussion headings such as cultivating research competencies, foster critical thinking and problem-solving, promote academic mobility and flexibility, and expand digital learning opportunities (Nic, n.d.).

Cultivating research competencies

The NEP strategy promotes various opportunities for students to cultivate advanced research skills by integrating research experience into graduate programs and creating specialised higher education institutions. Academic libraries serve as significant partners in the development of research competencies. Academic libraries in India are enhancing their roles to encompass advanced information literacy, systematic review methodologies, and research data management competencies, which are increasingly vital for graduate students.

Academic libraries are evolving by assuming new roles to support digital teaching, digital scholarship, and computational research methodologies. The

planned National Research Foundation establishes a systematic framework for facilitating graduate research through scholarships and grants, as well as enhancing research infrastructure (Lee, 2022). Soma Academy implements these strategies to transform students' research experiences from marginal to substantial, enhancing their intellectual talents and productivity.

Fostering critical thinking and problem-solving

When it comes to core education goals, the National Education Policy (NEP) places a sustainable emphasis on critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving. A significant realignment with contemporary educational theory is required in order to make the transition from content-oriented education to competency-based learning for graduate students (Varma et al., 2021). When there is an emphasis placed on critical thinking and practical research applications in graduate students' coursework, it is clear that the analytical abilities of these individuals experience a significant and exponential growth. While this is true, it is also true that it is far superior to traditional graduate programs. This technique encourages enhanced discovery-based debate and analysis for the purpose of achieving optimal learning, which results in a significant improvement in the degree to which graduate students are able to fully absorb passive knowledge. A further benefit of the policy is that it assists kids in developing their intellectual talents as well as their cognitive capacities.

Promoting academic mobility and flexibility

The National Education Policy (NEP) has proposed the concept of an academic bank of credits, which will transform graduate education by allowing students to independently navigate their educational journeys of study. Through the use of this method, students are able to transfer credits from one institution to another, so enabling them to create a more flexible and individualised path for themselves in their aspirations (Brenton & Tury, 2021). The provision of portable digital access privileges, networked reference services, and interoperable institutional repositories are all ways in which academic libraries can contribute to the growth of this philosophy. Through the utilisation of these infrastructures, students are able to maintain a balance between their research talents and the research resources that are available to them. This concept also takes into account the benefits of having a graduation program that is adaptable. Ask the policy indicates that students will be given the option to change their learning routes midway according to their aspiration and convenience, which demonstrates the non-linear nature of the new educational policy. This flexibility will be granted to students through the policy.

Expanding digital learning opportunities

The NEP includes a plan for the development of digital infrastructure, online courses, and virtual laboratories. This proposal demonstrates the potential for technological advancement in higher education and demonstrates the potential for technological advancement. The provisions of Section 24.4 clearly indicate

that “the building of digital infrastructure, digital content, and capacity building took care of the e-education needs of both the school and higher education (Nic, n.d.).” The provision of virtual reference services and the incorporation of electronic resource licences are two of the most important ways in which academic libraries contribute to the support of digital and hybrid learning models (Antony Michael, 2025). Academic libraries are equipped with a technologically advanced infrastructure that considerably improves the graduate experience for students. This is accomplished by encouraging students to participate in online learning and the use of digital materials. In addition to facilitating increased academic collaboration amongst a variety of other higher education institutions, it is obvious that providing graduate students with access to specialised courses at a decisive expense also helps to increase (Muralidharan et al., 2022). The National Education Policy (NEP) includes regulations that demonstrate a commitment to technology-enabled learning and training, which assists graduate students in gaining access to digital professional environments.

Enhancing professional trajectories

Higher education and job preparedness are increasingly focusing on graduate students’ journey from academic study to career fulfilment. The shift from academic instruction to professional fulfilment is complicated since innovation and multidisciplinary teamwork are valued in global markets. This alignment is hampered by systemic obstacles such as the “publish-or-perish” mentality, unequal access to resources for professional growth, and broken industry-academia ties. The article talks about institutional mentoring and other policy changes as ways to empower graduate students.

Industry-academia partnerships

The National Education Policy (NEP) recommends that there should be a stronger interaction between educational institutions and partners in related industries. Establishing research box technology incubators and industrial clusters that will promote active academic-industry collaboration is one of the goals of this program, which encourages higher education institutions to form a network. This network will be established with the assistance of these industry partners. Students will have the option to participate in internships and joint projects, as well as mentorship programs with industry professionals, as a result of these activities, which will provide them with a great professional development opportunity (Carroll & Mallon, 2021). Through the provision of specialised information services and competitive intelligence resources, academic library scans serve as a central location that facilitates communication between the academic world and the business world. The engagement of graduate students in the library results in an improvement in both the quality and productivity of the joint research items that they produce. Students who are pursuing a career path should be required to do so; this concept has the potential to significantly boost the likelihood that they will achieve their goals.

Entrepreneurship and innovation capabilities

It is a particularly noteworthy feature of the National Education Policy (NEP) that it takes into account entrepreneurship as a potential career route (Tholath et al., 2021). This is because the policy encourages educational institutions to devise a system that would assist students in returning to their studies after they have dropped out. Additionally, this policy ought to make it possible for students to move from one educational establishment to another, as well as to continue their studies after taking a sabbatical. The pupils are able to follow through with their entrepreneurial initiatives with the assistance of this clause, and the teacher's likelihood of leaving formal education is reduced. Academic libraries have the ability to establish a robust environment for entrepreneurial endeavours by providing specific services, as well as tools and initiatives. College and university libraries have the ability to establish business resource centres, maker spaces, and innovation hubs that cater to the requirements of graduate students. A new generation of knowledge-based entrepreneurs is being encouraged by the strategy that focuses on innovation start-up incubation. This approach sends us and makes it possible to provide coordinated help to graduate students who have ambitions of starting their own businesses.

Developing transferable skills

It is commendable that libraries play a role in fostering the development of multidisciplinary research carried out by graduate students. Students are able to develop the ability to transfer their skills to a much more holistic aspect when they participate in learning that is both comprehensive and inter-respiratory, as suggested by the National Education Policy (NEP). Communication, discussion, and debate are identified as essential abilities for the growth of education, as well as their skills, according to the policy. Because the development of good transferable abilities requires intentional integration in graduate studies rather than additional workshops, this is in contrast to the situation. Graduate programmes that incorporated communication, teamwork, and leadership development within the framework of disciplinary course sets have been seen to create graduates who are more professionally adaptable. The deliberate nursing of 21st-century competencies like collaboration, teamwork, ethical reasoning, and digital literacy would be successfully and gradually emphasised through the use of graduate courses that are related to the NEP framework.

International competitiveness

It is necessary to do so to align the standards of higher education in India with those of the rest of the world in order to increase the quality of education and the contextual relevance of Indian education. This program places an emphasis on a global and international perspective in order to prepare graduates for participation in a government that is both progressive and professional on a global scale. Through their role as a central location for the dissemination of global resources, the provision of training in cross-cultural communication, and the facilitation of international collaboration, academic libraries contribute to the

progression of internationalisation (Brenton & Tury, 2021). This facet of the libraries contributes to the entire nature of the student experience, which in turn enables students to engage with a wide range of academics, researchers, and faculty members hailing from a number of higher education institutions across the world. Explore the extensive library resources that are specifically designed for graduate students who are prepared to work in international professional environments. There is little doubt that the reforms proposed by NEP have the potential to improve the qualifications and capabilities of graduate students who are looking for funding and authorisation to pursue higher education overseas, thereby bringing them in line with global norms.

Implementation challenges and recommendations

The article highlights the challenges faced by graduate education in aligning with modern labour market realities, highlighting the need for interdisciplinary, innovation-driven, and skill-diverse competencies. The National Education Policy aspires to improve graduate education efficiency and industrial links, but implementation gaps might exacerbate quality difficulties. Regional resource centres, faculty development programs, research infrastructure investments, and quality assurance systems are required. The specifics are discussed below.

Institutional capacity building

Despite the fact that the NEP presents an ambitious vision for graduate education, the successful execution of this vision is contingent on the readiness of the institutions. It is necessary for the majority of universities and other institutions of higher education to possess both the experience and the organisational agility necessary to successfully execute policy reforms (Pawan, 2020). Under the circumstances that now exist, a strategy that involves gradual implementation, in conjunction with support that is focused on capacity-building for institutions, will facilitate sustainable transformation most effectively. There is a significant amount of variation in the degree to which institutions are prepared to implement the NEP, particularly in institutions that are limited in their resources and where capacity gaps are most noticeable. It is concerning that there is a possibility that implementation gaps will make the existing discrepancies in the quality of crystal education even more pronounced. It is recommended that regional resource centres be established with the purpose of providing assistance to educational institutions in the implementation of NEP rules that are applicable to graduate education. These centres would also provide assistance, faculty development, and example curriculum.

Faculty preparation and development

It is widely acknowledged that the establishment of faculty training and development programs is an essential component of graduate education. The objective of the NEP for graduate education is to ensure that faculty members are able to process research on advanced instructional methods in order to

maximise efficiency and industrial linkages. In spite of this, numerous institutions continue to face limitations in terms of the systematic growth of faculty in these areas. In this new era of education, it is important to adhere to both advanced technological techniques and advanced methodologies. On the other hand, Cundam says faculty development activities in Indian higher education have been focusing on generic pedagogical talents rather than the specific competencies that are required for research mentorship and instruction at the graduate level. In this context, the recommendation is to establish a comprehensive faculty development initiative with a focus on graduate education. This initiative should include the provision of workshops, seminars, and other training programmes that will assist in the composition of pedagogical training for research supervision, international teaching methodology, and strategies for industrial collaboration.

Resource allocation and funding models

There are a number of components of the National Education Policy that are designed to improve graduate education. These components will require significant investments in research infrastructure and digital resources, in addition to faculty. Many of these components, on the other hand, will amount to little more than a vision if suitable financial mechanisms are not put into place. Research-intensive graduate education often requires approximately two and a half times the amount of funds that is typically allocated to each student in a regular graduate school. Considering the levels of research and innovation that the NEP predicts would be required, the funding levels that are currently available would not be sufficient to support such levels. Establishing differentials in funding models for graduate education that take into account the various resource requirements of research-intensive graduate education while maintaining a balance between equity in access to resources for participation and possible engagement of students from all socio-economic groups is a recommendation.

Quality assurance mechanisms

The NEP framework is causing graduate programs to become more diverse and flexible, which will make it increasingly difficult to maintain quality assurance standards. In order to evaluate multidisciplinary programs, research integration, and industry participation in an effective manner, the quality assurance methods that are now in use might not be sufficient. There is a substantial divergence between the existing quality assurance metrics that are relevant to NEP priorities and the accrediting schemes that are currently in use in higher education in India. It is not possible for the existing quality assurance frameworks to effectively take into consideration the characteristics of graduate programs that are focused on research and involve multiple disciplines. Instead of focusing on procedural or standardised input measurements, it is recommended that individualised accrediting standards and procedures be developed for graduate-

level education. These should be centred on educational results, research quality, and professional relevance.

Libraries: from archives to active learning ecosystems

Libraries, once synonymous with silent aisles of printed books and guarded repositories of knowledge, are undergoing a radical transformation. In the context of India's NEP 2020, which envisions a "holistic, flexible, and multidisciplinary" education system, libraries are emerging as dynamic hubs for innovation, collaboration, and career readiness. For graduate students, this evolution represents a paradigm shift: libraries are no longer mere study spaces but strategic partners in bridging academic rigor with professional and societal demands (Carroll & Mallon, 2021). This essay explores how libraries are redefining their roles to align with the NEP's objectives, empowering graduate scholars to navigate the complexities of modern academia and the workforce.

Academic libraries need to transform into dynamic learning centres that are able to respond to the requirements of various curricula and enable collaborative research for NEP's goal of a multidisciplinary education structure. Libraries could actively curate resources across disciplines in order to develop understanding and connections across different areas of study for graduate students (Govinda, 2020). This would be an alternative to libraries becoming static repositories of books with no change. This will provide students with the opportunity to engage in critical thinking and find solutions to problems from a range of perspectives, which is in line with the National Education Policy's goal to provide a holistic education. Through the provision of access to subject-specific databases, open educational resources (OER), and interactive digital tools, libraries will assist in empowering students to circumvent the conventional limitations of knowledge. A further benefit of expanding the role of librarians as educational collaborators and research mentors is that it will enable students to have priority access to the vast knowledge ecosystem that is necessary for both academic and professional achievement.

The NEP's focus on business, research, and innovation calls for a robust academic infrastructure; libraries are fundamental in this regard. Graduate students doing original research require access to digital repositories, routes for academic communication, and sophisticated bibliometric tools. Being a key component of the research continuum, academic libraries can be customised to allow methodical literature reviews, research data management, and even grant proposal writing assistance. Investments in digital scholarship centres, research commons, and library-based makerspaces create venues for when theory meets practice. Universities may help the NEP's goal of building a knowledge-driven economy, driven by competent, research-minded graduates, by matching library services with institutional research goals.

A significant obstacle in implementing the NEP is ensuring that every student, regardless of their origin or background, have access to quality educational

resources. Libraries can address this issue by integrating through online platforms and local resource hubs (Ashokkumar et al., 2025). This approach ensures that all individuals have equal access to high-quality academic resources. Free online libraries, accessible archives, and collaborative libraries ensure that even graduate students from financially constrained institutions are not excluded. Furthermore, libraries facilitate student transitions across educational institutions by endorsing systems that enable credit transfers and promoting lifelong learning. They accomplish this by establishing selected learning pathways and instructing individuals on how to locate and utilise information. In the evolving landscape of education, libraries are emerging as significant catalysts for change. They are democratising knowledge, fostering inclusivity, and enabling lifelong learning for individuals. These concepts are fundamental to the objectives of the National Education Policy.

Conclusion

India's National Education Policy (NEP) aims to align graduate education with the demands of a rapidly evolving knowledge economy. However, achieving these goals requires addressing systemic challenges like institutional resistance to curricular flexibility and gaps in infrastructure. The policy focuses on multidisciplinary education, aiming for all higher education institutions to become multifunctional entities by 2030. It also emphasizes research, innovation, critical thinking, academic mobility, and digital learning. The policy encourages industry-academia partnerships, entrepreneurship, and resilience. However, it faces challenges in integrating with modern labour market realities. To address these issues, regional resource centres should be established to support NEP rules, faculty development programs, and research infrastructure investments. Academic libraries should become dynamic learning centres, catering to various curricula and enabling collaborative research. They should curate resources across disciplines, foster critical thinking, and provide access to subject-specific databases, open educational resources, and interactive digital tools. Libraries should also facilitate methodical literature reviews, research data management, and grant proposal writing assistance. They should integrate through online platforms and local resource hubs for equal access to quality educational resources.

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