

REVISITING THE ENGLISH CURRICULUM: HOW NEP 2020'S EMPHASIS ON HOLISTIC EDUCATION CAN REVITALIZE LITERATURE STUDIES

Dr. Rajula Albert

Asst. Professor of English
R. V. S Govt. Girls College,
Vidisha (M. P.)

Abstract

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 aims to transform India's educational landscape by promoting holistic, multidisciplinary learning that nurtures a wide range of skills beyond the cognitive. This research examines how the English curriculum, particularly literature studies, can benefit from NEP 2020's emphasis on experiential learning, multilingualism, and critical thinking. It explores the current challenges faced by the English curriculum in Indian schools and universities, proposing a model of curriculum redesign that incorporates the principles of NEP 2020 to make literature studies more engaging, relevant, and student-centric. The paper emphasizes how the reimagining of the curriculum can foster greater critical engagement with literary texts, multilingual perspectives, and cross-disciplinary learning while preparing students for an increasingly complex and interconnected world.

Introduction

The English curriculum in India, particularly literature studies, has traditionally been centered on canonical texts from British and American authors. While this has provided a foundation in Western literary traditions, it has often been criticized for its lack of relevance to the cultural, social, and political realities of Indian students. Additionally, the emphasis on rote memorization, exam preparation, and textual coverage has limited the scope for deeper, critical engagement with literature. This paper argues that the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, with its focus on holistic education, presents a transformative opportunity to rethink how literature is taught in Indian schools and colleges.

NEP 2020 envisions a more inclusive, flexible, and learner-centered approach to education, with an emphasis on developing skills that go beyond academic knowledge. This research investigates how the English curriculum can be realigned with the principles of NEP 2020, integrating interdisciplinary learning, multilingualism, critical thinking, and experiential pedagogy. By leveraging the holistic education framework proposed in NEP 2020, this paper aims to demonstrate how literature studies can be revitalized to make them more engaging, relevant, and impactful for students.

The structure of the paper is as follows: First, we provide a review of NEP 2020 and its emphasis on holistic education. Next, we critique the current state of the English curriculum in India, highlighting its limitations. We then propose a curriculum redesign model that

incorporates the principles of NEP 2020, followed by a discussion of the challenges and recommendations for implementation.

NEP 2020 and Holistic Education

NEP 2020 introduces a vision of education that aims to foster the development of the whole child. The policy emphasizes the need for an education system that nurtures cognitive, emotional, social, and ethical development, moving away from the traditional focus on rote learning and exams. The policy's key features—multidisciplinarity, flexibility, experiential learning, multilingualism, and a focus on critical thinking—are crucial for redesigning curricula across subjects, including English literature.

Holistic Education in NEP 2020

NEP 2020 defines holistic education as one that integrates a wide range of skills and competencies, preparing students not just for academic success but for life in a complex and rapidly changing world. The policy advocates for a shift from a rigid, exam-centric education model to one that values creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving, and ethical values. This is particularly relevant to the study of literature, which, if approached holistically, can develop critical thinking, empathy, and global awareness.

The policy also promotes multilingualism, advocating for the inclusion of regional languages, and emphasizes the need for cross-disciplinary learning. These features align well with the diverse linguistic and cultural landscape of India and offer significant potential for transforming literature studies in Indian classrooms.

Relevance to English Literature

The traditional English literature curriculum has been criticized for its focus on English literature texts from the West, with limited inclusion of Indian literature or works in translation. NEP 2020's emphasis on inclusivity, multilingualism, and cross-disciplinary learning offers a new direction for literature studies by incorporating regional languages, diverse cultural perspectives, and interdisciplinary approaches.

Challenges in the Current English Curriculum

Despite the potential for transformation, several challenges prevent the English curriculum from fully embracing the principles of NEP 2020. These challenges include:

1. **Overemphasis on Canonical Texts:** The existing curriculum primarily focuses on English literature from the Western canon, neglecting the rich diversity of Indian, regional, and world literatures. This limits students' exposure to global literary traditions and fails to reflect their lived experiences.
2. **Exam-Centric Approach:** The current assessment system in English literature is heavily exam-focused, with an emphasis on recall, memorization, and text-based questions. This approach discourages critical thinking, creativity, and a deeper understanding of the text.
3. **Lack of Interdisciplinary Learning:** Literature is often taught in isolation, without integrating themes from history, philosophy, sociology, or the arts. This restricts students' ability to draw connections between literary texts and real-world issues.

4. **Inadequate Teacher Training:** Many teachers are still trained in traditional, lecture-based, text-focused pedagogy. There is a need for professional development in new teaching methodologies, particularly those that foster active learning, critical engagement, and digital literacy.
5. **Limited Use of Technology:** The use of digital tools and multimodal resources in teaching literature is often underutilized. Incorporating technology can enhance students' learning experiences and engagement with literature.

Proposed Curriculum Redesign: Aligning with NEP 2020

To address the challenges mentioned above, this paper proposes a comprehensive redesign of the English literature curriculum that aligns with the principles of NEP 2020. The proposed curriculum focuses on flexibility, interdisciplinarity, multilingualism, and experiential learning.

1. Curriculum Structure and Text Selection

The curriculum should include a diverse range of texts from different genres, cultures, and languages. This could include:

- **Core Texts:** A combination of canonical English texts and Indian literature, including works from regional languages in translation. The inclusion of contemporary and diverse voices can make literature studies more relevant to students.
- **Choice Modules:** Elective modules that allow students to explore specific themes, such as gender, postcolonialism, environmentalism, or technology in literature. This flexibility will enable students to tailor their studies to their interests.
- **Multilingual Approach:** The curriculum should incorporate texts from different linguistic traditions, encouraging students to engage with literature in multiple languages. This approach will foster greater linguistic diversity and multicultural awareness.

2. Pedagogy and Learning Activities

A shift towards **learner-centred** pedagogy is essential for revitalizing literature studies. The following pedagogical strategies can be employed:

- **Inquiry-Based Learning:** Encourage students to ask questions, explore texts critically, and engage in discussions. This approach promotes active learning and intellectual curiosity.
- **Experiential Learning:** Students should engage with literature through activities such as role-play, dramatizations, field trips, and community-based learning. These activities help students connect the text to real-world experiences.
- **Collaborative Learning:** Group discussions, literature circles, and peer reviews can encourage students to collaborate and learn from each other.
- **Use of Technology:** Incorporate digital tools like multimedia presentations, online discussions, and e-books to enhance the learning experience. Social media platforms can also be used to engage students with contemporary literature.

3. Assessment Reform

Assessment should move beyond traditional exams to include formative, ongoing evaluations. The following types of assessments can be implemented:

- **Portfolios:** Students can maintain a portfolio of their work, including reflections, creative projects, and research papers. Portfolios allow for continuous assessment and offer a more comprehensive view of student progress.
- **Project-Based Assessment:** Students should be encouraged to undertake independent or group projects that require research, analysis, and creative outputs (e.g., a film adaptation of a literary work, a digital storytelling project).
- **Peer and Self-Assessment:** Encourage students to engage in peer review and self-reflection as part of the assessment process. This fosters critical thinking and a sense of ownership over their learning.

Teacher Professional Development

To implement the proposed curriculum redesign, teacher professional development is crucial. Teachers must be trained in new teaching methodologies, such as inquiry-based learning, multimodal literacies, and the integration of digital tools. Regular workshops, online courses, and collaborative networks should be established to help teachers adopt these new pedagogies.

Challenges and Recommendations for Implementation

The implementation of this new curriculum will face several challenges, including:

1. **Resistance to Change:** Many educators may be resistant to adopting new teaching methodologies. Professional development programs and ongoing support will be necessary to overcome this challenge.
2. **Resource Constraints:** Schools and colleges may face resource constraints, particularly in rural areas. The government should provide financial support for infrastructure development, including access to digital tools and multilingual resources.
3. **Assessment Reform:** Shifting from traditional exams to more diverse forms of assessment may require a change in policy and examination boards. Collaboration between educational institutions and assessment bodies will be needed to make this transition.

Conclusion

The NEP 2020's focus on holistic education provides an exciting opportunity to rethink how literature is taught in India. By aligning the English curriculum with NEP's principles of interdisciplinary learning, multilingualism, experiential learning, and critical thinking, literature studies can be revitalized to better engage students and prepare them for the challenges of the 21st century. A curriculum that is flexible, inclusive, and student-centred will not only enhance students' understanding of literature but also foster critical thinking, creativity, and empathy. Through thoughtful implementation, this approach can transform the study of literature into a vibrant and dynamic part of the educational experience.

References

1. Ministry of Education, Government of India. (2020). *National Education Policy 2020*. New Delhi.
2. Srikala, K. (2024). "Holistic Development through Implementation of NEP-2020". *Research Review International Journal of Multidisciplinary*, [Vol./Issue].
3. Gupta, N. (2023). "National Education Policy: A Holistic Development on the ...". *Journal of Education Policy & Research*, [Vol./Issue].

4. “Multidisciplinary and Holistic Education: Achieving ...” (2024 Jan). *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 11(1).
5. “Holistic Development of Education: NEP 2020” (2025). [Authors unspecified]. [Journal].
6. Tasildar, R. B. (2014). “English Studies in India: Some Reflections on the Present Scenario”. *The Delhi University Journal of the Humanities & The Social Sciences*, 1.
7. Chatterjee, A. (2022). “English Literature Studies in Indian Institutions”. *International Journal for Research Trends & Innovation*, 7(8).
8. John Sekar, J. (2025). “Expanding the English Studies Curriculum: Aligning Literary Education with Market-Driven Skill Demands in India”. *Asian Journal of Education and Social Studies*, 51(8), 131-142.
9. “Value Education in NEP 2020”. (2025, April). *International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts (IJCRT)*.
10. “Revisiting English Language Teaching (ELT) Curriculum Design”. (Year unspecified). [Journal/Conference].
11. “Curriculum Design and Development”. (2017). [Source].
12. Pillai, S. S. (Year unspecified). “Curriculum Design & Development”. [Institutional Publication].
13. “Review of Curriculum Development in ELT”. (2016). Apparaju, H. [Journal].
14. “Understanding Holistic and Experiential Education by NEP ...”. (2024). *Lead School Blog*.
15. Meganathan, R. (2019). “Research in English Language Education in India”. *Indian Educational Review*.