

ATTAINMENT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 4 THROUGH NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY 2020

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Abstract:

Quality education is the basis of goal 4 of SDG 2030, which is cornerstone for the growth of nation, thus quality education and SDG 2030 goes hand in hand for the good transformation of the globe. The NEP is in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which brought to the forefront access, equity, quality, affordability and accountability in education which is foundation of quality education. National Education Policy 2020 intends to restructure and reorient the education system in India. The NEP 2020 has accepted and adopted almost all objectives of SDG 2030, by introducing educational reforms, modifications, and introduction of new ideas. The SDG 4 does not only increase enrollment ratio of children in education system but also to ensure that they must achieve proper academic success with help of properly trained educators and adequate school infrastructures which will lead to positive educational outcomes.

This paper tries to find out Sustainable Development Goals and their integration and indivisibility to achieve sustainable development at the global level and also focus on the attainment of SDG 4 through National Education Policy 2020. It also suggests the ways through which India can achieve SDG 4 by the implementation of NEP 2020.

Key Words: Sustainable Development, National Education Policy 2020, Sustainable Development Goals, Attainment of SDGs.

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Introduction:

“Education is a foundation for sustainable development. Not only does quality education, especially for girls, help to improve health and livelihood outcomes, it also contributes to active and informed global citizens. Educating the next generation of leaders about the importance of protecting our environment and combating climate change is a key investment for a sustainable planet and future for us all.” - Ted Turner, Founder and Chairman, United Nations Foundation.

The above quote clearly signifies the immense importance of education if the world has to achieve the targets set in the SDGs. Sustainable development has been defined in many ways, but the most frequently quoted definition is from ‘Our Common Future’, also known as the Brundtland Report:

"Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

In 2015 the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (2015 to 2030) and explained how the goals are integrated and indivisible to achieve sustainable development at the global level. The UNGA's 17 goals address the global challenges including poverty, inequality, climate

change, environmental degradation, peace, and justice.

The National Education Policy 2020 (India) has mentioned the SDGs and given a call to align education in India to these goals. 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. This new NEP 2020 reflects the current needs and demands of our nation and also the knowledge and skills required to meet the Global needs.

Objectives:

1. To study the Sustainable Development Goals and their integration and indivisibility to achieve sustainable development at the global level.
2. To study the new National Education Policy 2020 in the light of SDGs.
3. To find out the alignment of National Education Policy 2020 with SDGs.
4. To suggest some measure for achieving the SDGs through NEP 2020.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), also known as the Global Goals, were adopted by the United Nations in 2015 as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that by 2030 all people enjoy peace and prosperity. These 17 goals with 169 targets, unanimously agreed upon by all 193 UN member states, aim to eradicate poverty, enhance education, reduce inequality, and stimulate economic growth by 2030.

Among these 17 goals of sustainable development, Goal 4 that is 'Quality Education' has been recognized most important and basic element of sustainable development, which helps to change the world in right direction. Basically, for the improvement of people's lives, standard of living and for proper use of natural resources quality education is essential factor.

Goal 4 (SDG 4) of the Sustainable Development centers on quality education, which is composed of 7 outcome targets and 3 means of implementation to create action to ensure quality education. The major objective of SDG 4 is to ensure that everyone has access to high-quality education in all countries and the opportunity to learn throughout their lives.

National Education Policy 2020:

NEP 2020 was approved by the union government on 29th July, 2020 which reflects the current needs and demands of our nation and also the knowledge and skills required to meet the Global needs. NEP 2020 gives main focus at universalization of education from pre-primary to secondary level, skill based learning, development of just and equitable society and promoting national development. NEP 2020 policy mainly based on human development which enabling every student to develop to their maximum potential. This makes this policy quite aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals especially with SDG 4 that is 'Quality Education'. New Education Policy provide balancing education to children, it means this policy is well mixture of theoretical and practical training. Actually, vocational training, internships and practical exposure if incorporated into curriculum it make graduates better at problem-solving, decision-making and better hands-on working

experience. The new education policy aims to generate productive and engaged citizens for an all-inclusive society.

Attainment of SDG 4 through NEP 2020:

Most of the SDGs will be achieved if quality education will be provided to children and the foundation of new NEP 2020 is also quality education. The NEP seems to support holistic and inclusive education where learning based on inquiry, curiosity, discovery, discussion and analysis is preferred. It also brings to lead access, equity, quality, affordability and accountability in education. This policy is aligned to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and aims to transform India into a vibrant knowledge society and global knowledge superpower. 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.

Sustainable Development Goal 4 has 10 targets encompassing many different aspects of education. There are seven targets which are expected outcomes and three targets which are means of achieving these targets.

1. Universal Primary and Secondary Education:

By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and Goal-4 effective learning outcomes.

NEP 2020 universalizes free and compulsory quality education without discrimination from Early Childhood Care and Education until the 12th grade through the Right to Education, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, and Beti Bachao Beti Padhao.

2. Early Childhood Development and Universal Pre-primary Education:

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.

NEP 2020 has made the provision of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) that is provided by the preparatory class, or "Balavatika." ECCE ideally consists of flexible, multi-faceted, multi-level, play-based, activity-based, and inquiry-based learning. The NEP 2020 gives due importance to the preparatory stage as it is recommended that National Curriculum and Pedagogical Framework for Early Childhood Care and Education (NCPFECCE) will be developed by NCERT and education at this stage will be imparted by ECCE qualified teachers.

3. Equal Access to Technical/vocational and Higher Education:

By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university.

NEP 2020 advocates for compulsory inclusion of vocational subjects from class 6 as well as to tertiary education, including university with a provision of internship. The policy revamps undergraduate education with a flexible curriculum of 3 or 4 years with multiple exit options and appropriate certification.

4. Relevant Skills for Decent Work:

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.

The aim of education according to NEP 2020 reflects the ambitious programme of Union Government- “Skill India”. It emphasizes that learning opportunities should be increased and diversified so that all youth and adults, especially girls and women, can acquire relevant knowledge, skills, and competencies for decent work and life. Beyond work-specific skills, emphasis must be placed on developing high-level cognitive and non-cognitive/transferable skills, such as problem solving, critical thinking, creativity, teamwork, communication skills, and conflict resolution.

5. Gender Equality and Inclusion:

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.

NEP focuses on curtailing dropout rates and ensuring universal access to education at all levels. Vulnerable groups that require particular attention and targeted strategies include persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, ethnic minorities, and the poor. All girls and boys, women and men, should have equal opportunity to enjoy education of high quality, achieve at equal levels and enjoy equal benefits from education. NEP focuses on bringing 2 crores out-of-school children back into the mainstream through an open schooling system to ensure 100% GER in school education by 2030. It also aims to increase GER in higher education including vocational education from current 26.3% (2018) to 50% by 2035.

6. Universal Youth Literacy:

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

To achieve this target NEP aims at ensuring that by 2030, all young people and adults across the world should have achieved relevant and recognized proficiency levels in functional literacy and numeracy skills that are equivalent to levels achieved at the successful completion of basic education.

7. Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship:

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.

Paragraph 20 of NEP documents strongly recommends Professional Education is vital to give a central place to strengthening education’s contribution to the fulfillment of human rights, peace, and responsible citizenship from local to global levels, gender equality, sustainable development, and health. The knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes required by citizens to lead productive lives, make informed decisions, and assume active roles locally and globally in facing and resolving global challenges can be acquired through Education for Sustainable

Development (ESD) and Global Citizenship Education (GCED), which includes peace and human rights education as well as intercultural education and education for international understanding.

Three Means of Implementation:

a. Effective Learning Environments

Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, nonviolent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all.

NEP advocates efficient resourcing and effective governance through School Complexes/Clusters, establishment of primary schools in every habitation across the country-driven by the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), now subsumed under the Samagra Shiksha Scheme.

b. Scholarships

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.

NEP advocates providing financial assistance to students shall be made available through various measures. Efforts will be made to incentivize the merit of students belonging to SC, ST, OBC, and other SEDGs. The National Scholarship Portal will be expanded to support, foster, and track the progress of students receiving scholarships. Private HEIs will be encouraged to offer larger numbers of free tuition and scholarships to their students.

c. Teachers and Educators

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. According to NEP, teachers are the key to achieving all of the SDG 4 targets. It requires urgent attention, with a more immediate deadline, because the equity gap in education is spoiled by the shortage and uneven distribution of professionally trained teachers, especially in disadvantaged areas. As teachers are a fundamental condition for guaranteeing quality education, teachers and educators should be empowered, adequately recruited and remunerated, motivated, professionally qualified, and supported within well resourced, efficient, and effectively governed systems.

Suggestions:

- The SDG 4 goals can only be achieved successfully if all the recommendations of NEP 2020 are implemented properly. Any obstacle that arises before the implementation of policy will finally put a negative effect in achieving the goal of SDG 4.
- Lack of competent teachers who can evaluate the higher order cognitive capacities and life skills of the students can be a hindrance before meeting the SDG 4. Teachers at all stages must be trained on priority basis so that learning outcomes can be evaluated effectively.
- The government should urgently fill required number of skillful teachers especially in rural areas.

- NCTE in consultation with NCERT should formulate and implement new and comprehensive National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (NCFTE, 2021) as early as possible so as to meet the required number of skilled teachers who can educate the students and prepare them to face the global challenges.
- The knowledge and skills that are expected in NEP 2020 to be transferred among the students should be matched with the job available in the market.
- Education is a concurrent subject. The state governments should keep aside the federal issues and shoulder with the central government in effective and smooth implementation of NEP which ultimately help in achieving the SDG 4 goal.
- Sufficient financing may become the defining factor in realizing the SDG 4 goals through NEP 2020. NEP 2020 suggests increasing the public investment in education sector to reach 6% of GDP. Public investment may make education costly for the student and hence government should take proper care of it.
- NEP is based on the core principle of SDG4, which is equality and access to education regardless of gender. The government should take proper step to provide sufficient infrastructural facilities such as toilets, transportation facilities, and security in schools and colleges to attract the female students into the educational institutions to bridge the gap of gender disparity.
- NEP will only be able to meet SDG 4 if Digital Literacy can be accelerated with zeal especially among rural students. Early provisions of making available the digital gazettes such as laptop or PC with speedy internet facility is a must to achieve the targets of SDG 4 to access technical knowledge and skill development for a decent job for our youth.

Conclusion:

NEP 2020 is a welcome reform of India's educational system which has every provision of transforming India into a dynamic knowledge society and worldwide knowledge superpower. NEP 2020, which is aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SD) by its core vision of achieving access, equity, quality, affordability, and accountability in education. The NEP 2020 advocates multi-disciplinary approach, education and skills integration, making education more inclusive, and effective regulation that lead to the attainment of SDG 4 i.e. 'Quality Education'.

NEP 2020, if implemented properly can lead India into the achievement of its ambitious goal of becoming 'VISHVA GURU'. Stakeholders have to change their attitude and mind-set with great deal of acceptance, commitment, and optimism for successful implementation of NEP 2020 and ultimately reaching the global targets included in the SDGs. Shred responsibility by both union and state government in early identification and overcome the challenges, making adequate provisions of financial assistance, acceleration of Digital India Scheme, and filling the teaching posts at priority basis can be great moves in successful completion of SDG 4.

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