



NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY 2020 AND HIGHER EDUCATION IN HARYANA: A CRITICAL REVIEW OF POLICY IMPLEMENTATION, INSTITUTIONAL TRANSFORMATION, OPPORTUNITIES, AND CHALLENGES

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Abstract: The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 represents the most comprehensive reform of India's education system since the National Policy on Education (1986). It seeks to transform higher education through multidisciplinary learning, flexible curricular structures, technology integration, academic mobility, institutional autonomy, research promotion, internationalization, and improved governance. Haryana has emerged as one of the leading states in implementing NEP 2020 through initiatives such as the National Education Policy Evaluation and Validation (NEEV) Portal, Academic Bank of Credits (ABC), Four-Year Undergraduate Programme (FYUP), digital governance, and institutional quality assurance mechanisms. Despite significant progress, implementation remains uneven due to infrastructure disparities, faculty shortages, financial constraints, digital inequality, and differences in institutional preparedness. This critical review synthesizes policy documents, government reports, peer-reviewed literature, and state-level initiatives to evaluate the implementation and impact of NEP 2020 on higher education in Haryana. The review critically examines governance reforms, curriculum restructuring, digital transformation, research promotion, employability, quality assurance, and institutional readiness. It argues that while Haryana has demonstrated strong administrative commitment toward policy implementation, sustainable transformation requires enhanced financial investment, faculty capacity building, stronger industry-academia collaboration, institutional autonomy, and evidence-based policy evaluation. The review concludes by proposing strategic recommendations to strengthen the long-term implementation of NEP 2020 within Haryana's higher education system.

Keywords: National Education Policy 2020, Higher Education, Haryana, Governance, Academic Bank of Credits, Multidisciplinary Education, Quality Assurance, Higher Education Reform.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Higher education is widely recognized as a fundamental driver of economic development, social mobility, innovation, technological advancement, and sustainable national growth. Knowledge-based economies increasingly depend upon universities for human capital development, research productivity, entrepreneurship, and technological innovation (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2023). Consequently, governments worldwide are restructuring higher education systems to improve quality, accessibility, flexibility, and global competitiveness.

India possesses one of the world's largest higher education systems, comprising universities, colleges, institutions of national importance, and standalone professional institutions. According to the Ministry of Education (2024), the country serves millions of students through an expanding network of higher education institutions. Despite this growth, the sector has historically encountered persistent challenges including fragmented governance, rigid disciplinary boundaries, limited academic flexibility, insufficient research productivity, inadequate internationalization, employability concerns, quality disparities among institutions, and inequitable access to educational opportunities (Government of India, 2020).

Recognizing these structural limitations, the Government of India introduced the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, replacing the National Policy on Education of 1986. The policy envisions a comprehensive transformation of the higher education ecosystem by promoting multidisciplinary education, holistic learning, competency-based curricula, flexible academic pathways, technology-enabled teaching, enhanced research culture, institutional autonomy, international collaboration, and learner-centered pedagogy (Government of India, 2020). The policy further aims to increase the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education from approximately 26.3% in 2018 to **50% by 2035**, requiring the creation of nearly 35 million additional seats across higher education institutions (Government of India, 2020).

NEP 2020 introduces several structural reforms intended to modernize Indian higher education. These include the Four-Year Undergraduate Programme (FYUP), Multiple Entry and Exit (MEES), the Academic Bank of Credits (ABC), multidisciplinary institutions, flexible curricula, vocational integration, competency-based education, digital learning ecosystems, outcome-based assessment, institutional restructuring, and the establishment of the National Research Foundation (NRF) to strengthen India's research ecosystem (Government of India, 2020). Complementing these reforms, the University Grants Commission (UGC) has issued a series of regulations and implementation

frameworks, including guidelines for the Academic Bank of Credits, Multiple Entry and Exit, National Credit Framework (NCrF), Institutional Development Plans, Internationalization of Higher Education, and multidisciplinary education to facilitate nationwide implementation of NEP 2020 (University Grants Commission [UGC], 2023). The UGC's UTSAH (Undertaking Transformative Strategies and Actions in Higher Education) portal further monitors institutional progress and disseminates implementation guidelines across higher education institutions.

Successful implementation of NEP 2020 largely depends upon state governments because higher education in India operates under a shared constitutional framework involving both the Union and State Governments. Consequently, individual states have developed context-specific implementation strategies reflecting their institutional capacities, governance structures, and developmental priorities.

Among Indian states, Haryana has emerged as one of the proactive adopters of NEP 2020. The Higher Education Department, Government of Haryana, has issued comprehensive implementation guidelines requiring government and government-aided colleges to undertake reforms in accreditation, institutional development planning, academic autonomy, digital infrastructure, faculty development, research productivity, innovation, entrepreneurship, Academic Bank of Credits integration, ICT-enabled pedagogy, and industry-linked curricula. These directives emphasize thirty priority action points designed to accelerate institutional transformation in accordance with NEP objectives.

A notable innovation introduced by Haryana is the National Education Policy Evaluation and Validation (NEEV) Portal, a digital monitoring platform designed to assess institutional performance, evaluate compliance with NEP indicators, and facilitate evidence-based decision-making. The portal enables continuous monitoring of universities through predefined performance indicators, thereby strengthening accountability and quality assurance mechanisms within the state's higher education system.

In response to these policy initiatives, universities and colleges across Haryana—including Maharshi Dayanand University, Kurukshetra University, Guru Jambheshwar University of Science and Technology, Chaudhary Ranbir Singh University, Chaudhary Devi Lal University, Indira Gandhi University, Bhagat Phool Singh Mahila Vishwavidyalaya, and affiliated government colleges—have initiated curriculum restructuring, implementation of FYUP, Academic Bank of Credits integration, skill-based education, multidisciplinary programmes, digital learning

platforms, faculty development programmes, and quality enhancement initiatives aligned with NEP objectives.

Nevertheless, implementation remains heterogeneous across institutions. While well-established universities have demonstrated considerable progress in curriculum redesign, digital governance, accreditation, and research promotion, numerous affiliated government colleges—particularly in rural areas—continue to face significant constraints related to infrastructure, faculty vacancies, limited research funding, inadequate digital resources, and restricted interdisciplinary capacity. Furthermore, rapid implementation timelines have increased administrative workloads for institutional leaders while exposing variations in institutional preparedness and governance capabilities. Similar implementation disparities have also been observed nationally, with recent AISHE assessments indicating uneven adoption of key NEP reforms, including FYUP, Multiple Entry–Exit provisions, and apprenticeship ecosystems across universities.

Although a growing body of literature has examined NEP 2020 from national and conceptual perspectives, relatively limited research has critically evaluated its implementation within individual states, particularly Haryana. Existing studies largely describe policy provisions or administrative initiatives without systematically assessing institutional readiness, governance reforms, implementation challenges, educational outcomes, or long-term sustainability. Consequently, there remains a significant need for evidence-based critical reviews that synthesize policy documents, scholarly literature, and state-level implementation experiences.

The present review addresses this gap by critically examining the implementation of NEP 2020 in Haryana's higher education system. Specifically, it evaluates major policy reforms, governance mechanisms, curriculum transformation, digitalization, research promotion, quality assurance, employability initiatives, institutional preparedness, and implementation challenges. By integrating national policy objectives with state-level evidence, the review seeks to provide a comprehensive assessment of Haryana's progress toward achieving the transformative vision articulated in NEP 2020.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Evolution of Higher Education Reforms in India

India's higher education system has experienced several waves of policy reform since independence, each responding to changing socio-economic and developmental priorities. The University Education Commission (1948–49), chaired by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, emphasized university autonomy, quality teaching, and national development through higher education (Government of India, 1949). Subsequently, the Kothari Commission (1964–66)

introduced the concept of education as a powerful instrument for national development and recommended structural reforms, curriculum modernization, teacher education, and expansion of educational opportunities (Education Commission, 1966).

The National Policy on Education (NPE) 1968 represented India's first comprehensive education policy and emphasized equal educational opportunities and national integration. This was followed by the National Policy on Education (1986), revised in 1992, which expanded higher education institutions but retained a largely discipline-based, examination-oriented educational structure (Government of India, 1986).

During the subsequent decades, rapid globalization, technological advancement, industrial transformation, and increasing international competition exposed several weaknesses within India's higher education system. These included fragmented institutional governance, rigid disciplinary boundaries, inadequate research productivity, limited employability, poor international rankings, insufficient industry collaboration, and unequal access to quality education (Altbach, 2015; Agarwal, 2009).

Recognizing these structural limitations, the Government of India introduced the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 after extensive stakeholder consultation involving over two lakh suggestions from educational institutions, academics, policymakers, and civil society (Government of India, 2020). Unlike previous reforms, NEP 2020 proposes a holistic transformation encompassing governance, curriculum, research, accreditation, faculty development, digital learning, institutional restructuring, and internationalization.

Several scholars have described NEP 2020 as a paradigm shift from an input-based education system toward an outcome-oriented, multidisciplinary, learner-centered model designed to improve quality, flexibility, and global competitiveness (Kumar & Sharma, 2021; Sivaraman et al., 2026).

2.2 Philosophy and Vision of NEP 2020

The philosophical foundation of NEP 2020 is based on the development of well-rounded individuals capable of critical thinking, creativity, ethical reasoning, scientific temper, and lifelong learning (Government of India, 2020). Unlike earlier education policies that primarily emphasized knowledge acquisition, NEP advocates competency development through multidisciplinary learning, experiential pedagogy, flexibility, vocational integration, and digital education.

The policy aligns with Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG-4), which seeks inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all (United

Nations, 2015). It also reflects recommendations from UNESCO's Education 2030 Framework by emphasizing inclusivity, accessibility, innovation, and quality assurance (UNESCO, 2021).

Researchers have noted that NEP attempts to bridge the long-standing divide between liberal education and professional education by encouraging multidisciplinary institutions where engineering, medicine, sciences, humanities, commerce, sports sciences, and vocational education coexist within integrated academic ecosystems (Tilak, 2021).

The policy also recognizes education as a continuous learning process rather than a linear progression toward degree completion. This philosophy underpins reforms such as Multiple Entry and Exit (MEES), Academic Bank of Credits (ABC), and lifelong learning pathways.

2.3 Major Structural Reforms Introduced under NEP 2020

Multidisciplinary Education: Perhaps the most transformative feature of NEP 2020 is the transition from isolated disciplinary education toward multidisciplinary universities. International evidence demonstrates that multidisciplinary education promotes creativity, innovation, problem-solving, and entrepreneurial thinking because students integrate knowledge from multiple academic domains (OECD, 2023). The policy recommends that all higher education institutions gradually evolve into multidisciplinary institutions by 2040 (Government of India, 2020). Several empirical studies suggest that multidisciplinary learning improves graduate employability, adaptability, communication skills, and research productivity (Marginson, 2016; Sivaraman et al., 2026). However, implementation remains challenging because many Indian colleges continue to operate with department-centric administrative structures and limited interdisciplinary faculty expertise.

Four-Year Undergraduate Programme (FYUP): The Four-Year Undergraduate Programme represents one of the most debated reforms within NEP. The additional fourth year emphasizes research, internships, multidisciplinary electives, innovation projects, entrepreneurship, and skill development. Internationally, four-year bachelor's programmes are common in countries such as the United States, Canada, Japan, and Australia, where undergraduate education combines disciplinary specialization with liberal education (Altbach, 2015). Supporters argue that FYUP enhances global compatibility and research readiness. Critics, however, question whether many state universities possess sufficient faculty, laboratory infrastructure, and financial resources to implement the programme effectively (Tilak, 2021).

Multiple Entry and Exit System (MEES)

Multiple Entry and Exit represents one of NEP's most student-centered reforms.

Students who discontinue education due to financial, personal, or health reasons can receive:

- Certificate after one year
- Diploma after two years
- Bachelor's degree after three years
- Bachelor's degree with research after four years

This reform aims to reduce educational discontinuity while recognizing accumulated learning.

Nevertheless, several scholars argue that employers may struggle to interpret multiple qualification levels during recruitment, potentially affecting labour market acceptance (Jha & Parvati, 2022).

Academic Bank of Credits (ABC)

ABC digitally stores academic credits earned across recognized higher education institutions.

Students may accumulate, transfer, and redeem credits throughout their educational journey.

The system encourages:

- Academic Mobility
- Interdisciplinary Education
- Lifelong Learning
- Institutional Collaboration

Although ABC has enormous transformative potential, its effectiveness depends upon digital infrastructure, institutional interoperability, and faculty awareness (UGC, 2023).

2.4 Digital Transformation in Higher Education

Digital education has become one of the defining pillars of NEP implementation.

The policy encourages:

- Blended Learning
- Virtual Laboratories
- Online Courses
- Artificial Intelligence
- Adaptive Learning
- Digital Governance
- Learning Analytics

The COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated digital transformation within Indian higher education (Dhawan, 2020).

Numerous universities now employ Learning Management Systems (LMS), MOOCs, SWAYAM, virtual classrooms, digital libraries, and online assessments.

However, scholars consistently highlight significant inequalities in digital access.

Students from rural and economically disadvantaged backgrounds continue to experience limited internet connectivity, inadequate digital devices, and insufficient ICT literacy (UNESCO, 2021).

These disparities remain particularly relevant for Haryana, where digital infrastructure varies substantially between urban universities and rural government colleges.

2.5 Research and Innovation Ecosystem

India contributes approximately 5–6% of global scientific publications but continues to lag behind many developed countries in research expenditure, patent generation, and innovation outputs (World Bank, 2023).

NEP proposes establishing the National Research Foundation (NRF) to strengthen research funding, interdisciplinary collaboration, and institutional research culture.

The policy emphasizes:

- undergraduate research
- innovation ecosystems
- incubation centres
- industry partnerships
- translational research
- societal impact

Universities are encouraged to integrate research into undergraduate education rather than restricting it to doctoral programmes.

Researchers argue that this approach may significantly improve India's research ecosystem provided adequate funding accompanies policy reforms (Altbach & Salmi, 2011).

2.6 Quality Assurance and Accreditation

Quality assurance occupies a central position within NEP.

The policy recommends transitioning from inspection-based regulation toward transparent, outcome-oriented accreditation systems.

NAAC accreditation, Institutional Development Plans (IDPs), performance indicators, learning outcomes, graduate

employability, research productivity, and governance quality have become increasingly important institutional benchmarks.

Several studies argue that quality assurance mechanisms improve institutional accountability, resource allocation, and continuous improvement.

However, critics caution that excessive compliance requirements may increase administrative burden without necessarily improving educational quality (Harvey & Green, 1993).

2.7 Haryana's Higher Education Landscape

Haryana possesses one of northern India's fastest-growing higher education systems.

The state comprises:

- State Universities
- Central Universities
- Private Universities
- Government Colleges
- Government-Aided Colleges
- Professional Institutions

The Department of Higher Education has positioned Haryana as an early adopter of NEP implementation.

Major initiatives include:

1. NEEV Portal
2. Academic Bank of Credits implementation
3. FYUP rollout
4. Institutional Development Plans
5. Digital governance
6. Outcome-based curriculum
7. Faculty Development Programmes
8. Skill enhancement courses
9. Internship integration
10. Innovation and Entrepreneurship Cells

The state government also issued Thirty Priority Action Points for all government and government-aided colleges to accelerate NEP implementation (Higher Education Department Haryana, 2022).

2.8 Critical Evaluation of Haryana's Implementation

Despite strong policy commitment, implementation remains uneven.

Major Achievements

1. Strong administrative leadership
2. Early adoption of ABC
3. Digital governance through NEEV
4. Curriculum restructuring
5. Increased NAAC awareness
6. Faculty development initiatives
7. Promotion of multidisciplinary education
8. Internship-based learning
9. Skill development programmes

Persistent Challenges

Numerous government colleges continue experiencing:

1. Faculty Shortages
2. Inadequate Laboratories
3. Limited Digital Infrastructure
4. Poor Internet Connectivity
5. Insufficient Research Funding
6. Low Industry Collaboration
7. Administrative Overload
8. Accreditation Disparities
9. Rural-Urban Inequality

Another emerging challenge concerns institutional readiness. Many affiliated colleges were originally established as single-discipline teaching institutions. Transitioning toward multidisciplinary universities requires major investments in faculty recruitment, infrastructure expansion, curriculum redesign, library modernization, laboratory development, and governance restructuring. Consequently, implementation has often emphasized policy compliance rather than institutional transformation. Several scholars argue that successful implementation requires sustained financial investment, decentralized governance, stronger institutional autonomy, continuous faculty development, and evidence-based monitoring rather than short-term administrative targets (Tilak, 2021; Sivaraman et al., 2026). A recurring theme in the literature is that NEP 2020 should not be evaluated solely by the number of reforms implemented but by the quality of their implementation and their measurable impact on student learning, research productivity, graduate employability, and institutional excellence. Haryana's proactive adoption of initiatives such as the NEEV portal and Academic Bank of Credits demonstrates administrative commitment; however, long-term success will depend on whether these reforms translate into sustained improvements in educational quality rather than procedural compliance.

3. RESEARCH GAP

Since the introduction of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, an increasing number of studies have examined its conceptual framework, anticipated reforms, and implications for the Indian higher education system. Most of the available literature highlights the policy's transformative vision of multidisciplinary education, flexible learning pathways, digital integration, research promotion, institutional autonomy, and competency-based education (Government of India, 2020; Kumar & Sharma, 2021; Sivaraman et al., 2026). However, much of this scholarship remains descriptive, focusing primarily on the theoretical provisions of the policy rather than critically evaluating its implementation and measurable outcomes.

A substantial proportion of existing studies have adopted a national perspective, discussing NEP 2020 as a comprehensive policy document without considering the diversity of implementation across Indian states. Since education is a concurrent subject under the Constitution of India, the success of NEP largely depends on state governments, universities, and affiliated colleges responsible for translating policy into practice. Consequently, implementation strategies, institutional preparedness, governance mechanisms, and resource allocation vary considerably among states, creating significant regional disparities that remain insufficiently explored in current literature (Tilak, 2021).

Within the context of Haryana, scholarly evidence remains particularly limited. Existing publications primarily consist of government circulars, implementation guidelines, institutional reports, conference proceedings, and descriptive analyses of policy initiatives. While these documents provide valuable information regarding administrative progress, they rarely evaluate whether the implemented reforms have resulted in meaningful improvements in educational quality, research productivity, graduate employability, governance efficiency, or institutional performance. Furthermore, there is limited empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of Haryana-specific initiatives such as the National Education Policy Evaluation and Validation (NEEV) Portal, the implementation of the Academic Bank of Credits (ABC), Four-Year Undergraduate Programmes (FYUP), Multiple Entry and Exit System (MEES), and Institutional Development Plans (IDPs).

Another notable limitation concerns the evaluation of institutional readiness. Most published studies discuss policy implementation without examining whether universities and affiliated colleges possess adequate infrastructure, digital resources, faculty capacity, financial support, laboratory facilities, interdisciplinary expertise, and governance mechanisms necessary for successful implementation. This

issue is particularly relevant for government colleges located in rural regions of Haryana, where disparities in infrastructure and resource availability may significantly influence policy outcomes.

The literature also reveals limited attention to faculty preparedness, one of the most critical determinants of educational reform. Successful implementation of multidisciplinary curricula, outcome-based education, blended learning, and competency-based assessment requires continuous faculty development and pedagogical transformation. However, relatively few studies have investigated the perceptions, competencies, and professional development needs of teachers responsible for implementing NEP reforms.

Similarly, although employability enhancement constitutes one of the principal objectives of NEP 2020, there is insufficient evidence regarding the impact of curriculum restructuring, internships, vocational integration, and skill-based education on graduate employment outcomes within Haryana's higher education institutions. Existing studies often assume positive outcomes without providing empirical validation.

Research concerning governance reforms also remains underdeveloped. NEP 2020 advocates institutional autonomy, evidence-based governance, digital monitoring systems, transparent quality assurance mechanisms, and performance-based accountability. Nevertheless, limited literature critically examines whether these governance reforms have improved institutional decision-making, administrative efficiency, or educational quality within Haryana.

Another significant gap relates to digital transformation. While numerous publications acknowledge the growing importance of digital learning under NEP 2020, relatively few studies critically evaluate digital inequality, technological readiness, internet accessibility, cybersecurity, digital literacy, and the sustainability of technology-enabled education across urban and rural institutions.

Finally, there is a scarcity of comprehensive systematic reviews synthesizing peer-reviewed literature, government policy documents, Higher Education Department reports, UGC regulations, AISHE statistics, NAAC frameworks, and Haryana-specific implementation initiatives into a single evidence-based analysis. Existing reviews often focus exclusively on conceptual discussions while overlooking practical implementation challenges and state-level experiences.

Accordingly, the present review seeks to address these gaps by critically synthesizing available evidence on the implementation of NEP 2020 in Haryana's higher education system. Unlike previous studies, this review integrates national policy objectives with state-specific initiatives to

evaluate governance reforms, institutional transformation, curriculum restructuring, digitalization, research promotion, employability, quality assurance, and implementation challenges. Through a systematic critical analysis of policy documents, government reports, and peer-reviewed literature, the study aims to provide a comprehensive assessment of Haryana's progress toward achieving the transformative vision articulated in NEP 2020.

4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The present review was undertaken to critically evaluate the implementation and impact of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 on higher education in Haryana. Specifically, the study seeks to achieve the following objectives:

1. To critically examine the philosophical foundations, objectives, and major reforms proposed under the National Education Policy 2020.
2. To evaluate the implementation strategies adopted by the Government of Haryana for operationalizing NEP 2020 across higher education institutions.
3. To assess the impact of major reforms, including multidisciplinary education, Four-Year Undergraduate Programmes, Academic Bank of Credits, Multiple Entry and Exit System, digital transformation, research promotion, and quality assurance.
4. To identify the achievements and best practices associated with NEP implementation in Haryana.
5. To critically analyse the institutional, financial, administrative, technological, and governance challenges affecting effective implementation.
6. To compare Haryana's implementation strategies with emerging national trends in higher education reform.
7. To identify existing research gaps and propose evidence-based recommendations for strengthening policy implementation and improving the quality, accessibility, and sustainability of higher education in Haryana.

5. METHODOLOGY

5.1 Research Design

The present study employed a systematic critical literature review to synthesize and critically evaluate the implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 within the context of higher education in Haryana. Unlike traditional narrative reviews, systematic reviews follow transparent and reproducible procedures for identifying, screening, evaluating, and synthesizing

available evidence, thereby minimizing selection bias and improving methodological rigor (Page et al., 2021).

The review combined qualitative thematic synthesis with policy analysis to examine how national policy objectives have been translated into institutional reforms within Haryana. The methodological framework was guided by the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA 2020) guidelines (Page et al., 2021).

5.2 Search Strategy

A comprehensive literature search was conducted between January and June 2026 using multiple electronic databases and official government repositories to identify relevant publications.

The following databases were searched:

- Scopus
- Web of Science
- ERIC
- Google Scholar
- JSTOR
- Dimensions
- Crossref

Government documents were retrieved from:

- Ministry of Education, Government of India
- University Grants Commission (UGC)
- Higher Education Department, Haryana
- National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC)
- All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE)
- National Education Policy Evaluation and Validation (NEEV) Portal

The following keywords were used individually and in combination using Boolean operators: "National Education Policy 2020" , "NEP 2020" , "Higher Education" , "Haryana" , "Academic Bank of Credits", "Four-Year Undergraduate Programme", "Multiple Entry Exit", "Digital Education", "Higher Education Governance", "Quality Assurance", "Multidisciplinary Education", "Higher Education Reform India" Reference lists of selected articles were manually searched to identify additional relevant studies.

5.3 Inclusion Criteria

Studies were included if they met the following criteria:

1. Published between 2020 and 2026.

2. Peer-reviewed journal articles.
3. Government reports.
4. UGC regulations.
5. NAAC guidelines.
6. AISHE reports.
7. Haryana Higher Education Department documents.
8. Studies examining NEP implementation in higher education.
9. English-language publications.

5.4 Exclusion Criteria

The following documents were excluded:

1. School education studies.
2. Opinion articles lacking empirical evidence.
3. Newspaper editorials.
4. Conference abstracts without full papers.
5. Duplicate publications.
6. Non-English publications.
7. Studies unrelated to higher education.

5.5 Study Selection

The study selection process followed four sequential stages consistent with PRISMA 2020:

Identification: Records were identified through electronic database searches and official government websites.

Screening: Duplicate records were removed, and titles and abstracts were independently screened for relevance.

Eligibility: Full-text articles meeting inclusion criteria were assessed for methodological quality and relevance.

Inclusion: Only studies directly addressing NEP implementation, higher education reforms, governance, curriculum restructuring, digital education, research promotion, quality assurance, and Haryana-specific initiatives were included in the final synthesis.

5.6 Data Extraction

Information extracted from each study included:

- Author(s)
- Publication year
- Study location
- Research design
- Sample characteristics
- Major findings

- NEP component investigated
- Key recommendations

The extracted information was subsequently organized into thematic evidence synthesis tables.

5.7 Quality Assessment

The methodological quality of included studies was evaluated using the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT 2018) for empirical research and the AACODS Checklist for policy documents and grey literature. Government reports issued by the Ministry of Education, UGC, NAAC, AISHE, and the Higher Education Department of Haryana were considered authoritative sources due to their official status and direct relevance to policy implementation.

5.8 Data Synthesis

A qualitative thematic synthesis approach was adopted to integrate findings across studies. Themes were developed inductively and aligned with the principal reform domains of NEP 2020, including multidisciplinary education, curriculum flexibility, digital transformation, governance reforms, research and innovation, quality assurance, faculty development, employability, and Haryana-specific implementation initiatives. Comparative analysis was also undertaken to identify common patterns, implementation challenges, and emerging best practices across the reviewed literature.

6. EVIDENCE BASE AND REVIEW STATUS

The evidence available for evaluating the impact of the National Education Policy 2020 on Haryana's higher education system falls into three broad categories: national policy and regulatory documents, Haryana-specific implementation documents, and peer-reviewed studies examining the implementation or implications of NEP 2020.

The National Education Policy 2020 constitutes the principal policy document. It proposes multidisciplinary higher education, flexible curricular structures, multiple entry and exit pathways, credit transfer, institutional restructuring, research promotion, technology integration, vocational education, equitable access, and a target Gross Enrolment Ratio of 50% in higher education by 2035 (Government of India, 2020). These broad policy objectives have subsequently been operationalized through University Grants Commission regulations and frameworks concerning the Academic Bank of Credits, undergraduate curricular structures, postgraduate programmes, qualification frameworks, multiple entry and exit, online education, and credit accumulation.

At the state level, Haryana has issued implementation directions for universities and colleges covering multidisciplinary curricula, internships, employability, faculty capacity building, accreditation, digital education, research, institutional governance, and quality assurance. The state's official admission framework also confirms that undergraduate admissions are being organized under NEP-aligned four-year structures, demonstrating that the policy has moved beyond the planning stage into formal academic implementation.

However, evidence concerning the *impact* of these reforms is more limited than evidence concerning their *adoption*. Official documents demonstrate that new regulations, curricula, portals, and administrative mechanisms have been introduced, but they do not independently establish that student learning, equity, employability, research quality, or institutional autonomy have improved. This distinction between policy adoption and educational impact is central to the present critical review.

7. EVIDENCE SYNTHESIS

Table 1: Major Verified Sources Relevant to NEP 2020 and Higher Education

Source	Type of evidence	Main contribution	Critical relevance
Government of India (2020)	National policy document	Defines the vision, objectives and structural reforms of NEP 2020	Establishes intended outcomes but does not provide post-implementation evidence
UGC Academic Bank of Credits Regulations	Regulatory document	Provides a formal mechanism for digital storage, transfer and redemption of credits	Enables mobility, but effectiveness depends on institutional compatibility and recognition
UGC undergraduate curriculum and credit framework	Regulatory framework	Supports four-year undergraduate programmes, flexible credits and multiple pathways	Requires extensive curriculum redesign and administrative coordination
AISHE 2021–22	National administrative dataset	Provides data on institutions, enrolment, teachers, infrastructure and participation	Useful as a baseline, but it predates the mature implementation of many NEP reforms
Haryana NEP implementation directions	State policy document	Identifies state-level strategies concerning multidisciplinary education, employability, digitalization and quality	Demonstrates administrative commitment, but not necessarily institutional outcomes
Panditrao and Panditrao (2020)	Scholarly policy analysis	Reviews the principal provisions and implementation implications of NEP 2020	Early analysis; largely conceptual because it was published soon after the policy
Saini et al. (2021)	Empirical social-media analysis	Examines public behavioural responses to NEP 2020	Provides evidence of public perceptions but not educational outcomes
Singh et al. (2023)	Empirical study of SWAYAM integration	Examines programme-inclusive credit-based MOOCs within Indian higher education	Supports the potential of online credit learning while identifying implementation requirements
Ashokkumar et al. (2025)	Scholarly impact analysis	Examines likely and emerging effects of NEP on education, training and infrastructure	Useful for national interpretation; Haryana-specific evidence remains limited
Mishra et al. (2025)	Empirical faculty-development study	Examines higher education teachers' experiences of professional development in India	Reinforces the importance of sustained faculty preparation
Angolkar et al. (2025)	Policy-based curricular study	Applies UGC and NEP frameworks to postgraduate public-health education	Demonstrates how NEP can guide disciplinary curriculum reform
Venkata and Kumar (2025)	Critical policy analysis	Analyses organisational, curricular, equity, skills and global dimensions of NEP	Highlights the scale and complexity of institutional transformation
Gopinath et al. (2025)	Empirical inequality study	Examines socioeconomic and spatial inequalities in access to higher education	Important for evaluating the equity claims of NEP 2020
Narkhede et al. (2025)	Empirical implementation study	Identifies critical factors affecting NEP implementation	Supports the argument that institutional capacity mediates policy success
College-educator implementation study (2025/2026)	Empirical faculty study	Examines the gap between policy intention and institutional practice	Directly relevant to implementation readiness and faculty-level challenges

8. CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF MAJOR REFORM DOMAINS

8.1 Multidisciplinary and Flexible Education

NEP 2020 seeks to dismantle rigid boundaries between arts, sciences, commerce, vocational education and professional studies. It envisages large multidisciplinary institutions and flexible combinations of major, minor, elective, skill and value-added courses (Government of India, 2020). Haryana's implementation documents similarly emphasize multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary education.

This reform has substantial educational potential. Flexible subject combinations may allow students to develop broader intellectual capabilities, combine disciplinary knowledge with employability skills and pursue individualized academic pathways. A physical education student, for example, may potentially combine sport science with psychology, data analytics, nutrition, management or communication.

Nevertheless, multidisciplinary education cannot be achieved merely by renaming courses or adding isolated electives. Genuine interdisciplinarity requires:

- qualified teachers across multiple domains;
- compatible timetables and credit systems;
- academic advising;
- sufficient student choice;
- laboratory and library resources;
- coordinated assessment practices; and
- institutional authority to design and revise curricula.

Many Haryana colleges remain affiliated teaching institutions with relatively small faculties and programme structures shaped by centralized university regulations. In such institutions, offering a wide range of meaningful major–minor combinations may be difficult. A college with limited permanent faculty may technically adopt a multidisciplinary curriculum while providing students with very few actual choices.

Therefore, the critical issue is not whether multidisciplinary terminology appears in the syllabus, but whether students can exercise real academic choice without timetable conflicts, faculty shortages, restricted seats or compulsory substitution of unavailable electives.

8.2 Four-Year Undergraduate Programme

The four-year undergraduate programme is one of the most visible changes introduced under NEP 2020. Haryana's

admission arrangements indicate implementation of NEP-aligned four-year undergraduate structures across colleges.

The four-year design may improve higher education by providing additional time for research, internships, community engagement, skill courses and advanced disciplinary study. It may also improve compatibility with international degree structures and create a clearer pathway into postgraduate education and research.

Its educational value, however, depends upon the quality of the fourth year. Extending a conventional three-year curriculum by one year does not automatically create research competence. A meaningful research year requires research-method training, ethical review systems, trained supervisors, access to databases and laboratories, manageable supervision loads and opportunities for field-based or institutional research.

Colleges that lack postgraduate departments, research-active faculty or adequate laboratories may struggle to provide a genuine bachelor's degree with research. In such settings, the research component may become a short descriptive project, compilation exercise or formal submission with limited academic value.

The equity implications also require examination. An additional year may enhance learning for students who can remain in education, but it may also increase the direct and opportunity costs of degree completion. Students from lower-income families, first-generation learners and those required to enter employment early may prefer the three-year exit. Consequently, the four-year structure could produce differentiated educational outcomes unless scholarships, hostel support, transport, mentoring and research resources are expanded.

8.3 Multiple Entry and Exit

The multiple-entry and exit system recognizes accumulated learning by permitting students to leave with an appropriate qualification and return later. Its conceptual strength lies in reducing the “all-or-nothing” nature of degree education. Students experiencing financial, health, family or employment-related interruptions may retain formal recognition of completed study.

Yet the same system presents a serious policy tension. An exit award can protect students who are compelled to discontinue, but it can also normalize early departure among disadvantaged groups. A student receiving a certificate after one year may technically benefit from flexibility, while structurally being excluded from the economic and social advantages associated with a complete degree.

The success of the system therefore depends on whether early exit is voluntary or caused by financial hardship, poor academic support, geographic disadvantage or institutional exclusion. Haryana should monitor the socioeconomic

profile of students taking each exit option. Without such monitoring, a policy designed for flexibility could unintentionally reproduce inequality.

Labour-market recognition also remains uncertain. Employers need clear information concerning the competencies represented by one-year certificates, two-year diplomas, three-year degrees and four-year degrees. Unless qualification outcomes are standardized and communicated, different exit awards may be interpreted inconsistently.

8.4 Academic Bank of Credits

The Academic Bank of Credits is designed as a digital mechanism through which credits awarded by registered institutions may be accumulated, transferred, validated and redeemed toward qualifications. UGC regulations formally define and govern this process.

The ABC has the potential to support mobility, interdisciplinary learning, online courses and lifelong education. It may permit students to earn credits from multiple recognized providers rather than being restricted entirely to one institution.

However, digital credit storage should not be confused with automatic academic mobility. Effective transfer requires:

1. equivalence between courses;
2. agreement about learning outcomes;
3. compatible credit calculations;
4. recognition by the receiving institution;
5. valid assessment standards; and
6. reliable student records.

A credit earned in one institution may not be educationally equivalent to a similarly titled course elsewhere. Universities may therefore retain substantial discretion over recognition and redemption. This means that the existence of an ABC account does not guarantee seamless transfer.

Haryana's institutions should publish clear credit-recognition rules, timelines and grievance procedures. Data should also be collected on the number of credits uploaded, transferred, rejected, redeemed and used toward completed qualifications. Registration numbers alone would be an inadequate indicator of success.

8.5 Digital Education and SWAYAM Integration

NEP 2020 gives considerable importance to digital learning, virtual laboratories, online resources, educational technology and blended instruction. SWAYAM and other credit-bearing online courses may increase access to subjects that are unavailable locally. Evidence concerning programme-inclusive credit-based SWAYAM courses suggests that online learning can expand curricular choice,

although institutional integration and learner support remain essential (Singh et al., 2023).

Digital education is particularly relevant for Haryana's rural and semi-rural colleges because it may partially address shortages of specialist courses. Nevertheless, online provision does not automatically produce equitable learning. Students require suitable devices, stable connectivity, digital literacy, language support and access to quiet learning environments.

Institutions also require systems for mentoring, proctored assessment, credit recognition and academic assistance. Where online courses are introduced simply to replace unavailable teachers, digital education may reduce rather than enhance educational quality.

The appropriate model is therefore blended and supported learning rather than unsupported content delivery. Colleges should organize orientation sessions, designated digital-learning spaces, faculty mentors and progress monitoring for students enrolled in online credit courses.

8.6 Faculty Preparedness

Faculty members are the principal implementers of curriculum reform, credit systems, research supervision, blended learning and competency-based assessment. Empirical work on professional development in Indian higher education reinforces the importance of structured, continuing and contextually relevant teacher development rather than isolated training events (Mishra et al., 2025).

In Haryana, faculty members are expected to interpret new curricular structures, advise students about credit choices, teach multidisciplinary courses, use digital platforms, develop learning outcomes and undertake new forms of assessment. These responsibilities represent a substantial change in academic work.

One-time orientation programmes are unlikely to be sufficient. Effective capacity building should include:

- Curriculum Mapping;
- Outcome-Based Education;
- Interdisciplinary Course Design;
- Assessment Rubrics;
- Digital Pedagogy;
- Academic Advising;
- Research Supervision;
- Use of ABC and Institutional Portals; And
- Inclusive Teaching Practices.

Faculty vacancies create an additional constraint. Where teachers already manage excessive teaching and

administrative responsibilities, NEP-related documentation may become a compliance burden rather than a mechanism for pedagogical improvement.

8.7 Research and Innovation

NEP 2020 seeks to strengthen research culture across universities and colleges and encourages undergraduate research, innovation, interdisciplinary inquiry and societal relevance (Government of India, 2020). For Haryana, this objective is especially important because research capacity is concentrated in established universities and selected specialist institutions. Many undergraduate colleges have limited research infrastructure, insufficient access to subscription databases, small laboratories, heavy teaching workloads and little institutional research funding.

The policy's impact should therefore be evaluated through indicators such as:

- funded projects;
- quality and integrity of publications;
- student research participation;
- patents and socially useful innovations;
- research collaborations;
- ethical-review capacity;
- access to laboratories and databases; and
- completion and quality of undergraduate research projects.

A narrow focus on publication counts may generate undesirable incentives, including low-quality publication, duplication and use of questionable journals. Haryana's implementation strategy should emphasize research quality, reproducibility, ethics and local relevance rather than numerical output alone.

8.8 Employability, Internships and Vocational Integration

NEP 2020 attempts to connect higher education with practical learning, vocational exposure, internships, entrepreneurship and employability. Haryana's strategy documents similarly emphasize internships and future readiness.

The inclusion of internships in curricula is potentially valuable because it can expose students to professional environments and help them develop communication, problem-solving and workplace skills. However, internship effectiveness varies considerably.

A high-quality internship should involve:

- defined learning outcomes;
- appropriate placement;
- supervision by the institution and host organization;
- meaningful work rather than observation alone;
- attendance and performance records;
- reflective reporting; and
- structured assessment.

The number of students placed should not be treated as the only indicator. Institutions must also evaluate whether placements were relevant to the student's discipline, whether supervision occurred, whether the host organization provided meaningful work and whether the experience improved competencies or employment prospects.

Stronger partnerships are required between Haryana's colleges and local industries, schools, sports organizations, healthcare institutions, agricultural enterprises, government departments, community organizations and start-ups.

8.9 Equity and Regional Disparities

Equity is a central principle of NEP 2020, yet national research continues to demonstrate socioeconomic and spatial inequalities in access to higher education (Gopinath et al., 2025).

Haryana's higher education system includes metropolitan, urban, semi-urban and rural institutions with markedly different resource environments. Universities and colleges situated in major cities may have stronger connectivity, research networks and industry exposure, while institutions in rural districts may face transport limitations, faculty shortages and limited local placement opportunities.

A uniform implementation mandate may therefore produce unequal outcomes. Institutions starting with stronger infrastructure are better positioned to benefit from flexibility, online learning, research and multidisciplinary programmes.

Equity-sensitive implementation should include differentiated funding, rural digital-learning centres, transport and hostel support, faculty incentives for underserved locations, disability-access measures, mentoring for first-generation learners and targeted academic support.

9. Haryana-Specific Implementation Assessment

Table 2: Policy Adoption Versus Evidence of Impact in Haryana

Reform domain	Evidence of adoption	Evidence of educational impact	Assessment
FYUP	Strong; incorporated into undergraduate structures and admissions	Limited publicly available longitudinal evidence	Implementation confirmed; impact not yet established
Multidisciplinary curriculum	Included in official directions and curricular frameworks	Limited evidence concerning actual student choice	Requires programme-level audits
ABC	Regulatory and administrative adoption	Limited published evidence on successful transfer and redemption	Registration should not be equated with mobility
Multiple entry and exit	Embedded in the programme structure	Little evidence on student return, completion or labour-market recognition	High-priority area for longitudinal research
Digital learning	Strong policy emphasis and increasing platform use	Uneven evidence across rural and urban institutions	Access and learning outcomes must be assessed separately
Faculty development	Training initiatives are evident	Limited evidence on sustained classroom change	Needs follow-up and competency assessment
Internships	Integrated into several programme structures	Quality, relevance and employability outcomes remain underreported	Quality assurance is necessary
Research promotion	Policy support and curricular inclusion	Uneven capacity across universities and colleges	Requires funding and mentoring
Accreditation and quality	Strong administrative emphasis	Accreditation may improve systems, but direct learning impact is uncertain	Avoid compliance-only implementation
Equity and inclusion	Explicit policy commitment	Institution-level disaggregated evidence remains insufficient	Requires district-, gender- and category-based monitoring

The analysis indicates that Haryana has made visible progress in the formal adoption of NEP structures. However, the available public evidence is stronger for administrative implementation than for measurable educational impact. This is not necessarily an indication of policy failure; many reforms are recent and require longitudinal assessment. It does mean that claims describing Haryana as fully transformed or conclusively successful would be premature.

10. SWOT ANALYSIS OF NEP 2020 IMPLEMENTATION IN HARYANA

Table 3: SWOT Matrix

Strengths	Weaknesses
Early administrative adoption of NEP-aligned undergraduate structures	Unequal institutional readiness
State-level implementation instructions and digital systems	Faculty shortages and workload pressures
Established network of universities and government colleges	Limited research capacity in many undergraduate colleges
Integration of internships, skill courses and digital learning	Insufficient evidence concerning actual student outcomes
Growing emphasis on accreditation and institutional planning	Risk of documentation-oriented compliance
Potential linkage with Haryana's industrial and service economy	Limited multidisciplinary choice in smaller institutions
Opportunities	Threats
Stronger university-college collaboration	Widening rural-urban institutional inequalities
Industry-linked internships and applied research	Early exits becoming concentrated among disadvantaged students
SWAYAM-supported access to specialist courses	Digital exclusion and variable online-learning quality
Interdisciplinary programmes aligned with regional needs	Inconsistent recognition of transferred credits
Undergraduate research focused on local problems	Low-quality or superficial research projects
Data-informed governance and student tracking	Rapid reform without adequate funding or staffing
Faculty development through national training programmes	Resistance caused by administrative overload

11. PROPOSED OUTCOME-BASED EVALUATION FRAMEWORK FOR HARYANA

The implementation of NEP 2020 should be assessed through five interconnected levels.

Level 1: Policy and Institutional Readiness: Indicators should include faculty availability, infrastructure, digital connectivity, laboratory access, library resources, academic advising, institutional development plans and budget allocation.

Level 2: Implementation Fidelity: This level should assess whether programmes are implemented as intended. Indicators may include availability of elective choices, timetable flexibility, credit uploading, internship supervision, faculty training and functioning grievance mechanisms.

Level 3: Student Experience: Student-centred indicators should include awareness of programme options, satisfaction with course choice, access to digital resources, academic advising, internship quality, participation in research and difficulties in credit transfer.

Level 4: Educational Outcomes: Outcome measures should include course completion, learning achievement, progression, dropout and re-entry, graduate attributes, research competence, employability, postgraduate admission and entrepreneurship.

Level 5: Equity and Long-Term Impact: All indicators should be disaggregated by gender, social category, disability, income group, rural–urban location, institution type and district. Long-term analysis should determine whether NEP has narrowed or widened educational inequalities.

The framework may be represented as follows:

Inputs and readiness → implementation processes → student experience → learning and employment outcomes → equitable social and institutional impact

Feedback from each stage should inform policy revision, resource allocation and faculty development.

12. CRITICAL DISCUSSION

NEP 2020 provides Haryana with an opportunity to move from rigid, examination-oriented degree structures toward flexible, multidisciplinary and competency-based higher education. Its strongest contribution lies in creating an integrated reform agenda linking curriculum, credits, digital education, research, skills, quality and governance.

However, its ambition is also its central implementation challenge. The policy expects institutions to undertake several major reforms simultaneously. Colleges must

redesign curricula, manage multiple qualification pathways, upload credits, supervise internships, introduce research, strengthen digital education and undertake quality-assurance activities. Institutions with limited faculty and infrastructure may formally adopt these reforms without possessing the capacity to implement them meaningfully.

The distinction between administrative compliance and educational transformation must therefore guide evaluation. Administrative compliance may be demonstrated through circulars, committees, portals, uploaded data, revised syllabi and completed forms. Educational transformation requires evidence that students have gained meaningful choice, stronger competencies, better learning experiences, improved employability and more equitable opportunities.

Current evidence supports the conclusion that Haryana has made substantial progress in policy adoption. It does not yet justify definitive claims that NEP 2020 has produced sustained improvements in learning, research productivity, employment or equity. Longitudinal and institution-level empirical research is required.

13. Priority Research Questions for Haryana

Future investigations should examine the following questions:

1. How many students use different entry and exit options, and what are their socioeconomic characteristics?
2. What proportion of registered ABC credits are successfully transferred and redeemed?
3. Do FYUP students demonstrate better research, communication and employability competencies than students under earlier programmes?
4. How much real subject choice is available in rural and small government colleges?
5. What is the quality and relevance of internships offered under NEP curricula?
6. How do faculty members perceive workload, training and institutional support?
7. Has digital learning narrowed or widened educational inequality?
8. What additional financial and human resources are required for effective implementation?
9. Do NEP reforms improve retention, postgraduate progression and employment?
10. How does implementation differ across government, aided, private and university teaching departments?

14. CONCLUSION OF THE EVIDENCE SYNTHESIS

Haryana has demonstrated a proactive administrative approach to the implementation of NEP 2020 through revised undergraduate structures, multidisciplinary curricula, credit-based systems, digital initiatives, internships and quality-oriented institutional directions. The policy has created new opportunities for flexibility, academic mobility, research, skill development and technology-supported education.

At the same time, the evidence base remains dominated by policy documents and implementation directives. Robust Haryana-specific evidence concerning learning outcomes, employment, student mobility, research quality, faculty preparedness and equity is still insufficient. The success of NEP 2020 should therefore not be judged solely through the adoption of frameworks or the completion of administrative targets.

For Haryana, the next phase must shift from implementation reporting to outcome evaluation. Financial support, faculty recruitment, academic advising, rural infrastructure, research mentoring, internship quality assurance and disaggregated student tracking will determine whether the policy produces substantive transformation or remains primarily procedural.

15. CONCLUSION

The National Education Policy 2020 seeks to transform Indian higher education through flexibility, multidisciplinary learning, academic mobility, research, digital education, vocational integration, institutional autonomy, and learner-centred teaching. Reforms such as the Four-Year Undergraduate Programme, multiple entry and exit, the Academic Bank of Credits, internships, and outcome-based quality assurance offer significant opportunities to improve educational quality and relevance (Government of India, 2020; University Grants Commission, 2021a, 2021b, 2022).

Haryana has demonstrated strong administrative commitment by introducing NEP-aligned curricula, credit-based programmes, skill courses, internships, digital systems, faculty-development initiatives, and institutional monitoring mechanisms. However, policy adoption should not be considered equivalent to educational transformation. Evidence regarding improvements in student learning, employability, research quality, academic mobility, retention, and equity remains limited.

The success of FYUP, ABC, digital learning, and multidisciplinary education will depend on adequate faculty, infrastructure, research facilities, academic advising, credit recognition, and student support. Particular attention is

required in rural and smaller government colleges, where faculty shortages, limited digital access, weak research infrastructure, and fewer academic choices may create unequal outcomes.

The next phase of implementation should therefore move beyond administrative compliance toward outcome-based evaluation. Haryana should monitor actual elective choice, credit transfer, student retention and re-entry, internship quality, research participation, graduate employment, and differences across social groups and institutional locations.

Overall, Haryana has created a promising foundation for NEP 2020, but its long-term success will depend on the depth, quality, and equity of implementation. Sustained public investment, faculty recruitment, professional development, research support, industry collaboration, rural institutional strengthening, and transparent monitoring are essential for converting policy reforms into meaningful educational outcomes.

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