

# A Study of the New Education Policy 2020 of India in reference to Sustainable Development Goal 4- “Quality Education”

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**Abstract** - Education is not confined to developing regions but the whole world when it comes to ensuring sustainable development. The Sustainable Development Goals 4 (SDGs4 provide a major objective in ensuring inclusive and high quality education that can improve the living standard of students, increase their community's future. The Indian Government has launched the National Education Policy 2020 NLP2020, which will be India's first 21st century education policy with a view to addressing many of its increasingly pressing development needs. The objective of the Policy is to create India as a vibrant knowledge society and Global Knowledge Superpower, aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, by making education more holistic, flexible, multidisciplinary in response to 21st century needs and bringing together the different capacities of students, it seeks to transform India into a vibrant knowledge society and Global Knowledge superpower. This study aims to explore the key provisions of the new education Policy 2020 on Sustainable Development goals 4 Quality Education and learn its contribution towards sustainable development Goal 4 Quality Education. In addition, it shall endeavour to analyse India's status in relation to the achievement of the target for 4 Sustainable Development Goals on the basis of information gathered from sources such as government websites, well known journals and other publications.

**Keywords** —Education, Sustainable, New Education Policy, Sustainable Development Goals, Holistic, Knowledge

## I. INTRODUCTION

Education for All is a popular slogan and has been observed in various international development courses since 1990. Considered important at the start of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), SDG4 was awarded. Education is seen as a force for sustainable development, nation-building, and peace. Children and adolescents with specific skills such as reading, writing, and counting are more likely to have a better future than their peers without these skills. The world is changing, and globalization requires the world's population to adapt quickly and learn how to use new technologies. The role of education in ensuring sustainable development is not limited to developing regions, but the whole world at large. The major aim of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) is to provide an inclusive and high-quality education that will improve the learner's standard of living, and the community's future. Since 2000, significant progress has been made toward achieving the goals of universal primary education. Overall school

enrolment in developing regions reached 91% in 2015, halving the number of out-of-school children worldwide. Literacy rates have also risen dramatically, with more girls attending school than ever before. These are all notable achievements. In the Indian context, SGD 4 is particularly significant given the country's large population and its commitment to providing education for all. One of the main challenges is the quality of education, particularly in rural areas. There is also a significant gender gap in education, with girls having lower enrollment rates than boys. To overcome these challenges Indian Government has introduced National Education Policy 2020 (NEP2020) this is India's first education policy of the 21st century and aims to address the many growing developmental imperatives of our country. This Policy proposes the revision and revamping of all aspects of the education structure, including its regulation and governance, to create a new system that is aligned with the aspirational goals of 21st-century education, including SDG4 while building upon India's traditions and value

systems. The NEP intends to support holistic and inclusive education where learning based on inquiry, curiosity, discovery, discussion, and analysis is preferred. It also brings lead: Access, Equity, Quality, Affordability, and Accountability in education. This policy is aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and aims to transform India into a vibrant knowledge society and global knowledge superpower by making both school and college education more holistic, flexible, and multidisciplinary, suited to 21st-century needs and aimed at bringing out the unique capabilities of each student. The NEP 2020 says:

*"This Policy proposes the revision and revamping of all aspects of the education structure, including its regulation and governance, to create a new system that is aligned with the aspirational goals of 21st-century education, including SDG4, while building upon India's traditions and value systems."*

– Education Policy of India 2020

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Though the NEP 2020 is at the initial stages of implantation in India some studies have discussed the expected outcome of NEP 2020 on the achievement of SDG 4 in India:

- I. Pandey (2018) focuses on the current approaches adopted by India to contextualise Goal 4 on education of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the Indian context by integrating them into the formulation of New Education Policy and its positive impact on achieving quality education, as emphasised in SDG 4. It examines the trends in education attainments at primary, secondary and tertiary levels in India and explores some major challenges facing the quality education and accessibility issues in education sector.
- II. Aithal (2019) highlights various policies proposed in the NEP draft with the special emphasis on higher education section and compare them with the previous policies. The analysis also compares the possible effects of NEP 2019 proposal on private and public HEIs in terms of facilities & restrictions. The strength and weakness of the new policy are identified with respect to various stakeholders and listed. Appropriate suggestions are made to realize the policy and make it defect free and effective from a public point of reference and for the prosperity of the country.
- III. Singh, Shantesh (2020) talks about the importance of quality education as the backbone for the growth of any society, and education policy is the way to attain it. In India, after three decades, the National

Education Policy 2020 (NEP-2020) has been introduced by the current government. The NEP 2020 is also in line with Goal 4 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 2030), which believes equal access to education is the base of sustainable development. By aligning SDG targets with NEP, the government has ensured the success of the self-reliance campaign of the nation by providing equal education to all. NEP 2020 will strengthen all the citizens of the country by enhancing their skills and knowledge.

IV. Raman & Ghoshal (2021) attempt to analyze the New Education Policy (NEP), designed to replace the previous National Policy on Education, 1986. It is a historic opportunity to build inclusive and diverse educational institutions that will enable social transformation. The National Educational Policy 2020 aims to democratize higher education and enable the world's youngest and most capable demographic to participate in it.

V. Trivedi (2021) says that the new education policy of 2020 has introduced remarkable changes in India's Education System. A few years back in 2015, Sustainable Development Goals have been adopted by the Global community including India of which SDG-4 pertains to quality education and comprises 10 targets. However, there is a need to understand the key challenges in implementing NEP 2020 recommendations and achieving SDG-4 targets.

VI. Sunita (2021) argues that with the help of NEP 2020, every person in the nation will be better equipped to contribute to the country's success. India's progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) would be facilitated by a comprehensive modernization of the country's educational system from pre-primary to higher education, including curriculum reform and institutional reform.

VII. Ashwini K & Ambekar (2021) says that the changes proposed and implemented by the NEP – 2020 in the unorganized and unscientific current education system breathe a fresh wave of hope in foreseeing much brighter and more practical students ready to take on the challenges posed to them. The NEP – 2020 seems to impact the education system both at the school level as well as at the college level

VIII. Goswami (2022) concludes it is expected that the National Education Policy 2020 will bring a revolutionary change in the Indian education system and will be able to build an India-centric education based on Indian heritage, culture, and language. Teachers will be a crucial player in

policy implementation, therefore it is equally essential to build the professional competency of teachers along with accountability. Governments both central and state must especially focus on removing the threats and weaknesses of our education system and enhancing the opportunities for implementation of NEP 2020 in a time-bound manner.

### III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The prime objectives of the research paper are

- To study the significant provisions of the New Education Policy – 2020 concerning Sustainable Development Goal – 4 Quality Education.
- To analyse the Performance India in achievement of SDG 4
- To understand its contribution towards sustainable development Goal – 4 Quality Education.

### IV. METHODOLOGY

This research paper is based on descriptive study. The information required was collected from secondary sources, viz., the Government websites, renowned journals and other publications. The same was analysed and reviewed present the findings. The limitation of the paper is in terms of the data available about the study as NEP 2020 is still in the initial stages of implementation therefore there is lack of empirical studies and data available for the same.

### V. ANALYSIS & DISCUSSION

**SDG4's 10 targets:** SDG 4 is composed of 7 outcome targets and 3 means of implementation.

#### 5.1 SDG 4 Outcomes, Targets and their Implications

##### 1. Universal primary and secondary education

*SDG 4.1 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes.*

All should be guaranteed 12 years of free, publicly funded, inclusive and equitable primary and secondary education that is at least 9 years compulsory which results in the relevant learning outcomes without discrimination.

##### 2. Early childhood development and universal pre-primary education

*SDG 4.2 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education.*

The provision of at least one year of free and compulsory quality pre-primary education, to be

delivered by well trained staff as well as early childhood development and care is encouraged.

##### 3. Equal access to technical/ vocational and higher education

*SDG 4.3 By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education (TVET) including university.*

To ensure lifelong learning opportunities for young and adult citizens, it is essential to reduce barriers to the development of skills in technical or vocational education and training starts at Secondary level as well as higher education courses such as universities. In line with recent international agreements, provision of further education should be progressively freed up.

##### 4. Relevant skills for decent work

*SDG 4.4 By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship.*

**Access:** In order to ensure quality, access to TVET needs to be increased. With the use of a broad range of education and training modalities, learning opportunities should be enhanced and diversified.

**Skills acquisition:** Beyond work specific skills, emphasis has to be placed on developing high level cognitive and non-cognitive transferable competencies such as problem solving, critical thinking, creativity, teamwork, communication skill and conflict resolution.

##### 5. Gender equality and inclusion

*SDG 4.5 By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations.*

**Inclusion and equity:** All people, irrespective of sex, age, race, colour, ethnicity, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property or birth, as well as persons with disabilities, migrants, indigenous peoples, and children and youth, especially those in vulnerable situations or other status, should have access to inclusive, equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities.

**Gender equality:** Equal opportunities should exist for girls and boys, women and men to attain high quality education, achieve a level playing field and benefit from learning in an equal way. Adolescent girls and young women, who may be subject to gender-based violence, child marriage, early pregnancy and a heavy load of household chores, as well as those living in poor and remote rural areas, require special attention. Targeted



action should be envisaged for boys in contexts where they are disadvantaged. It is more effective to adopt policies which promote health, justice, good governance and the freedom of child labour if they are part of a broader package that promotes equality between men and women.

### 6. Universal Youth Literacy

*SDG 4.6 By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy.*

The objective is to ensure that all young and adults in the world achieve relevant, recognised levels of functional literacy and numeracy skills equivalent to those achieved during successful completion of primary education by 2030 at the latest.

### 7. Education for sustainable development and global citizenship

*SDG 4.7 By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.*

Sustainable development and Global Citizenship education, including Peace and Human Rights Education as well as intercultural learning and training on international understanding can be used to acquire the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that citizens need in order to take up their life's work, do a proper job at home and around the globe while solving world challenges.

## 5.2 Means of implementation and Implications of SDG 4

### 1. Effective Learning Environments

*SDG 4.A Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all.*

This objective addresses the need for adequate physical infrastructure and safe, inclusive environments that foster learning for all, regardless of background or disability.

### 2. Scholarships

*SDG 4.B By 2020, substantially expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing States and African countries, for enrolment in higher education, including vocational training and information and communications technology, technical, engineering and scientific programmes, in developed countries and other developing countries.*

Where developed countries offer scholarships to students from developing countries, these should be structured to build the capability of the developing country. While the importance of scholarships is recognized, donor countries are encouraged to increase other forms of support to education. In line with the SDG4-Education 2030 focus on equity, inclusion and quality, scholarships should be transparently targeted at young people from disadvantaged backgrounds

### 3. Teachers & Educators

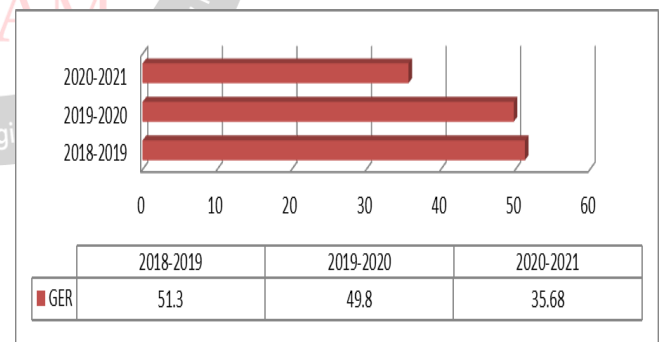
*SDG 4.C By 2030, substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and small island developing States.*

In the case of developed countries offering scholarships to students from Developing Countries they should be structured with a view to promoting development capabilities in that country. Donor countries should be encouraged to step up other forms of education aid, while recognising the importance of scholarships. The scholarships must be transparently targeted at young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals4 Education 2030 focus on equity, inclusion and quality.

### 5.3 India's Performance in achieving SDG -4

As per the data published by Niti Aayog in 2021 performance of India in achieving targets set for SDG 4 are as follows:

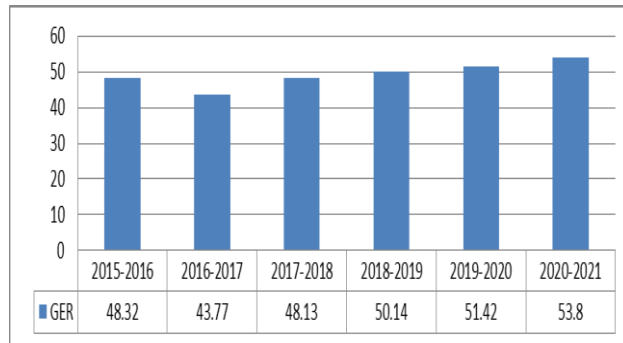
Figure 5.3.1: Gross enrolment ratio in early childhood education



**Enrolment Ratio in elementary education:** This target is in line with the global target of 4.1 of the Sustainable Development Goals to ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education. In India, the gross enrolment ratio in higher secondary education for the year 2020-21 was 53.8 and the adjusted net enrolment ratio for elementary school classes 1 to 8 is 87.26 percent. Ensuring universal access and affordability to quality holistic education to all children of the country including -including vocational education - from pre-school to Grade 12 is also a key objective of the National Education Policy 2020 which aims to Increase

Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in preschool to secondary education to 100% by 2030.

Figure 5.3.2: Gross enrolment ratio in higher secondary education



Enrolment Ratio in higher secondary: At the higher secondary level, the gross enrolment ratio is 49.14 %. The National Education Policy, 2020 aims to ensure that all students have universal, free and compulsory access to high-quality and equitable schooling from early child - hood care and education (age 3 onwards) through higher secondary education (i.e., until class 12)

Table 5.3.1: Adjusted net enrolment ratio in primary, upper primary and secondary education

Time Period	Upper primary	Secondary	Primary
2015-2016	81.29	58.35	98.79
2016-2017	79.66	58.03	96.08
2017-2018	80.3	59.36	94.34
2018-2019	76.97	55.64	93.6
2019-2020	79.55	59.98	97.31
2020-2021	84.4	61.8	98.6

Source : Department of School Education and Literacy, Ministry of Education

<http://www.sdgindia2030.mospi.gov.in/dashboard/india>

Enrolment Ratio in higher education: The All India Survey of Higher Education (AISHE) report for the year 2018-19 shows that 26.3 % of students in the age group of 18 to 23 years are enrolled in higher education. The 2020 National Education Policy aims to achieve GER in higher education at 50 % by the year 2035.

Table 5.3.2: Completion rate for Secondary, Upper Primary and Primary

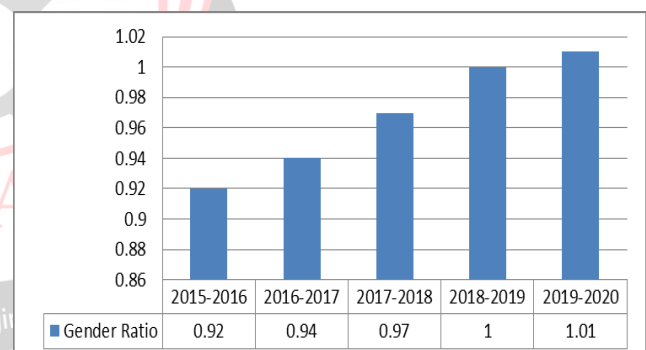
Time Period	Secondary	Upper primary	Primary
2015-2016	80.44	98.58	97.59
2016-2017	80.39	98.85	97.58
2017-2018	75.33	97.64	96.85
2018-2019	77.58	97.18	96.53
2019-2020	80.73	97.62	97.16
2020-2021	84.86	95.22	94.16

**Average annual dropout rate:** This objective is in line with the Global Target 4.1 of the Sustainable Development Goals, which seeks to ensure girls and boys have equal access to quality primary and secondary education In India, the average annual failure rate at secondary school level is 17.87 %. The National Education Policy, 2020 also aims to curtail drop-out rates with a goal to achieve 100 percent Gross Enrolment Ratio in preschool to secondary level by 2030.

**Student proficiency in class 8:** This target is aligned with global goals 4.1 of the Sustainable Development Goals, which aim to ensure that all girls and boys have free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education while achieving relevant and effective learning outcomes. At least a minimum level of proficiency in the language and mathematics was achieved by approximately 71.9 percent of students from class 8.

**Education level among Persons with Disability:** This target is in line with the global target of 4.5 of the Sustainable Development Goals, which aims to ensure equal access to all levels of education for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, by 2030, with 19.3 % of persons with disabilities having completed at least secondary education.

Figure 5.3.3: Proportion of male-female enrolled in higher education, technical and vocational education



**Gender Parity in higher education:** According to AISHE report 2018-19, India's overall GDP index is 1, implying that females and males are statistically equivalent in the Indian education system aged 18 to 23 years. This objective is aligned to the Global SDG target of 4.5, which aims at eliminating gender inequalities in education.

**Literacy levels:** At all Indian levels, the level of literacy was 74.6 % for persons aged 15 years and above. This goal is in line with the Global Sustainable Development Goals 4.6 to ensure that all young people and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, attain literacy and numeracy by 2030.

**Infrastructure in schools:** Basic infrastructure, including electricity and drinking water, was available to 84.76 % of schools in the year 2018-19. To ensure all students have access to safe and stimulating learning at all levels of

education, from preschool through grade 12, the National Education Policy 2020 aims to provide an efficient and sufficient infrastructure. In particular, it is designed to ensure that infrastructure support does not remain inadequate at any school.

**Proportion of trained teachers:** In secondary schools, approximately 83 % of teachers are trained. This goal is aligned with global SDG target 4.c which aims to substantially increase the number of qualified teachers.

**Pupil-teacher ratio:** The ratio of teachers to students at secondary level in all India is 21. The National Education Policy 2020 proposes to ensure a pupil-teacher ratio (PTR) of under 30:1 at each level of school education.

#### 5.4 NEP 2020 Provisions to comply with SDG 4 Targets

In order to achieve the SDG 4 Targets the National Education Policy 2020 has various provisions in it. These are discussed here as under;

**SDG 4.1:** Increase Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in preschool to secondary education to 100% by 2030.

**SDG 4.2:** By 2025, reach all basic fundamental literacy and numeracy in primary school with a focus on those who are disadvantageous or marginalised. The policy also focuses on importance of crucial early stage for the development of mental faculties of children by bringing the age group of 3-6 years under school curriculum with three years of pre-school and anaganbadi. Furthermore, a proactive provision is also made with regard to the new Gender Inclusion Fund that was set up in order to provide support for school teaching and training of disabled pupils.

**SDG 4.3:** Emphasizing the importance of Vocational education and training will be provided at a younger age and technical skills such as coding will begin from as early from class 6. The policy also emphasizes on revamping undergraduate education with a flexible curriculum of 3 or 4 years with multiple exit options and appropriate certifications. In order to address technology, knowledge sharing and capacity development issues, the Ministry of Higher Education and Research shall set up a National Technology Forum.

**SDG 4.4:** The curriculum of higher and secondary education is changing from the previous 10+2 model, as a result of the NEP. A clearer set of benchmarks will be established by the 5+3+3+4 model leading to better results. They have helped improve the ability of students to signal in Higher Education, by providing a number of exit points. In addition, the NEP proposes that by 2035 a gross enrolment ratio of 50 % should be achieved in higher education. This will ensure that the majority of the population, below 35 years of age, has a strong skills base.

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**SDG 4.5:** It emphasizes the need for equity and inclusion in ensuring that education is made available to all, including those who are marginalized or disadvantaged. It also focuses on bringing 2 Crore school dropout children back in the mainstream through open schooling system. Furthermore, it is proposed to establish a new unit which will address eLearning from the Internet, digital learning, infrastructure, and capacity building.

**SDG 4.6 :** Under NEP a National Foundation of Literacy and Numeracy will be set up to provide basic literacy and numeracy skills by 3rd grade.

**SDG 4.7:** Aims to reduce the curriculum to its core essentials to promote critical thinking and inquiry based, discovery based and analysis based learning.

**SDG 4.A:** Re-organising smaller schools with very low enrolment into a 'school complex' structure, which connects 10-15 such small schools into one administrative unit, will help reduce school isolation, efficiently use teaching learning resources, and increase governance and accountability, especially in rural/Adivasi parts of India. Providing autonomy to plan and implement the initiative locally is a good idea in principle. School Complex Management Committee (SCMC) and public representation at a school complex level will encourage decentralised implementation as well as higher engagement of parents.

**SDG 4.B :** Various measures will be taken to ensure the availability of financial assistance for students. Incentivising the achievement of students belonging to SC, ST, OBC and Other Special Education Development Groups will be pursued. In order to support, foster and monitor students' progress with scholarships, the National Scholarships Portal will be extended. Higher education institutions in the private sector will be encouraged to offer a higher number of students free tuition and scholarships.

**SDG 4.C:** By 2022 in consultation with NCERT, SCERTs, teachers and experts to establish the common national professional standards for educators (NPST) by creating a National Education Commission responsible for monitoring implementation and reviewing progress.



## VI. CONCLUSION

By aliening SDG targets into NEP, the government has ensured the success of self-reliance campaign of the nation through providing equal education to all. NEP 2020 will strengthen all the citizens of the country by enhancing their skills and knowledge. Furthermore, It clearly states that, in a phased manner, India will achieve its Sustainable Development Goals through the complete overhaul of our educational system from primary to higher education as well as curricular and institutional reforms aimed at modernizing Indian institutions. The reform in India, where education is a matter of common interest between states and the central government as determined by the Concurrent List laid down under the Indian Constitution, will certainly be difficult to achieve. The NEP 2020 presents a comprehensive framework for a radical transformation in planning and delivering education at all levels and forms. However, implementation of NEP 2020 would require changes in the curriculum and pedagogy and terms of process, structures, and education management systems.

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