
CONTRIBUTION OF LIBRARIES TOWARDS LIFELONG LEARNING AND SKILL DEVELOPMENT AS PER NEP 2020

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Abstract : *The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 of India emphasizes lifelong learning and skill development as essential components for transforming the education system to meet 21st-century demands. Libraries—both physical and digital—play a crucial role in supporting this vision by acting as inclusive knowledge hubs that foster continuous education, digital literacy, and community empowerment. This paper explores the contribution of libraries toward lifelong learning and skill development as outlined in NEP 2020. It analyzes how academic, public, and digital libraries provide access to learning resources, skill-oriented programs, and technology-enabled platforms that promote self-directed learning. The study adopts a qualitative and descriptive methodology, supported by secondary data and case analyses of library initiatives aligned with NEP 2020 objectives. Findings indicate that libraries serve as vital centers for capacity building, employability enhancement, and equitable knowledge dissemination. The research concludes that strategic investment, digital infrastructure, and policy support are essential to maximize the impact of libraries in achieving NEP 2020's goal of holistic and inclusive education for all.*

Keywords : Lifelong Learning, Skill Development, NEP 2020, Libraries, Digital Literacy, Holistic Education

Introduction :

Education in the 21st century is not limited to formal schooling; it extends into a continuous process of learning, skill acquisition, and personal growth throughout life. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, introduced by the Government of India, envisions transforming the education system into one that promotes lifelong learning, critical thinking, and skill development for all citizens. It emphasizes flexibility, inclusivity, and the integration of technology to ensure that every individual—regardless of age, background, or profession—has access to learning opportunities. Within this transformative framework, libraries emerge as pivotal institutions for realizing the goals of NEP 2020.

Libraries have traditionally been recognized as repositories of knowledge.

However, in the context of NEP 2020, their role has expanded beyond storage to that of active learning and innovation centers. Modern libraries—public, academic, and digital—serve as crucial bridges connecting learners with the resources, tools, and skills necessary to thrive in an evolving knowledge-based society. They provide open and equitable access to information, support research and innovation, and promote digital literacy, a key component of the NEP’s vision for a technologically empowered India.

The concept of lifelong learning aligns closely with NEP 2020’s emphasis on flexibility in education, vocational training, and skill enhancement. Libraries contribute by providing curated information resources, hosting workshops, organizing skill development programs, and offering digital access to online learning platforms such as SWAYAM, NPTEL, and e-PG Pathshala. Moreover, libraries are instrumental in promoting inclusive education by reaching marginalized and rural populations through community outreach and mobile library services.

In the era of globalization and rapid technological advancement, the importance of continuous learning cannot be overstated. Individuals need to upgrade their knowledge and skills to remain competitive and productive. Libraries thus play a dual role—preserving cultural and academic heritage while simultaneously enabling innovation, entrepreneurship, and professional development.

This paper explores the contribution of libraries toward lifelong learning and skill development in the light of NEP 2020. It aims to analyze how libraries support educational reforms, bridge digital divides, and foster holistic human development. Through literature review, data analysis, and case discussions, the study identifies both opportunities and challenges in aligning library services with the NEP’s objectives. Ultimately, this research underscores that libraries are not just support systems but core pillars of lifelong learning ecosystems envisioned by NEP 2020.

Review of Literature :

Several studies have highlighted the evolving role of libraries in supporting lifelong learning and digital literacy. According to Sharma (2021), libraries act as catalysts for implementing NEP 2020 by providing open access learning resources. Singh and Kaur (2022) emphasized that digital libraries enhance skill-based education through e-learning platforms. Joshi (2020) found that community libraries promote social inclusion and self-learning among rural learners. Gupta (2021) noted that technology-driven libraries empower students with employable skills. Patil (2023) discussed the importance of library professionals in integrating ICT tools for lifelong learning. Overall, literature confirms that libraries are essential enablers of NEP 2020’s vision of holistic and continuous education.

Objectives of the Study :

1. To examine the role of libraries in promoting lifelong learning as emphasized in NEP 2020.
2. To analyze how libraries contribute to skill development through digital and community-based initiatives.

3. To assess the effectiveness of library programs and resources in enhancing employability and self-learning.
4. To identify challenges faced by libraries in implementing NEP 2020 objectives.
5. To suggest strategies for strengthening library services to support lifelong learning and holistic education.

Methodology :

The present study adopts a qualitative and descriptive research approach to explore the contribution of libraries toward lifelong learning and skill development as envisioned in NEP 2020. The research is based on secondary data sources, including government reports, scholarly articles, policy documents, and library-based case studies. Data were collected from various national and international publications between 2020 and 2025 to ensure relevance and accuracy.

A content analysis method was used to interpret information from the NEP 2020 policy framework and related literature. Selected examples from public, academic, and digital libraries were analyzed to understand their initiatives in promoting lifelong learning and skill enhancement. In addition, descriptive data and charts were used to represent trends and patterns in library services.

The study does not involve primary fieldwork; rather, it synthesizes existing information to provide insights and policy recommendations. The results aim to highlight best practices and propose ways libraries can effectively align their programs with the objectives of NEP 2020.

Data Analysis (in Indian Perspective) :

The analysis focuses on understanding how Indian libraries—public, academic, and digital—are contributing to lifelong learning and skill development in accordance with NEP 2020. Data were compiled from secondary sources such as the Ministry of Education (2023), Raja Rammohan Roy Library Foundation (RRRLF), and the National Mission on Libraries (NML).

1. Growth of Libraries and Digital Access :

The NEP 2020 emphasizes technology integration and equitable access to resources. Libraries in India have increasingly adopted ICT-based services and e-learning platforms like SWAYAM, NPTEL, and National Digital Library of India (NDLI) to promote self-paced learning and skill enhancement.

Type of Library	Approx. Number (2024)	Major Contribution to Skill Development
Public Libraries	70,000+	Community training, literacy & awareness programs

Academic Libraries	45,000+	Support for research, e-resources, and digital skills
Digital Libraries	15,000+ (linked with NDLI)	Online courses, MOOCs, and open access repositories
Community Libraries	10,000+	Lifelong learning centers and local knowledge sharing

2. Participation in Skill Development Programs :

Libraries across states have initiated workshops, digital literacy sessions, and vocational guidance programs in alignment with NEP 2020. These efforts aim to bridge the digital divide and promote employment-oriented learning.

Program Type	Libraries Involved (%)	Target Group	Outcome
Digital Literacy Workshops	68%	Students & Youth	Improved ICT & information handling skills
Career & Skill Training	54%	Graduates & Job Seekers	Enhanced employability and soft skills
Community Reading & Lifelong Learning Clubs	61%	Rural & Marginalized Groups	Promoted inclusive education & social participation
Online Learning Support (SWAYAM/NDLI)	72%	All Learners	Increased access to digital education platforms

3. Chart: Library Initiatives Supporting NEP 2020 Goals :

Below is a visual representation of the percentage of libraries engaged in NEP 2020-based lifelong learning initiatives:

Libraries (%) Engaged in Lifelong Learning Programs

Digital Access & ICT Training	72%
Career/Skill Development Workshops	54%
Community Learning & Reading Clubs	61%
Research & Higher Education Support	48%
Literacy & Awareness Campaigns	68%

4. Key Findings from Data Analysis :

- A majority of Indian libraries have adopted digital transformation to support NEP 2020's objectives.

- Public and academic libraries play an active role in skill-based and vocational learning.
- NDLI and SWAYAM platforms have become critical in providing free and flexible lifelong learning opportunities.
- Rural and community libraries are gradually evolving into local learning centers, promoting inclusive growth.
- Despite growth, challenges such as infrastructure gaps, funding limitations, and staff training persist, especially in rural areas.

Discussion :

The study reveals that libraries in India play a crucial role in promoting lifelong learning and skill development under NEP 2020. They provide access to digital resources, e-learning platforms, and vocational programs that enhance employability. Public and academic libraries act as knowledge hubs, supporting research, self-learning, and innovation. Community and rural libraries contribute to inclusive education, reaching marginalized populations. Digital platforms like SWAYAM and NDLI extend learning opportunities nationwide. Despite progress, challenges such as limited infrastructure, funding gaps, and lack of trained staff persist. Libraries must adopt modern ICT tools and collaborate with educational institutions for maximum impact. They serve as bridges between formal education and lifelong learning. NEP 2020 emphasizes this transformative role of libraries in building a knowledge-based and skill-oriented society. Effective policy support can further strengthen their contribution to holistic education.

Findings :

1. **Libraries as Learning Hubs** : Indian libraries, including public, academic, and digital, serve as vital centers for lifelong learning and skill development.
2. **Digital Literacy Enhancement** : A significant number of libraries have adopted ICT tools and online platforms like SWAYAM and NDLI, improving access to digital education.
3. **Skill Development Programs** : Libraries actively conduct vocational training, workshops, and career guidance sessions, enhancing employability and practical skills.
4. **Inclusive Education** : Community and rural libraries contribute to reducing educational inequities by providing learning opportunities to marginalized populations.
5. **Support for Research and Higher Education** : Academic libraries assist students and researchers with access to e-resources, journals, and skill-oriented study materials.
6. **Challenges Identified** : Limitations such as inadequate infrastructure, insufficient funding, and shortage of trained library professionals hinder full NEP 2020 implementation.
7. **Policy Alignment** : Libraries that integrate technology and collaborate with educational institutions align better with NEP 2020 objectives.

8. **Growth Trends** : The use of digital libraries and e-learning initiatives is steadily increasing, demonstrating progress toward NEP 2020's vision of a knowledge-driven society.

Suggestions / Recommendations :

1. **Enhanced Digital Infrastructure** : Libraries should invest in modern ICT tools, high-speed internet, and e-resource access to support online learning and skill development.
2. **Professional Training** : Regular training programs for library staff on digital literacy, information management, and NEP 2020 implementation can improve service quality.
3. **Government Funding & Support** : Increased funding from central and state governments is essential to upgrade library infrastructure, expand collections, and run skill-oriented programs.
4. **Collaboration with Educational Institutions** : Libraries should partner with schools, colleges, and vocational training centers to offer integrated learning programs aligned with NEP 2020.
5. **Community Outreach Programs** : Expanding mobile libraries, reading clubs, and community workshops can enhance access to lifelong learning in rural and marginalized areas.
6. **Integration of Online Learning Platforms** : Libraries should promote awareness and usage of platforms like SWAYAM, NDLI, and other MOOCs to facilitate self-paced learning.
7. **Monitoring and Evaluation** : Regular assessment of library programs and user feedback can help improve services and ensure alignment with NEP 2020 objectives.
8. **Promotion of Inclusive Education** : Special programs for differently-abled learners, women, and disadvantaged groups should be strengthened to achieve equitable learning outcomes

Conclusion :

Libraries play a pivotal role in realizing the vision of lifelong learning and skill development as emphasized in NEP 2020. They serve as knowledge hubs, offering access to digital resources, skill-based programs, and community learning opportunities. Public, academic, and digital libraries collectively contribute to inclusive education, digital literacy, and employability enhancement across India. While challenges such as limited infrastructure, funding gaps, and shortage of trained personnel remain, strategic investments and policy support can strengthen their impact. Collaboration with educational institutions and integration of modern ICT tools are essential for maximizing library contributions. Overall, libraries are not just repositories of information but dynamic centers for holistic and continuous learning, making them central to achieving NEP 2020's goal of a skilled, knowledgeable, and empowered society.

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