



Human Values and National Education Policy 2020: A Path Toward Holistic Learning

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ABSTRACT

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 marks a transformative shift in India's approach to education, emphasizing not only cognitive development but also the cultivation of ethical, emotional, and spiritual intelligence. Present paper explores the integration of human values into the framework of NEP 2020, proposing a model for holistic learning that aligns academic excellence with character building. Drawing upon foundational Indian philosophical thought and contemporary educational theories, the study outlines how values such as empathy, respect, integrity, and responsibility can be systematically embedded across curricula, pedagogy, and assessment. Through a critical analysis of policy objectives, existing value education models, and classroom practices, the paper presents a conceptual model that bridges traditional Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) with modern educational needs. The proposed study aims to produce not only skilled professionals but also socially conscious and ethically grounded citizens. Ultimately, this work underscores the urgency of value-based education in addressing current global challenges and nurturing a more compassionate and sustainable future.

The study follows a descriptive methodology, incorporating interpretative techniques such as discussion, observation, and analysis of secondary sources including books, journals, theses, expert opinions, and websites.

Keywords: Human Values, NEP 2020, IKS, Value-Based Education, Holistic Learning

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Introduction:

Education is a profound process of shaping individuals into responsible, ethical, and empathetic members of society. In the rapidly evolving socio-economic and technological landscape of the 21st century, the need for value-based education has become more critical than ever. Recognizing this, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 of India envisions an education system rooted in Indian ethos that fosters holistic development of intellectual, emotional, physical, moral, and spiritual dimensions.

Human values such as truth (satya), non-violence (ahimsa), compassion, respect, duty (dharma), and integrity form the foundation of a just and inclusive society. NEP 2020 acknowledges that integrating these values into the educational process is essential for nurturing well-rounded individuals who are not only academically competent but also morally and socially conscious. The policy calls for a shift from rote learning to experiential, inquiry-based, and value-oriented education, aiming to cultivate both critical thinking and character.

This paper examines the philosophical underpinnings and practical implications of NEP 2020 in relation to human values and proposes a model for holistic learning. Drawing from Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS), global educational theories, and contemporary pedagogical practices, it seeks to establish a framework through which values can be meaningfully infused into the curriculum, teacher training, and school culture. The goal is to explore how education's role in promoting not only employability and innovation, but also ethical citizenship and personal fulfillment.

By situating human values at the heart of the education system, NEP 2020 provides a timely opportunity to reimagine learning as a transformative journey one that empowers learners to thrive not only in their careers but also as compassionate, resilient, and responsible human beings.

Need and Importance of the Present Study:

In the context of increasing global unrest, ethical erosion, and social fragmentation, there is an urgent need to reorient education toward fostering not just academic achievement but character, compassion, and consciousness. This aligns with recent findings emphasizing global perspectives in teacher readiness and value-driven internationalization (Saikrupa B. & Dr. Sakhare S.J. 2025). The development of human values such as honesty, empathy, responsibility, tolerance, and respect plays a pivotal role in shaping individuals who can contribute meaningfully to both personal growth and societal well-being.



Human values are universal principles that guide behaviour and interpersonal relationships. They form the ethical backbone of a harmonious society. In today's world of rapid technological advancement and material progress, education systems often emphasize competitive success over moral integrity. This has led to a growing disconnect between intellectual advancement and ethical grounding. Therefore, the integration of values into the educational process is essential to create socially responsible, emotionally intelligent, and morally upright citizens.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 recognizes this pressing need and proposes a value-based, holistic approach to education that is rooted in Indian cultural and philosophical traditions while being forward-looking and globally relevant. It highlights the importance of nurturing not just the mind, but also the heart and soul of learners, through education that is rich in ethics, civic sense, and personal responsibility.

NEP 2020 emphasizes:

- Character building alongside skill development, recognizing that success is meaningless without integrity.
- The integration of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS), which historically place high importance on human values and ethical living.
- Experiential and multidisciplinary learning, which allows values to be lived and practiced rather than just taught.
- A learner-centered environment that encourages respect for diversity, equity, and inclusion.

The importance of this policy direction lies in its potential to address modern challenges such as environmental degradation, violence, inequality, and mental health crises by nurturing a generation of individuals who are capable of making ethical decisions and leading value-driven lives.

Thus, the need and importance of integrating human values into the framework of NEP 2020 lie in its promise to transform education from mere information delivery to a life-enriching, soul-nourishing experience, paving the way for holistic learning and nation-building in its truest sense.

Research Objectives:

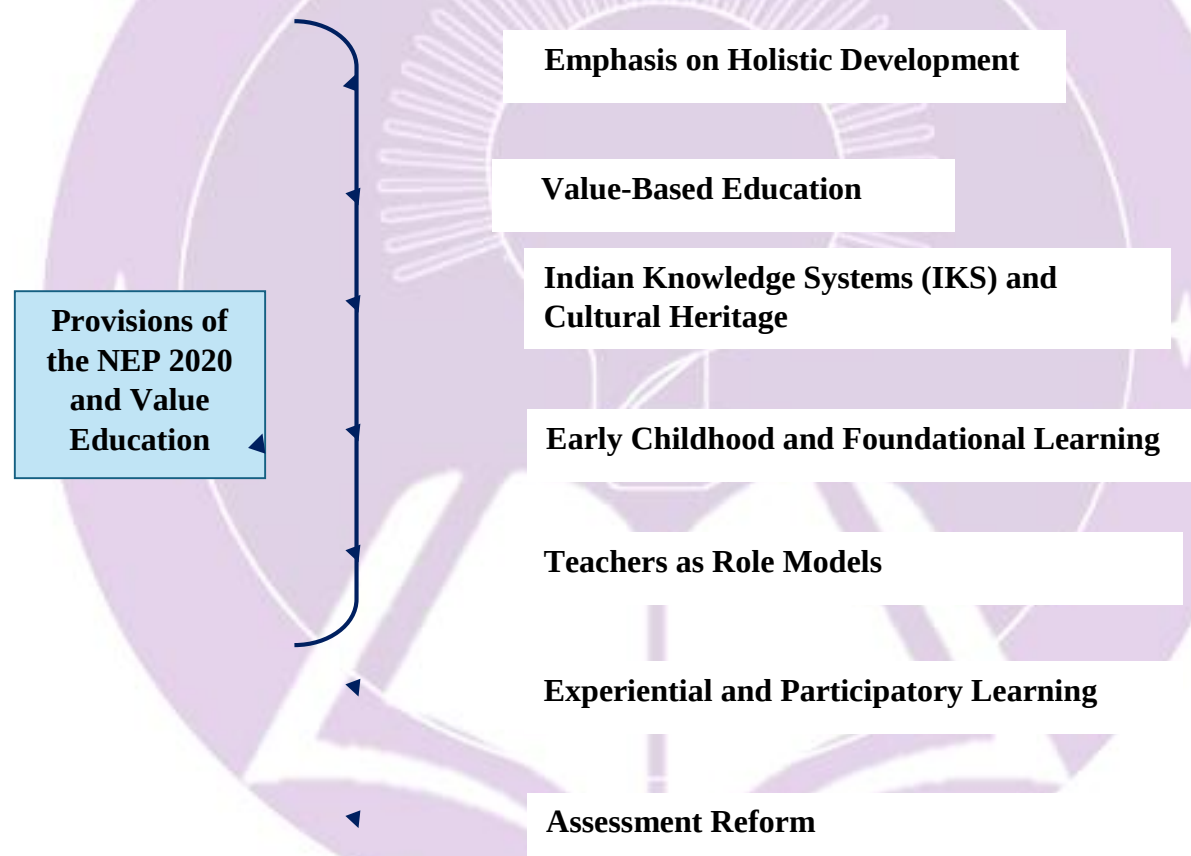
1. To analyze the provisions and vision of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 related to value-based and holistic education.
2. To examine how Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) and cultural traditions contribute to the promotion of human values in education.



3. To identify challenges and opportunities in implementing value-based education within the current educational landscape of India.

I. Provisions and vision of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 related to value-based and Holistic Education:

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, introduced by the Government of India, represents a landmark shift in the educational paradigm, aiming to create a system that is not only rooted in Indian culture and knowledge systems but also future-ready. At its core, NEP 2020 envisions education as a means of developing the full potential of the human being, emphasizing a holistic, learner-centered, and value-driven approach. and also for societies.



1. Emphasis on Holistic Development:

NEP 2020 advocates for a multidisciplinary and holistic approach to education, which includes the development of cognitive skills alongside social, emotional, ethical, and spiritual capacities. This is reflected in its call for:



- The integration of arts, humanities, sports, and vocational education with core academics.
- A focus on the five aspects of holistic development: intellectual, physical, emotional, social, and moral.

2. Value-Based Education:

One of the key aims of NEP 2020 is to cultivate not just well-informed individuals but also ethical, responsible, and compassionate citizens. The policy encourages:

- Embedding human and constitutional values such as empathy, respect for others, cleanliness, courtesy, democratic spirit, justice, service, patriotism, and environmental responsibility.
- Promoting ethics and moral reasoning across subjects and age groups.

3. Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) and Cultural Heritage:

The policy strongly recommends the inclusion of Indian Knowledge Systems, including traditional sciences, indigenous health systems (like Ayurveda and Yoga), classical languages, philosophy, and literature, as a source of timeless human values and wisdom.

- IKS is recognized as a repository of ethical frameworks, environmental sensitivity, and spiritual values that contribute to the holistic development of learners.

4. Early Childhood and Foundational Learning:

The foundational stage (ages 3–8) is considered critical for value inculcation. NEP 2020 emphasizes:

- Play-based, activity-oriented learning infused with stories, songs, and local cultural content that promotes moral values from a young age.

5. Teachers as Role Models:

The policy underscores the role of teachers as moral and ethical role models, and calls for their training in value-based education, emotional intelligence, and holistic development strategies.

6. Experiential and Participatory Learning:

To internalize values, the policy encourages experiential learning methods such as:

- Group activities, storytelling, role plays, debates, and community engagement.
- Environmental education, life skills, and service-learning projects to nurture responsibility and civic engagement.



7. Assessment Reform:

NEP 2020 calls for a transformation in assessment from rote memorization to competency-based evaluation, which includes:

- Formative assessments that consider socio-emotional and ethical development.
- Inclusion of self-reflection, peer review, and teacher feedback on values and behavior.

Vision for the Future:

The overarching vision of NEP 2020 is to build an education system that not only produces knowledgeable individuals but also wise, ethical, and culturally grounded human beings. By realigning the goals of education with India's rich heritage of value-based living and global challenges of the 21st century, the policy aspires to create "engaged, productive, and contributing citizens" who can uphold justice, peace, and sustainability in society.

II. Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) and Cultural Traditions- Contribute to the Promotion of Human Values in Education:

Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) represent a vast reservoir of wisdom encompassing philosophy, science, literature, medicine, art, and spirituality that has evolved over millennia. Rooted in the diverse cultural and spiritual traditions of India, IKS offers profound insights into ethical living, harmonious coexistence, and holistic human development. These systems transcend academic knowledge, embedding deep-rooted human values that can enrich modern education.

1. Ethical and Philosophical Foundations:

The philosophical schools of India such as Vedanta, Nyaya, Yoga, and Buddhism articulate a value-centric view of life. Concepts such as:

- Dharma (righteous duty)
- Ahimsa (non-violence)
- Satya (truth)
- Karuna (compassion)

These serve as foundational principles that guide ethical behavior and moral reasoning. Integrating these concepts into education nurtures not only cognitive skills but also moral consciousness and character.



2. Indian Epics and Literature:

Texts such as the Ramayana, Mahabharata, Panchatantra, and Jataka tales are rich sources of stories illustrating courage, humility, respect, duty, and justice. When used in classrooms:

- They serve as narrative tools for value education.
- They engage students emotionally and intellectually, making values more relatable and internalized.

3. Yoga and Mindfulness Practices:

Yoga, a key component of IKS, is not just a physical practice but a holistic discipline that fosters self-awareness, discipline, emotional regulation, and inner peace. Practices like:

- Yama and Niyama (ethical codes from Patanjali's Yoga Sutras)
- Meditation and breathing techniques (Pranayama)

These can be incorporated into daily school routines to instill calmness, compassion, and focus in learners.

4. Ayurveda and Environmental Ethics:

Ayurveda, the ancient Indian system of medicine, emphasizes balance, harmony with nature, and self-care, promoting values like simplicity, sustainability, and respect for life. Environmental ethics found in Indian traditions (e.g., the concept of Prakriti as sacred) align closely with modern sustainability goals and can help foster eco-consciousness in students.

5. Gurukula Tradition and Teacher-Student Relationship:

The traditional Gurukula system emphasized value transmission through living examples, where the teacher (guru) was not just an academic guide but a moral mentor. This tradition promoted:

- Lifelong learning (Brahmacharya)
- Respect, humility, and obedience
- Self-reliance and community service

Modern education can draw from this model by:

- Training teachers as ethical facilitators.
- Building stronger relationships between educators and learners.



6. Festivals, Rituals, and Cultural Practices:

Indian cultural traditions including festivals, folk arts, and community rituals often carry embedded messages of gratitude, unity, sharing, and interdependence. Schools can integrate these into co-curricular activities to:

- Build cultural literacy and moral values.
- Foster a sense of identity and respect for diversity.

Indian Knowledge Systems provide a rich, culturally resonant framework for value-based education. Their integration into the modern curriculum not only preserves cultural heritage but also promotes ethical development, emotional well-being, and social harmony. As envisioned by the NEP 2020, aligning education with IKS helps create a holistic learning environment one that nurtures both the intellect and the heart.

III. Challenges and opportunities in implementing value-based education within the current educational landscape of India:

In a rapidly changing global environment marked by technological advancement, social fragmentation, and ethical ambiguity, the role of education extends far beyond academic instruction. There is a growing recognition of the need to foster value-based education that equips learners with not only knowledge but also the moral compass and emotional intelligence necessary for responsible citizenship. In India, the introduction of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has renewed focus on integrating human values into the curriculum to ensure the holistic development of students.





Challenges:

1. Curriculum Overload and Academic Pressure:

The existing education system in India is often criticized for its heavy focus on rote learning, exam-oriented teaching, and a crowded curriculum. This leaves limited space and time for the deliberate integration of value-based education, which requires experiential learning and reflective practices.

2. Lack of Teacher Training and Awareness:

Many educators lack adequate training in value education methodologies. Without proper sensitization and continuous professional development, teachers may struggle to effectively convey human values or model ethical behavior themselves.

3. Diverse Socio-Cultural Contexts:

India's vast linguistic, cultural, and socio-economic diversity poses a challenge to creating a uniform value education framework that resonates equally across different regions and communities. Values can be interpreted differently, leading to potential conflicts or dilution.

4. Inadequate Institutional Support:

Schools and educational institutions may lack the necessary resources, infrastructure, and leadership commitment to prioritize and sustain value-based programs. This includes insufficient funding for extracurricular activities that nurture values.

5. Resistance to Change:

Shifting from a traditional knowledge-transmission model to a holistic, value-centered pedagogy requires mindset changes among stakeholders educators, parents, policymakers, and learners themselves. Resistance to pedagogical reform may hinder effective implementation .

6. Assessment and Evaluation Difficulties:

Measuring the development of values, attitudes, and character traits is inherently complex. Conventional assessment tools are ill-equipped to capture these qualitative aspects, leading to undervaluation or neglect of value education.

Opportunities:

1. Policy Support through NEP 2020:

The National Education Policy 2020 provides a strong foundation and explicit mandate for integrating value-based education at all levels. Its emphasis on holistic development,



experiential learning, and Indian Knowledge Systems offers a unique opportunity to redesign curricula and pedagogy accordingly.

2. Growing Awareness of Emotional and Social Learning:

Globally and nationally, there is increasing recognition of the importance of social-emotional learning (SEL). Schools are gradually adopting programs that nurture empathy, resilience, and collaboration, which align closely with human values.

3. Technological Innovations and Digital Learning:

Digital platforms and educational technologies can facilitate innovative value education programs through interactive storytelling, virtual simulations, collaborative projects, and global cultural exchanges that engage learners meaningfully.

4. Community and Cultural Resources:

India's rich cultural heritage, festivals, oral traditions, and community practices provide abundant resources to contextualize and enrich value education, making it more relevant and engaging for students.

5. Teacher Empowerment and Capacity Building:

With targeted teacher education reforms and continuous professional development programs, educators can become confident facilitators of values, modeling behaviors and creating supportive learning environments.

6. Collaborative and Multidisciplinary Approaches:

Integrating value education across subjects arts, sciences, physical education encourages interdisciplinary learning, reinforcing values through diverse perspectives and real-life applications.

Challenges in implementing value-based education are significant, the current educational landscape in India also presents unprecedented opportunities, especially with policy support like NEP 2020 and advancements in pedagogy and technology. Addressing these challenges through systemic reforms, capacity building, and community involvement can lead to the successful realization of an education system that nurtures not just intellectual capabilities but also the moral and ethical foundations essential for personal and societal well-being.

Conclusion:

The integration of human values into education is no longer an option but a necessity in nurturing responsible, compassionate, and ethically grounded citizens. The National Education Policy (NEP)



2020 marks a visionary step toward embedding these values within the educational fabric of India by promoting a holistic, multidisciplinary, and learner-centric approach. By aligning modern educational goals with the rich heritage of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) and emphasizing character development alongside academic excellence, NEP 2020 paves the way for a transformative model of holistic learning.

This model recognizes that education must cultivate not only intellectual capabilities but also emotional intelligence, ethical reasoning, and social responsibility. It calls for systemic reforms in curriculum design, teacher training, pedagogy, and assessment to foster value-based education effectively. While challenges remain, the opportunities presented by policy reforms, cultural resources, and technological advances provide a strong foundation for success.

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