

Lifelong Learning and Community Engagement in the New Education Policy (Nep) 2020: Challenges and Opportunities

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Abstract:

India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasizes lifelong learning as a fundamental aspect of education, aimed at providing continuing education and skill development to people of all ages. The policy promotes the integration of formal, non-formal, and informal learning pathways into mainstream education, including vocational education. With India's literacy rate at 74.04%, the focus has shifted from literacy to adult education and lifelong learning. Online learning platforms have revolutionized education by offering a wide range of courses, including language proficiency and technical skills. Personalized learning experiences and microlearning modules are also gaining popularity, increasing retention rates. Thus, lifelong learning networks are expanding with a focus on soft skills training. Lifelong learning is a key component of NEP 2020, reflecting a holistic approach to education that includes all age groups and learning settings. However, challenges such as lack of information, budgetary constraints, educational inequality, institutional preparedness, learner characteristics and resistance to non-traditional teaching methods hinder its implementation emphasizing the need for specialized training programs. Going forward, significant efforts are needed to overcome existing barriers and promote a culture of continuous learning across all sectors of society. To overcome these challenges, NEP 2020 provides opportunities to expand lifelong learning through technology adoption, financial assistance and community engagement programs and activities. This report examined the various dimensions and implications of lifelong learning as defined in NEP 2020, such as its historical context, contemporary trends, issues, and mechanism for financial assistance. Further, the conclusions of the study highlight the importance of lifelong learning in the NEP 2020. The study concludes that community and financial support are crucial for promoting lifelong learning, and that technology can make educational resources more accessible.

Keywords: Lifelong Learning, NEP 2020, community engagement, skill development

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Lifelong Learning

The concept of lifelong learning is important to India's New Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which aims to promote continual growth of skills and knowledge throughout one's life. The NEP 2020 recognizes lifelong learning as essential for personal and societal development, emphasizing that learning should not be limited to childhood or formal schooling settings. It advocates for an inclusive framework that enables learning across age groups, addresses diverse learning requirements, and encourages skill development. The policy emphasizes the importance of lifelong learning in a fast-changing environment, where adaptability and updated skill sets are critical for economic and social development.

1.2 Review of literature

Several studies have shown that importance of Lifelong Learning (LLL) has been increasing (Haydar 2012) and educational imbalances are a major barrier to effective lifelong learning, especially in developing countries. Budget constraints, lack of technology or inadequate infrastructure can prevent individuals from participating in lifelong learning programs. In countries such as China, the lack of universal education increases inequality, making it impossible for excluded groups to fully participate in LLL. As a result, bridging these gaps is crucial to ensuring that lifelong learning is accessible to all segments of society. Promoting lifelong learning has received increased attention recently from the educational and business communities. (McCombs, B. L. - 1991). The review of related literature identified issues such as inadequate faculty training, insufficient alignment of technology with teaching methods, and the need for diverse and inclusive educational approaches, (Johnson et.al-2016). It is revealed that the universities and colleges face barriers to incorporating LLL into their curricula. In addition, resistance to change and cultural barriers in academic institutions can

hinder the implementation of innovative teaching methods, (Yilmaz et.al 2013). These institutional challenges underscore the importance of comprehensive initiatives to educate teachers for the changing landscape of lifelong learning.

According to recent research, countries at the forefront of educational innovation such as the United States have developed strong frameworks for lifelong learning that dramatically improve educational attainment and workforce preparation. Involving people of different ages in educational activities improves the educational experience for everyone. The classrooms with multiple generations promote intergenerational learning by allowing younger students and older students to share knowledge and insights. These neighborhood programs enhance the educational setting by promoting tolerance and respect between different age groups. In addition, using inclusive education approaches that identify and address the specific needs of individuals from diverse communities can improve participation and retention in programs that promote lifelong learning. When community stakeholders are involved in the planning and implementation of educational initiatives, a shared sense of ownership and responsibility is created and can lead to improved learning outcomes. One of the aspect of lifelong learning is the creativity which has always been an admired personal characteristic but now it is becoming an important objective also in lifelong learning. The knowledge society demands people with better education and abilities to work with ideas. The article on lifelong learning. (Sahlberg P, 2009) argues that education systems have trouble finding ways of adapting to the need for innovation and including creativity in current teaching and learning processes.

1.3 Objective:

The objective of the study is to investigate the role of community organizations and financial assistance in promoting lifelong learning.

1.4 Methods

The methods used to promote lifelong learning in the NEP 2020 include the combination of formal, nonformal, and informal learning routes, vocational education, and adult education and vocational training. The NEP 2020 promotes lifelong learning as essential for creating a more equal and adaptable education system, and it will be included in the curriculum at all levels of schooling. The study uses a descriptive approach to highlight the importance of community and financial support in promoting lifelong learning, and to explore the role of technology in making educational resources more accessible involving community organizations, educational institutions, and government bodies to promote lifelong learning.

1.5 Limitations

Despite its importance, implementing lifelong learning presents numerous problems, including accessibility, awareness, and motivation among potential learners, as well as the integration of technology. The study does not explicitly mention any limitations, but it appears to be a descriptive study based on a review of literature and existing research,

which may not provide a comprehensive understanding of other related terms. The limitations of implementing lifelong learning include accessibility, awareness and motivation, integration of technology, and institutional and faculty challenges. The study acknowledges that there are obstacles to accessing lifelong learning, including accessibility, awareness, and adoption of technology.

2. UNDERSTANDING LIFELONG LEARNING IN NEP 2020

Lifelong learning is positioned as a critical pillar of NEP 2020, with the specific goal of providing inclusive and equitable quality education to all. It is a fundamental component of India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which aims to ensure continuous learning and skill development for all age groups. It advocates an inclusive framework that enables learning for all age groups, addresses diverse learning needs and promotes skill development. The NEP 2020 recognizes lifelong learning as essential for personal and social development, emphasising that education should not be limited to childhood or formal schooling. The policy emphasizes the importance of lifelong learning in a rapidly changing environment, where adaptability and updated skill sets are crucial for economic and social development.

2.1 Historical context of lifelong learning

Lifelong learning, a concept that involves learning throughout life and in a variety of contexts, originated in the 1960s with the term "lifelong learner". The term was coined by The New School for Social Research in 1962 and is now accepted as a useful tool for individuals with academic or professional qualifications. The concept of lifelong learning has evolved significantly over the years. It was established in the 1970s at the initiative of UNESCO to address concerns about occupational mobility and the integration of marginalised groups such as the elderly and migrants into society. Technological advancements and global crises, as evidenced by the changing socio-economic landscape, have underscored the importance of lifelong learning as the foundation of personal and professional development. Upon examining the policy's historical foundations, contemporary limitations, and overall significance, creating an environment of lifelong learning will be crucial to establishing a trained and adaptable workforce in India.

2.2 Current trends in lifelong learning

- NEP 2020 recognises lifelong learning as essential to create a more equitable and adaptive education system. The policy promotes a combination of formal, non-formal and informal learning pathways. It will be incorporated into the curriculum at all levels of school education. In addition, vocational education is now considered at par with academic education and will be gradually incorporated into mainstream education across all institutions beginning with elementary education in middle and high schools. This will ensure that every child will learn at least one skill and be exposed to multiple skills. It will further emphasize the

dignity of labor and the importance of various careers associated with Indian arts and crafts. It includes measures to support adult education and vocational training, which meet the diverse educational needs of individuals throughout their lives. NEP-2020 highlights that the opportunity to acquire basic literacy, pursue education and secure a livelihood should be considered a fundamental right for all citizens. Literacy and basic education open a whole new world of personal, civic, economic and lifelong learning opportunities for individuals, giving them the opportunity to progress personally and professionally.

- In the digital age, lifelong learning has become an essential component of personal and professional development. Unlike traditional educational pathways that typically end with formal schooling, lifelong learning promotes continued skill development and knowledge acquisition at all stages of life. The emergence of online learning represents a significant shift in the way people interact with educational opportunities. These platforms offer a variety of courses, including language proficiency and technical skills, for students of all ages. This access not only democratizes education but also meets the changing needs of a dynamic global workforce.
- One of the most significant developments in the evolution of the online learning market is the emphasis on personalized learning experiences. This customization ensures that learners are actively engaged in a learning experience that aligns with their personal and professional goals, rather than passively acquiring knowledge.
- Online marketplaces typically provide access to specialized courses in areas such as data science, blockchain technology, and artificial intelligence. These courses are crucial in preparing the workforce for future demands. They prioritize soft skills training to prepare learners for the overall work context. Lifelong learning networks are also growing, with forums, webinars, and discussion groups facilitating global interactions.
- With a growing focus on customized learning experiences, online learning marketplaces are changing the way students learn. Platforms use data analytics to recommend courses based on individuals' learning styles and career goals, increasing course completion rates heavily. Microlearning modules, which are smaller in size and tailored to specific learning outcomes, are gaining popularity, increasing retention rates in maximum.

2.3 Importance of lifelong learning in NEP 2020

Lifelong learning has been placed as an important pillar of the NEP 2020, which aims to provide inclusive and equitable quality education to all. By promoting a culture of continuous learning, the policy aims to not only improve individual employability but also develop a smart community capable of keeping pace with the rapid changes in the global economy. Moreover, lifelong learning promotes personal growth and empowerment, giving people the opportunity to cope with

the complexities of modern life and make significant contributions to their communities.

According to the 2011 census, the country's overall literacy rate was 74.04% and it is increasing every year. Therefore, literacy is not a problem for the country, and it is time to shift our focus from literacy to adult education and lifelong learning. India is catching up with the rest of the world. This idea is reflected in a unique way in the National Education Policy, 2020. The literacy target for NEP-2020 has been set at 100%. Additionally, emphasis has been placed on both adult education and lifelong learning (NEP, 2020).

2.4 challenges in implementing lifelong learning

Despite its importance, the implementation of lifelong learning poses several problems. The implementation of lifelong learning (LLL) involves many issues that vary according to context and demographics. These difficulties often hinder effective learning opportunities and reduce the potential benefits of lifelong learning activities.

- First, access is a challenge, especially for disadvantaged communities that do not have the finance or opportunity to pursue further education. In addition, awareness and motivation among potential learners may be low, affecting participation rates in lifelong learning programs. Furthermore, the integration of technology creates problems for digital literacy, as many people may be unfamiliar with online learning platforms, limiting their ability to engage with educational information.
- The rapid growth of knowledge is one of the most difficult problems in implementing LLL. Individuals must continue to learn and adapt as knowledge becomes more complex, which can be intimidating. Without a proper LLL strategy, several may struggle to meet the demands imposed by this rapid change, requiring a robust learning framework that can meet the wide range of needs of learners.
- Adult learners' features and characteristics provide additional problems while implementing LLL programs. Adult learners often have diverse educational backgrounds and learning experiences, which can affect their engagement with new learning possibilities. Age, prior knowledge and motivation all have a major impact on student learning outcomes. For example, adult learners, particularly those returning to education after a long absence, may struggle with basic knowledge and learning techniques, requiring individualized support to ensure an effective learning experience.
- The rapid advancement of technology creates both opportunities and challenges for LLL. Technology can improve access to online learning resources and enable flexible learning settings, but potential students may face significant challenges due to a lack of technological infrastructure and digital literacy. In addition, companies using LLL technology must ensure that their platforms are user-friendly and secure to gain the trust of learners. Dealing with these technical difficulties is crucial to developing long-term, effective learning frameworks.
- Technology also plays an important role in increasing access to educational resources by providing online help

systems, digital libraries, and virtual courses through digital technologies and online platforms.

Overcoming the barriers to adopting lifelong learning requires a multi-pronged approach that considers rapid knowledge expansion, educational inequities, institutional readiness, learner characteristics, and technological advancements. Stakeholders can improve the success of LLL programs and ensure that more people have access to education by adopting comprehensive policies that take these issues into account.

2.5 Opportunities under lifelong learning

NEP 2020 also provides several opportunities to improve lifelong learning.

- The strategy promotes technology adoption, particularly the use of digital platforms such as Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and SWAYAM, which provide flexible learning options to a diverse population. In addition, incorporating skill development into the school system provides individuals with an opportunity to improve their employability by bridging the gap between education and industry needs.
- With its emphasis on the continued accumulation of knowledge and skills throughout life, lifelong learning provides many opportunities for growth and personal development. It includes many teaching methods that are important for cognitive and emotional development. Lifelong learning is not simply an organized educational process; it is a self-directed pursuit of human development. Through lifelong learning, individuals can develop resilience, flexibility, and overall well-being, which is consistent with well-being principles.
- Using multiple learning methods is an important part of lifelong learning. These include formal schooling, informal learning experiences, and informal learning settings, all of which help individuals learn more effectively. Each stream offers a variety of opportunities to develop a variety of talents, from professional qualifications to personal hobbies, providing a rich educational experience.

2.6 Community engagement and lifelong learning

Community and financial support are important factors in promoting lifelong learning, improving access, and ensuring that educational opportunities are available to diverse communities. This research examined the important role played by these support systems in creating a favorable environment for continuing education.

- Community organizations play an important role in promoting lifelong learning by establishing cooperative networks, promoting learning cities, solving social problems, improving access to technology, increasing cultural awareness and identity, and facilitating professional development. These organizations bring together diverse social entities such as local businesses, cultural centers, and schools to share educational resources and opportunities. Learning cities, which

support educational opportunities for all residents, are developed in part by community organizations that recognize and utilize local cultural and social resources.

- Cultural education is promoted through community institutions, especially museums and cultural institutions, which foster a sense of community and interaction with local history and culture. Adult professional development programs are often facilitated by community organizations, providing information and skills needed to facilitate job advancement and boost the local economy. By fostering an environment that promotes lifelong learning, community organizations contribute to a more inclusive and effective learning environment.
- Community engagement is essential to support lifelong learning. Community organizations make a significant contribution to improving lifelong learning opportunities by providing resources, support, and programs that promote continuing education and personal growth. Their involvement can create a more informed and engaged community, which promotes a culture of lifelong learning.
- Community support is a vital component of programs that promote lifelong learning. Local communities provide people with the resources and context needed to improve their educational engagement. With the help of local governments, educational institutions, and community organizations, an environment that promotes networking, resource sharing, and continued learning can be created.
- Public libraries, which provide invaluable resources and educational opportunities, are prime examples of the community's dedication to lifelong learning. They serve as learning centers that offer a range of activities from enhancing literacy to promoting digital citizenship and ensuring that content is accessible to all age groups. Libraries are expanding their operations beyond traditional book lending to include training programs and skills development efforts in response to community demands and technological improvements. By partnering with educational institutions to provide specialized programs that meet the needs of society, libraries can play a revolutionary role in the framework of lifelong learning.
- Communities often support both formal and informal learning opportunities by setting up workshops, seminars, and community classes. These activities support social participation, which is important for personal development in addition to eliminating educational inequities.

2.7 Community engagement and financial assistance

Financial assistance is essential to overcome barriers to accessing lifelong learning. Organizations, government agencies, and nonprofit groups often offer a variety of financial aid options, such as grants, scholarships, and low-interest loans, to encourage greater participation in educational programs. This type of financial aid not only encourages people to continue their education, but also helps pay for living expenses, educational materials, and tuition,

which might otherwise discourage lifelong learning. Furthermore, funding for educational programs can be improved by donations from community sources, including nearby companies and charitable endeavors. They can fund special projects that are not adequately funded in traditional educational settings, such as adult education courses and mentoring programs. Finally, financial and community support improves the lifelong learning environment by providing necessary resources, establishing inclusive opportunities, and developing an environment that promotes lifelong learning. Successfully promoting lifelong learning through cooperative initiatives involving neighborhood associations, educational institutions, and community members can create a more informed and empowered society. Therefore, community and financial resources are vital to transforming the educational environment to meet the needs of all students.

3. KEY FINDINGS

Lifelong learning is a fundamental component of India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which aims to ensure continual education and skill development for all ages.

- Community organizations, financial support, and technology are crucial in promoting lifelong learning. These support systems can create an atmosphere conducive to continuing education, improve accessibility, and ensure that educational opportunities are available to a wide range of communities.
- The study's findings emphasize the value of lifelong learning in the context of NEP 2020, which seeks to encourage ongoing skill and knowledge development throughout the course of a person's lifetime.
- The study concludes that technology can make educational resources more accessible and that financial and community support are crucial for encouraging lifelong learning at all levels.
- Unlike traditional educational pathways, which frequently end with formal schooling, lifelong learning promotes ongoing skill development and information gain at all stages of life. Lifelong learning is positioned as a critical pillar of NEP 2020, with the specific goal of providing inclusive and equitable quality education to all.
- The study finds that community and financial support are essential for creating an environment conducive to lifelong learning, and that technology can play a significant role in making educational resources more accessible.
- The results of promoting lifelong learning in the NEP 2020 include the development of a more equal and adaptable education system, increased employability, and personal development.
- The study found that community organizations, financial support, and technology can improve accessibility to educational resources, create an atmosphere conducive to continuing education, and promote lifelong learning.

3.1 Recommendations

The future work required to overcome the obstacles of adopting lifelong learning includes a multifaceted approach, considering rapid knowledge expansion, educational disparities, institutional preparation, learner characteristics, and technological advancements. The study suggests that future work should focus on addressing the obstacles to accessing lifelong learning, and promoting technology integration, community engagement, and improved accessibility to educational resources. The study suggests that future research should focus on exploring the role of community and financial support in promoting lifelong learning, and on developing strategies to improve accessibility to educational resources.

4. CONCLUSION

The NEP 2020 provides several chances to improve lifelong learning, including the adoption of technology, notably the usage of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and digital platforms such as SWAYAM, which offer flexible learning options to a diverse population.

The study has practical implications for policymakers, educators, and community organizations, highlighting the importance of community and financial support in promoting lifelong learning and improving accessibility to educational resources. The practical applications of lifelong learning include the adoption of technology, skill development, and personal development, which align with eudaimonia principles.

Finally, NEP 2020's definition of lifelong learning seeks to create a more informed and empowered society. Despite barriers to access, awareness, and adoption of technology through technology integration, community engagement, and improved access to educational resources, the policy provides ample opportunities. By addressing these issues, India can successfully implement a lifelong learning framework to improve social and personal development, meet international education standards, and promote economic progress. The study concludes that technology can make educational resources more accessible, and financial and community support is critical to promote lifelong learning.

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