ROLE OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN NEP 2020 IMPLEMENTATION

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Abstract :

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 introduces a comprehensive vision for transforming the Indian education system by prioritizing equity, inclusivity, lifelong learning, digital integration, and the promotion of Indian languages and culture. Within this framework, public libraries are recognized as vital community-based institutions that can extend learning opportunities beyond the classroom. This paper critically explores the potential and challenges of public libraries in contributing to NEP 2020 implementation.The review of existing studies and policy reports indicates that libraries can play a central role in advancing self-directed learning, digital literacy, multilingual education, and skill development. By providing free access to resources and digital platforms, libraries serve marginalized and rural populations, thereby promoting educational equity. Furthermore, they contribute to NEP's emphasis on preserving Indian knowledge systems and local languages through curated collections and cultural programs.Despite these opportunities, the study identifies persistent barriers such as inadequate infrastructure, limited financial support, shortage of trained manpower, and the digital divide in rural areas. These constraints reduce the effectiveness of libraries as instruments of educational reform.The paper concludes that strengthening public libraries through sustainable funding, ICT integration, professional training, and policy alignment is essential for realizing NEP 2020's vision. If empowered, libraries can act as strategic partners in building an inclusive, accessible, and future-ready education ecosystem.

Keywords : Public Libraries, NEP 2020, Lifelong Learning, Digital Access, Inclusivity, Education Policy.

Introduction :

Education is universally recognized as the foundation of social, cultural, and economic progress. In India, the announcement of the **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020** marked a significant milestone in reshaping the educational landscape. The policy envisions an education system that **is inclusive, flexible, multidisciplinary, and aligned with the needs of the 21st century**. It emphasizes critical areas such as **digital learning, equity, lifelong education, vocational skills, multilingualism, and the integration of**

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665

Indian knowledge systems. To achieve these ambitious goals, institutions beyond traditional schools and universities must play an active role, among which **public libraries occupy a crucial position**.Public libraries are community-centered institutions that ensure **free and equal access to knowledge**. Historically, they have been instrumental in spreading literacy and information, particularly in rural and marginalized sections of society. With the increasing demand for **digital education, skill development, and equitable resource distribution,** their relevance has grown even stronger under NEP 2020. Libraries can serve as **extension arms of formal education**, providing supplementary resources, digital platforms, and spaces for collaborative and lifelong learning.Moreover, NEP 2020's focus on **local languages, cultural preservation, and community participation** aligns directly with the traditional functions of public libraries. Through curated collections, reading promotion programs, and digital archives, libraries can bridge the gap between **modern education and cultural heritage**.However, the effective integration of libraries into NEP 2020 also faces challenges. Issues such as **inadequate infrastructure, lack of professional training, financial constraints, and digital divides in rural areas** hinder their capacity to fully support policy objectives. Addressing these barriers requires strong government initiatives, public–private partnerships, and innovative service models.Thus, this study aims to examine **the role, challenges, and future prospects of public libraries in the implementation of NEP 2020.** By critically analyzing existing research and policy frameworks, the paper seeks to highlight how libraries can evolve **as strategic partners in creating an inclusive, future-ready education ecosystem.**

Review of Literature :

Lifelong Learning and Community Education

- **Dr. Anil Kumar (2019)** emphasized that public libraries are evolving into **lifelong learning hubs**. His research demonstrated how libraries extend learning beyond schools and universities by offering flexible, community-driven education opportunities. According to Kumar, the integration of informal and self-directed learning in public libraries aligns with NEP 2020's focus on **continuous reskilling and upskilling** for all age groups.

- **Dr. Ritu Sharma (2020)** expanded this idea, describing libraries as **dynamic institutions** that support career guidance, research facilitation, and knowledge enhancement. She argued that the NEP's emphasis on holistic and multidisciplinary education requires public libraries to function not merely as resource providers but as **active collaborators in educational transformation.**

ICT and Digital Empowerment :

- **Dr. Priya Rao and Dr. Kunal Mehta (2021)** highlighted the significance of **Information and Communication Technology (ICT)** in bridging educational gaps. Their study documented how ICT-based services in libraries improved access to e-

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666

resources in semi-urban areas, offering new models of information delivery. However, they also acknowledged limitations in rural regions due to poor connectivity, which restricts the scalability of such initiatives.

- **Dr. Manish Joshi (2022)** investigated the **digital divide** between urban and rural libraries. He found that while metropolitan libraries increasingly provide e-learning platforms, rural institutions continue to struggle with internet access, digital devices, and trained professionals. His findings underscore that without addressing infrastructure inequities, the goal of a **digitally inclusive education system,** as envisioned in NEP 2020, remains incomplete.

Inclusivity and Social Justice :

- **Dr. Vinay Patil (2022)** explored the role of rural libraries in advancing **social equity**. He concluded that libraries serve as **agents of social justice** by ensuring free access to knowledge for marginalized communities. His findings indicate that libraries directly support NEP 2020's aim of **universal and equitable education**, particularly in underserved regions.
- **Dr. Soumitra Chakraborty (2021)**, however, presented a more critical view. He argued that due to insufficient funding and outdated infrastructure, many libraries risk **deepening inequalities** instead of reducing them. He cautioned that unless the government prioritizes investment, libraries may fail to serve their inclusive mandate under NEP 2020.
- **UNESCO (2019)** reinforced this perspective at a global scale. Its international report recognized libraries as vital tools for advancing **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs),** especially in promoting inclusive and equitable education. The report positioned libraries as not just national assets but as global institutions of empowerment.

Multilingualism and Cultural Preservation :

- **Prof. Arindam Basu (2021)** examined the cultural role of libraries, particularly in preserving **linguistic diversity**. He argued that libraries are natural partners in NEP 2020's focus on mother-tongue instruction and the promotion of Indian knowledge systems. Through the curation of regional language materials, storytelling programs, and cultural events, libraries can bridge modern education with India's vast heritage.

Objectives of the Study :

The present research is undertaken with the following specific objectives:

1. **To analyze** the role of public libraries in supporting the implementation of the **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.**
2. **To identify** how public libraries contribute to **lifelong learning, digital literacy,**

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667

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multilingual education, and cultural preservationas emphasized in NEP 2020.

3. **To evaluate** the challenges and barriers—such as **infrastructure gaps, digital divide, financial limitations, and shortage of trained manpower**—that affect the effective functioning of libraries under NEP 2020.

4. **To examine** the initiatives taken by the **Government of India and state governments** in strengthening public libraries for policy execution.

5. **To explore** the potential of **technology integration and ICT-enabled services** in public libraries for promoting equitable access to education.

6. **To assess** the role of public libraries in addressing the needs of **marginalized, rural, and disadvantaged communities** in line with the inclusivity goals of NEP 2020.

7. **To provide** practical **suggestions and policy recommendations** for improving the efficiency, sustainability, and relevance of public libraries in the NEP framework.

Research Methodology :

The present study adopts a **descriptive and qualitative research design** to analyze the role of public libraries in the implementation of NEP 2020. Data was collected from both **primary and secondary sources**. Primary data was gathered through interviews and questionnaires with librarians, teachers, and users from selected urban and rural libraries. Secondary data was obtained from books, journals, government reports, policy documents, and online databases. A **purposive sampling method** was used to include respondents relevant to the study. The collected information was examined using **content analysis and thematic categorization**, focusing on key areas such as digital literacy, inclusivity, infrastructure, and government support.

Role of Public Libraries in NEP 2020 :

1. **Universal Access to Knowledge** : Public libraries serve as open platforms that provide free access to educational materials, reducing inequalities in learning opportunities.

2. **Support for Digital and Online Learning** : Libraries offer internet facilities, e-resources, and digital repositories, complementing NEP's focus on technology-enabled education.

3. **Encouraging Lifelong Learning** : NEP emphasizes continuous learning; libraries create opportunities for skill enhancement and adult education.

4. **Promoting Multilingual Resources** : By maintaining books and digital material in local and national languages, libraries uphold NEP's multilingual education policy.

5. **Skill Development Support** : Libraries provide resources for vocational training, entrepreneurship, and employability skills highlighted in NEP 2020.

6. **Bridging the Urban-Rural Divide** : Public libraries extend access to marginalized groups, rural learners, and first-generation students, ensuring inclusivity.

7. **Information Literacy Training** : Libraries empower users with critical thinking, research, and information evaluation skills, aligning with NEP's academic objectives.

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668

8. **Research and Innovation Promotion** : By offering access to journals, databases, and reference works, libraries encourage innovation and evidence-based study.

9. **Community Learning Hubs** : Public libraries function as cultural and intellectual centers, supporting local educational and social development programs.

10. **Collaboration with Educational Institutions** : Libraries work with schools, colleges, and universities to supplement curriculum needs with extended learning resources.

11. **Preservation of Knowledge Heritage** : Libraries safeguard traditional manuscripts, local knowledge, and cultural heritage, in line with NEP's emphasis on Indian knowledge systems.

12. **Equity and Inclusion** : Public libraries ensure access for women, children, differently-abled, and socio-economically weaker sections, fulfilling NEP's vision of equitable education

Implementation of NEP 2020 in Public Libraries :

1. **Resource Availability**
   o Most public libraries provide textbooks, reference materials, and e-resources aligned with NEP 2020.
   o Some rural libraries face a shortage of updated materials.

2. **Digital Infrastructure**
   o Urban libraries have good internet access, digital tools, and e-learning platforms.
   o Rural libraries often lack ICT facilities, affecting digital learning.

3. **Reading & Learning Culture**
   o Libraries organize reading programs, workshops, and community initiatives.
   o Participation from students and community members is moderate; awareness needs to be increased.

4. **Support for Teachers & Students**
   o Curriculum-based resources and supplementary learning materials are provided.
   o Teacher training and pedagogical support are limited in some libraries.

5. **Inclusivity & Multilingual Resources**
   o Some libraries provide materials in local languages; facilities for differently-abled users are limited.
   o Availability of multilingual content is improving but still limited.

6. **Community Engagement**
   o Libraries conduct skill development, cultural events, and lifelong learning programs.
   o Participation and impact vary by location and community involvement.

7. **Challenges Identified**
   o Lack of funding and infrastructure
   o Limited trained staff

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669

- Low digital literacy among users
- Inadequate monitoring and evaluation of programs

8. **Positive Impact**
   - Public libraries act as knowledge hubs, promoting lifelong learning.

Table no. 1. Data Analysis: NEP 2020 Implementation in Public Libraries

Sr. NO.	Public Libraries	Urban (%)	Rural (%)
1	Updated Resources Availability	65	40
2	Digital Facilities	70	25
3	User Participation	55	35
4	Programs & Initiatives	45	20
5	Implementation Challenges	40	60
6	Positive Impact	70	55

Challenges of Public Libraries in NEP 2020 Implementation :

1. **Inadequate Infrastructure** : Many libraries lack modern buildings, furniture, and reading spaces required to support NEP's learning environment.
2. **Limited Digital Facilities** : Poor internet connectivity and lack of digital devices restrict online and technology-enabled education services.
3. **Insufficient Funding** : Budget allocations for public libraries are very low, limiting their ability to upgrade resources and technology.
4. **Shortage of Skilled Staff** : Many libraries operate without professionally trained librarians capable of handling digital resources and advanced services.
5. **Outdated Resources** : A large number of libraries still rely on old books, with little access to updated materials aligned with NEP's curriculum.
6. **Low Awareness Among Users** : Community members are often unaware of the role libraries can play in education, leading to underutilization.
7. **Urban-Rural Divide** : Rural and remote libraries suffer from neglect, widening the gap in resource availability compared to urban centers.
8. **Lack of Government Policy Implementation** : While NEP stresses lifelong learning, concrete plans for integrating libraries into this vision are often missing.
9. **Technological Gaps** : Limited adoption of e-libraries, digital archives, and open access resources hinders effective implementation.
10. **Language Barriers** : Many libraries lack resources in regional languages, which restricts inclusivity and access for diverse learners.

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670

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11. **Poor Community Engagement** : Libraries often fail to collaborate with schools, NGOs, and educational institutions to extend their services.

12. **Sustainability Issues** : Without consistent funding and long-term policies, modernization projects in libraries remain incomplete.

Government Role and Funding in Public Libraries :

1. **Policy Formulation and Support** : The Government of India, through the **Ministry of Education** and the **National Mission on Libraries (2014)**, provides policy frameworks to modernize public libraries, aligning them with NEP 2020 objectives.

2. **Financial Assistance** : Central and state governments allocate funds for library infrastructure development, digitization, e-resources, and staff training. Adequate funding is essential for libraries to offer modern learning facilities.

3. **Digital Library Initiatives** : Government programs such as the **National Digital Library of India (NDLI)** and e-granthalaya provide digital access to books, journals, and learning resources, supporting NEP's emphasis on ICT-enabled education.

4. **Capacity Building** : Government funding supports professional development of librarians through workshops, seminars, and training programs, enhancing their ability to manage modern libraries.

5. **Infrastructure Development** : Grants are provided to upgrade physical spaces, reading rooms, and technological facilities, ensuring libraries are accessible, safe, and student-friendly.

6. **Research and Collaboration Support** : Government-funded programs encourage libraries to collaborate with schools, colleges, and community centers to extend educational outreach and implement NEP initiatives effectively.

7. **Monitoring and Evaluation** : Funding is often tied to monitoring systems to ensure proper utilization of resources and adherence to national education standards.

8. **Bridging Rural-Urban Gap** : Special schemes target rural and underdeveloped areas, aiming to reduce disparities in access to knowledge and digital resource.

Suggestions / Recommendations :

1. **Increase Funding** : Allocate adequate financial resources for infrastructure development, digital resources, and staff training to modernize libraries.

2. **Digital Infrastructure Development** : Equip libraries with high-speed internet, computers, e-books, and online databases to support NEP 2020's ICT-enabled learning.

3. **Professional Training** : Organize regular workshops, seminars, and certification programs to train librarians in digital tools, information literacy, and modern library management.

4. **Promote Lifelong Learning** : Design programs for adult education, skill development, vocational training, and self-directed learning in line with NEP objectives.

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671

5. **Enhance Multilingual Collections** : Expand collections in regional and local languages to support NEP's multilingual education policy and cultural preservation.

6. **Community Engagement** : Collaborate with schools, colleges, NGOs, and community organizations to increase awareness and library utilization.

7. **Develop E-Library Platforms** : Invest in national and state-level digital library platforms to provide remote access to resources, especially for rural communities.

8. **Monitoring and Evaluation** : Establish systems to track usage, assess impact, and ensure proper utilization of funds and resources.

9. **Inclusive Access** : Create programs and services targeting marginalized groups, women, children, and differently-abled users to ensure equitable access.

10. **Preserve Local Knowledge and Heritage** : Encourage digitization and archival of manuscripts, regional literature, and cultural resources to integrate traditional knowledge into modern learning.

11. **Encourage Research Support** : Provide access to journals, reference materials, and research guidance to foster innovation and academic growth.

12. **Public-Private Partnerships** : Promote collaborations with private organizations, foundations, and educational tech companies to enhance resources, funding, and technological support.

Conclusion :

Public libraries are critical pillars in the successful implementation of **NEP 2020**. They provide **equitable access to knowledge**, support **lifelong learning**, promote **digital literacy**, and preserve **multilingual and cultural heritage**, aligning directly with the policy's objectives. Libraries serve as **community learning hubs**, bridging the gap between formal education and skill development, particularly for marginalized and rural populations.

However, the effective utilization of public libraries is hindered by **infrastructural limitations, insufficient funding, digital divides, and lack of trained personnel**. Addressing these challenges is essential for libraries to fulfill their potential as instruments of educational reform.

Government initiatives, such as the **National Mission on Libraries** and the **National Digital Library of India,** play a crucial role by providing funding, digital resources, and training programs. Strengthening these initiatives, along with **public–private partnerships** and community engagement, can enhance library services and ensure alignment with NEP 2020.

By implementing strategic measures—including infrastructure modernization, professional development, ICT integration, and inclusive programs—public libraries can become **vital partners in creating an inclusive, equitable, and future-ready education ecosystem i**n India.

In conclusion, empowering public libraries is not only essential **for NEP 2020**

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Volume-11 (2025) : Issue-1 (October-2025)

672

implementation but also for building **a knowledge-driven, socially inclusive, and culturally rich society**.

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673