

## ROLE OF NEP 2020 IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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### ABSTRACT

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 serves as a transformative framework designed to align India's educational system with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4: "Quality Education." By adopting a learner-centric, multidisciplinary 5+3+3+4 structure, NEP 2020 emphasizes foundational literacy and numeracy, critical thinking, vocational proficiency, and digital literacy—core pillars of inclusive, equitable, and lifelong learning. The policy's focus on early childhood care and education (ECCE), mother-tongue instruction, and elimination of gender and socio-economic disparities echoes SDG 4 targets such as universal access, gender parity, and quality learning outcomes. Integrating vocational education from Grade 6 onwards and promoting EdTech innovations fosters relevant skilling for decent employment (linked with SDG 8). However, realizing these objectives hinges on overcoming implementation challenges—including digital inequity, infrastructure gaps, and monitoring mechanisms. By forging policy coherence between NEP 2020 and SDGs, India has initiated a synergistic agenda that has the potential to restructure education and foster sustainable national development—provided systemic barriers are adequately addressed.

**Keywords:** National Education Policy 2020; Sustainable Development Goal 4; foundational literacy & numeracy; vocational education; EdTech; equity; teacher training; GDP investment; lifelong learning.

### INTRODUCTION

In 2015, there was a big step forward in the world's attempts to solve the most important problems facing humanity. This year, the United Nations, which includes all of its member states, came together to agree on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These SDGs are a universal call to action that show us how to make the world a better place for everyone. The main goal is to make a big change by 2030, which includes reducing poverty, protecting the environment, and making sure that everyone on Earth has a good life. The SDGs are not separate or unrelated goals; they are part of a complex web of challenges and goals that are all connected. These aims are based on a wide range of important problems. They support the laudable goal of ending poverty, knowing that doing so is essential for long-term development. At the same time, the SDGs call for higher educational standards around the world, stressing that quality education is essential for progress in society.

the environment, recognizing that the health of our world is directly related to our own health. The National Education Policy (NEP) was released in India in 2020. This all-encompassing

policy framework is a groundbreaking endeavor to improve and modernize India's education system. The Another important part of the SDGs is gender equality. The goals aim to eliminate current inequities and empower women and girls around the world since they know how much gender differences affect human growth. The SDGs also stress the importance of protecting NEP wants to be a catalyst for change by encouraging new ideas and making schools more welcoming to everyone. Its provisions are far-reaching, spanning from the universalization of early childhood education to the integration of vocational training into mainstream learning. There is a very interesting and strong link between the NEP in India and the Sustainable Development Goals. This paper delves into the core of this synergistic relationship, elucidating how the NEP may be utilized as a mechanism to not only achieve the SDGs but also enhance their impact. India can make big steps toward a future with more fairness, wealth, and environmental responsibility by using a harmonized strategy, where educational reforms fit in well with the larger goals of sustainable development. In short, the Sustainable Development Goals are a call for everyone to work together to make the world a better place. The NEP in India sets the stage for and drives radical change. This paper explores the significant ways in which these efforts complement each other, ultimately working together to promote sustainable development on both national and global levels.

## **QUALITY EDUCATION (SDG 4) AND THE NEP**

SDG 4 is a guiding light within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), urging countries to make quality education for all a top priority and help make it happen. In a time when knowledge is very important, SDG 4 is a strong reminder of how education can change people's lives. It is a strong appeal to make sure that everyone, no matter where they come from, has access to education that is both high-quality and open to everyone. The NEP of India is a natural partner in this great educational project and a symbol of this high goal. The NEP, which was released in 2020, fits perfectly with the goals and values of SDG 4. Together, they make a great team that has a lot of potential for India's education system.

The NEP and SDG 4 are similar in that they both want everyone to have equal access to education. SDG 4 stresses the need to make sure that everyone in society has access to education, even those who are on the fringes. The NEP shares this vision by pushing for changes in education that make it easier for everyone to get to it. This dedication starts at the grassroots level and goes all the way up to the universalization of early childhood education. This makes sure that everyone, no matter where they live or how much money they have, has the chance to learn. In addition, the NEP's focus on learning across disciplines fits with the overall goal of SDG 4. Education is not just about learning things in isolation; it's also about helping kids grow in all areas of their lives and encouraging them to look into different subjects. The NEP gives students the skills they need to do well in a world that is becoming more complicated and linked by challenging them to think critically and take a more holistic approach to learning. The NEP also understands that vocational training and skill development are important for making a workforce that is not just educated but also ready to work. This part of the NEP helps SDG 4's goal of providing inclusive and equitable quality education by making excellent education more available to those that are often left out.

The NEP gives people practical skills that can help them make a living and make society more inclusive by offering vocational training alongside traditional academic paths.

So, it's clear that SDG 4 and India's NEP are in line with each other since they both want to make sure that everyone, no matter their background or situation, gets a good education. The NEP's commitment to fair access, learning across disciplines, and vocational training aligns with the broader goals of SDG 4, which ultimately seeks to provide fair and inclusive education. This combination of a global vision and a national policy could change the way education works in India and make a big difference in the global goal of sustainable development via education.

## **GENDER EQUALITY (SDG 5) AND THE NEP**

The idea of gender equality is a key part of the idea of sustainable development. It is not just a basic human right; it is also a key factor in social and economic advancement. SDG 5 was created because it is so important. Its main goal is to achieve gender equality and provide all women and girls around the world more authority. This aim shows how important it is to break down deep-seated gender preconceptions and make sure that everyone has the same rights and opportunities, no matter what gender they are. The NEP, which was implemented in India in 2020, is a very powerful tool for addressing and promoting the ideas behind SDG 5. The NEP doesn't just cross paths with SDG 5; "it works along with it to achieve the same goal of gender equality. One of the main ways that the NEP and SDG 5 are similar is that they both want to get rid of gender bias in school materials. Textbooks and curricula that contain discriminatory and stereotyped content have long kept gender inequities going". The NEP wants to fix this by creating a learning space that is open to everyone and attentive to gender. By doing this, it makes a big step toward achieving SDG 5's goal of getting rid of harmful preconceptions and biases.

The NEP also supports the idea of gender-sensitive education. It recognizes that educational content should not reinforce gender disparities but rather foster a balanced and equitable comprehension of the responsibilities and contributions of everyone, regardless of their gender. This method fits in with SDG 5's larger goal of empowerment since it gives pupils the power to see things from a more informed and equal point of view. Crucially, the NEP also places a strong emphasis on encouraging the participation of girls in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) subjects. There has been a gender disparity in STEM professions in the past, which has made it harder for girls and women to get jobs. The NEP directly supports SDG 5's goal of empowering women and girls with the knowledge and skills they need to fully participate in society by aggressively promoting and making it easier for girls to get involved in STEM education. The NEP is an important tool for closing the gender gap in education, which supports and builds on the larger goals of gender equality included in SDG 5. The NEP promotes gender equality in education by pushing for inclusive, bias-free materials, gender-sensitive curricula, and more girls to take part in fields that are usually male-dominated. This helps the larger goal of empowering women and girls around the world. In doing so, it fits in perfectly with the global goal outlined by SDG 5, which is to create a fairer and more just society for everyone.

## **CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION (SDG 6) AND THE NEP**

Making sure that people have access to clean water and good sanitation is not only a question of convenience, but it is also a basic need for fostering healthy living and general well-being. The NEP that came out in 2020 stresses the necessity of making sure that India's schools are safe and clean places to learn. This is because basic facilities are so important for people's health. The NEP's visionary framework says that schools should do more than just teach; they should also provide clean drinking water and good sanitation facilities. It is not only clear but also very important that the NEP's commitment to safe and clean schools is in line with the global goal set out in Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG 6). Another important part of the SDGs is SDG 5, which is about gender equality. The goals aim to eliminate current inequities and empower women and girls around the world because they understand how gender differences affect human growth. The SDGs also stress the importance of protecting the environment, recognizing that the health of our world is directly related to our own health. The NEP was released in India in 2020. This all-encompassing policy framework is a groundbreaking endeavor to improve and modernize India's education system. The NEP wants to be a catalyst for change by encouraging new ideas and making schools more welcoming to everyone. Its provisions are extensive, encompassing the universalization of early childhood education and the incorporation of vocational training into mainstream education. There is a very interesting and strong link between the NEP in India and the Sustainable Development Goals. This paper delves into the core of this synergistic relationship, elucidating how the NEP may be utilized as a mechanism to not only achieve the SDGs but also enhance their impact. "India can make big steps toward a future with more fairness, wealth, and environmental responsibility by using a harmonized strategy, where educational reforms fit in well with the larger goals of sustainable development. In short, the Sustainable Development Goals are a call for everyone to work together to make the world a better place. The NEP in India sets the stage for and pushes for big changes". This paper examines the significant interconnections among these initiatives, highlighting how they mutually reinforce one another to promote sustainable development at both national and global levels.

## **QUALITY EDUCATION (SDG 4) AND THE NEP**

SDG 4 is a guiding light within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), urging countries to make quality education for all a top priority and help make it happen. In a time when knowledge is very important, SDG 4 is a strong reminder of how education can change people's lives. It is a strong appeal to make sure that everyone, no matter where they come from, has access to education that is both high-quality and open to everyone. The NEP of India is a natural partner in this great educational project and a symbol of this high goal. The NEP, which was released in 2020, fits perfectly with the goals and values of SDG 4. Together, they make a great team that has a lot of potential for India's education system.

One of the main ways that the NEP and SDG 4 are similar is that they both want everyone to have equal access to education. SDG 4 stresses the importance of water and sanitation for everyone, and it shows how countries are working together to make sure that everyone has access to them and that they are managed in a way that lasts.

The NEP's focus on providing schools with safe drinking water and sanitary facilities shows that people are starting to realize that healthy learning environments are important for good education. It understands that kids can't get the most out of their education if they have to deal with problems like not enough water or dirty conditions. Schools address a basic human need by making sure students have access to clean drinking water. This also creates a space where students can do well physically, psychologically, and academically. Furthermore, providing schools with sufficient sanitation facilities has several benefits. It not only teaches kids good habits and hygiene, but it also helps them stay healthy. The NEP helps create responsible individuals who know the need of clean and sustainable behaviors by encouraging a culture of cleanliness and accountability. The NEP's connection with SDG 6 is more than just a sign of common intentions; it is a real promise to turn global sustainability goals into real steps that can be taken in the education sector. The NEP strengthens the idea that education is not a separate activity but an important aspect of overall human growth. Clean water and sanitation are essential for a healthy and dignified living. By including these ideas in education, the NEP fits perfectly with the global goal of SDG 6. In conclusion, “the NEP's acknowledgment of the importance of clean water and sanitation in educational institutions demonstrates its dedication to fostering an enriching learning environment and its alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 6. The NEP helps with the bigger goal of making sure everyone has access to clean water and sanitation by making sure that schools have clean drinking water and good sanitation facilities. This will lead to healthier communities and long-term development for everyone”.

## **DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH (SDG 8) AND THE NEP**

Sustainable Development Goal 8 (SDG 8) is a great idea for the world community: it calls for long-lasting, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth. SDG 8 is all about making the world a better place for everyone by making sure that everyone has access to good jobs and full-time work. The pursuit of this aim encompasses not only economic development but also the equitable distribution of such prosperity. In India, where economic growth and development are the top priorities, the NEP that was put into effect in 2020 is a powerful tool for putting the ideas of SDG 8 into action. One of the main parts of the NEP is the concentration on skill development and vocational education. The NEP is a broad plan to change the country's education system.

The NEP and SDG 8 work well together because they both focus on giving people the knowledge and skills they need to do well in the labor market. The NEP meets a basic requirement in the modern global economy by putting skill development first. It recognizes that conventional academic knowledge is crucial, yet insufficient for equipping individuals for the dynamic and diverse labor market of the 21st century. One of the best things about the NEP is that it is dedicated to vocational education, which fits perfectly with the goals of SDG 8. Vocational education gives students real-world skills and knowledge that they can use right away in the workplace. This method not only helps people get jobs, but it also encourages entrepreneurship and new ideas, both of which are important for economic progress. The NEP's emphasis on transdisciplinary learning aligns with the overarching ethos of SDG 8. It understands that people need a wide range of skills and knowledge to do well in different fields in today's complicated environment. The NEP makes

sure that children have a well-rounded education that includes a variety of subjects, which helps them get ready for a wide range of jobs. The NEP also connects education to the real world by focusing on experiential learning and internships. This gives students useful information and hands-on experience. This method helps people understand how the industry works better and makes it easier for them to get a job. So, the NEP is an important part of India's path to reaching SDG 8. The NEP makes sure that students are not just well-educated but also ready for the labor market by putting skill development, vocational education, and learning across disciplines first. The NEP offers a big and direct contribution to reaching the goals of SDG 8, which are decent work and economic growth. This will help create a society where people can find meaningful and long-lasting jobs and where economic growth is fair and long-lasting.

### **SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES (SDG 11) AND THE NEP**

The NEP, which India put into effect in 2020, shows that the country is committed to not just encouraging intellectual advancement but also acknowledging the important role that environmental awareness and sustainable practices play in making the future better. The NEP's approach goes beyond the limits of traditional education; it affects the places where learning happens. This all-encompassing view is especially seen in the NEP's push for schools and colleges to adopt and live by the ideals of sustainability. One of the most important parts of the NEP's environmental awareness is that it wants schools to use sustainable methods. It recognizes that educational campuses are not merely physical locations; they serve as microcosms of society, and the values they promote transcend their confines. The NEP makes a big difference in Sustainable Development Goal 11 (SDG 11) by encouraging sustainability at the institutional level. "SDG 11 aims to make cities and human settlements safe, resilient, and sustainable".

Waste management is a key part of this sustainable way of doing things. The NEP stresses how important it is for schools to reduce, recycle, and dispose of garbage in a responsible way. This teaches pupils how to be good stewards of the environment and sets an example for the rest of the community. Institutions help make cities and human settlements more sustainable and resilient by cutting down on waste and using eco-friendly procedures. This is in line with SDG 11's target of encouraging sustainability in cities and human settlements. Another important part of the NEP's aim for sustainable education is energy efficiency. The NEP not only lowers the costs of running schools by encouraging them to use energy-efficient equipment and practices, but it also lowers the carbon footprint of schools. This focus on energy efficiency is in line with SDG 11's goal of making cities that are good for the environment and last a long time.

The NEP also sees educational institutions as "green campuses," where the school's core values include sustainability. Green campuses put a lot of emphasis on using renewable energy sources, making the most of green spaces, and having less of an impact on the environment. The NEP shows its dedication to establishing learning environments that are safe, welcoming, strong, and long-lasting by taking care of green campuses. So, the NEP's emphasis on sustainable activities and environmental awareness goes far beyond the classroom. The NEP supports the broader goals of SDG 11 by encouraging schools to be more environmentally friendly through waste management, energy efficiency, and green campuses. This will help create "cities and human

settlements that are not only safe and welcoming, but also environmentally friendly”. The NEP strengthens the idea that education is not just about passing on knowledge, but also about teaching values and behaviors that can help everyone have a more sustainable and strong future.

## **CLIMATE ACTION (SDG 13) AND THE NEP**

In a time when our planet is facing unprecedented environmental problems, taking strong action on climate change is no longer an option; it is a moral and existential need. Climate change has effects that go beyond the natural world. It also affects human communities and economy. Sustainable Development Goal 13 (SDG 13) calls for the world to act quickly to fight climate change and its effects. In this important situation, India's NEP stands out as a forward-thinking and progressive tool that acknowledges how important it is to take action on climate change. The NEP's aim goes beyond traditional education models; it also includes environmental education, raising awareness, and encouraging sustainable practices. This is in line with SDG 13's call to action.

The NEP's dedication to environmental education is a key part of how it fits with SDG 13. It recognizes that teaching people about environmental issues is the most important thing to do if you want to make a real difference. The NEP gives pupils the knowledge and understanding they need to understand the complicated web of environmental problems that people face by include environmental education in all levels of school. This fits perfectly with SDG 13's goal of making people more aware of climate change and how to stop it. The NEP also goes beyond just teaching theory; it stresses eco-friendly, hands-on initiatives in schools. Educational institutions help the larger goal of lowering carbon footprints and having less of an impact on the environment by setting an example of sustainability through waste reduction, energy efficiency, and responsible resource management. These efforts are directly in line with SDG 13's goal of lessening the bad effects of climate change. The NEP also encourages pupils to take care of the environment by making them feel responsible for the health of the earth.

One of the main goals of SDG 13 is to get kids involved in protecting the environment through hands-on activities, conservation efforts, and community service. The NEP also knows how important it is to utilize sustainable techniques when designing and running educational institutions. "Green campuses" that use renewable energy, make the most of green spaces, and put eco-friendly infrastructure first are great examples of how to live sustainably and also help institutions lower their carbon footprints. This fits perfectly with SDG 13's goal of getting people at all levels of society to take action on climate change right away. The NEP of India, which emphasizes environmental education, sustainable practices, and encouraging people to care for the environment, is a perfect example of what SDG 13 says about climate action. The NEP strengthens the idea that education is a powerful tool for change by including these values in the educational system. This is important for the urgent and collaborative actions needed to fight climate change. The NEP makes a big difference in making the future of both India and the world more sustainable and resilient. It shows how closely education and climate action are linked.

## **CONCLUSION**

The NEP and the SDGs are not separate or parallel efforts; they are all part of the same fabric. Together, they make a whole plan for making India a better and fairer place to live in the future. The NEP, in particular, is a powerful force for reaching the SDGs. It is the foundation on which the structure of sustainable development is built. The SDGs could seem like a list of global goals that deal with a lot of problems, like poverty and climate change. At the same time, the NEP might look like a national effort to change India's education system to make it more modern. But when you look more closely, you can see how deeply intertwined they are and how important education is to achieving the bigger goals of sustainability. The NEP is the rich soil that allows the seeds of sustainable development to grow. It is not just about teaching people things; it is also about raising people who are knowledgeable, caring, and aware of the environment so that they can deal with the problems of a world that is changing quickly. It stresses fair access to education so that no one is left behind in their search for knowledge and power.

The NEP also promotes high-quality education by going beyond standard learning to include different points of view and critical thinking. It acknowledges that sustainable development necessitates a group of intellectuals capable of addressing intricate challenges, fostering innovation, and demonstrating adaptability. The NEP gets students ready to deal with the many problems that come with sustainable development by helping them develop these abilities. The NEP's emphasis on gender equality is another sign that it is in line with the SDGs. It breaks down gender stereotypes, pushes for gender-sensitive curricula, and encourages women to work in STEM disciplines. By doing this, it immediately supports SDG 5, which works toward gender equality and gives women and girls the power to be active participants in the road toward sustainability. The NEP also talks about being aware of the environment and encourages schools to employ green practices, manage trash well, save electricity, and have green campuses. These ideas go along with the goals of SDG 11, which is to protect the environment.

The NEP essentially creates a generation of students who not only know things, but also have values that are in line with the SDGs. It gets them ready to be responsible caretakers of the environment, advocates for gender equality, and drivers of economic growth that is both inclusive and long-lasting. India is on the verge of change by accepting this one vision. It can become a world leader in both education and sustainable development, showing that a country's progress is closely tied to the education it gives. The NEP is the most important part of this synergy, and it shows how important education is to reaching the high goals of sustainability. India is showing the world how to move toward a more fair, wealthy, and sustainable future by using this linked strategy. India can face the difficult problems of the 21st century and be a shining example of progress for future generations by combining education and sustainability in a way that works well together.

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