NEP 2020: Pivotal Role of Libraries in Achieving the Goals

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ABSTRACT

National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) of Government of India envisions quality education for holistic development of its youth, with an objective to prepare them for the changing knowledge landscape. In order to achieve this goal it has proposed major reforms and laid down guiding principles to redesign our education system. This study is an attempt to define the role of libraries in achieving the goals of NEP 2020. Even though, NEP 2020 does not explicitly define the role of library in the new education system, libraries can play an important role in facilitating e-learning, experiential learning, lifelong learning, community engagement and quality research. Libraries have always been an integral part of an education system and will continue to play an important role in the educational, social, political and cultural development of the society. In fact implementation of NEP 2020 will further enhance the role of libraries. But, there is a need to recognize the potential of libraries in meeting the objectives of NEP 2020. Concrete steps should be taken to transform the libraries into technology enabled smart libraries. Librarians also need to acquire the required skill set and adapt themselves to the changing environment. They will have to proactively work to develop rich collection of print and e-resources, provide fast and efficient information services and collaborate with teachers and administration to improve the teaching-learning experience. Policies should be drafted at national and local level to define the role and functions of the library in the new education system.

KEYWORDS: NEP 2020, Role of Libraries, Library Resources, Library Services, E-learning, Quality Education, New Education Policy.

I. NTRODUCTION

We are today living in an information society which is characterized by use of technology and networking. Every aspect of society be it economy, politics or education is dependent on information and technology. Technology is fast changing and so is the knowledge landscape and there is a dire need to keep pace with these technological advances.

The world is also facing many environmental changes like global warming, imbalance in bio-diversity and pollution which is resulting in epidemics, natural disasters and depletion of natural resources. National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020), Government of India, has considered the impact of these changes and how it is going to change the employability landscape. There will be extensive use of technology and machines and new job will be created in the field of cloud computing, data science, machine learning, etc and the need for multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary research will increase. NEP 2020 emphasizes on preparing our youth for these changes. It has proposed major reforms to bridge the gap between the present learning outcomes and the required learning outcomes (NEP 2020, p.3).

The SDG (Sustainable Development Goal) 4 of UN 2030 Agenda is to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" and NEP 2020 envisions achieving this goal (NEP 2020, p.3). This study is an attempt to analyze and define the role of libraries in realizing this objective in accordance to the fundamental principles of NEP 2020.

2. NEP 2020: ARE LIBRARIES ALIGNED TO MEET THE GOALS?

2.1 Quality Education and Holistic Development

Learning should be based on understanding the concept and not on rote learning for exams. NEP 2020 lays emphasis on activity-based, enquiry based and experiential learning from foundational education to higher education to enhance creativity and critical thinking. It advocates learning through games, problem solving, discussions, debates; other activities like drama, painting, music, etc.; and on field training (NEP 2020, p5, 7, 11, 12).

Education should be holistic; with a right mix of sciences, social sciences, arts and humanities, sports and curricular activities. It should also develop ethical, human and constitutional values, life skills and pride in India and Indian culture and history (NEP 2020, p5-6).

Libraries have always played an important role in education. Libraries develop collection to support formal and informal education and also collect documents on nascent cutting edge scientific developments to support research. Libraries also collect documents on culture, history, literature, social and political changes, and in fact many libraries have rich collection of manuscripts, local culture and history; thus providing users with a rich collection to enrich their knowledge and satisfy their curiosity.

Libraries can facilitate activity based experiential learning, by providing small discussion rooms and also bigger conference halls for conducting activities and competitions like extempore, posters competitions, workshops, drama, etc. and the required information resources. These activities can be made more effective if teachers and librarians collaboratively conduct these programs. Many libraries these days are developing maker spaces to help students to learn by doing; students can use tools like computers, 3D printers, robotic kits, craft items, audio-video editing software, etc. to create physical or virtual items. Libraries also provide opportunities to students for volunteering programs, earn-while-learn, and internships thus encouraging on field training.

But, libraries are not mere store houses of books or just information providers; they have always been centres for educational, social, cultural and political development. Libraries regularly organize lectures by eminent persons, debates, study circles, book clubs and brainstorming sessions on various social and political issues, thus providing an environment for social interaction and open discussions. Workshops on live skills like communication skills, information literacy, stress management, etc. are also conducted by libraries these days. So, libraries can play a key role in meeting the objective of NEP to provide quality education leading to holistic development of students.

2.2 Use of Technology in Teaching and Learning

One of the fundamental principles of NEP 2020 is "extensive use of technology in teaching and learning, removing language barriers, increasing access for *Divyang* students, and educational planning and management" (NEP 2020, p.5).

To attain this goal, open digital solutions like DIKSHA (Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing), SWAYAM and SWAMPRABHA have been set up by the Indian Government (NEP 2020, p.59). There is emphasis on developing quality e-books and to establish digital libraries to ensure availability of good quality books and promote reading habit among school children (NEP 2020, p.9, 2.8). It advocates online education and blended learning. Pilot studies for integrating education with online education are also proposed (p.59). The policy envisions "increased access, equity and inclusion through measures like online education, ODL (Open Distance Learning), accessibility and availability of learning material to learners with disability" (p.34)

Libraries can play a pivotal role in achieving the above mentioned objectives. Libraries are developing digital collections and making them available through remote access. Unlike the information available on the cyberspace, the information made available by the libraries is selected according to user needs, is authentic and also catalogued. Application of Web 2.0 technologies in libraries has made it possible to provide many user-centric services like current awareness services, selective dissemination of information, etc. and reach out to the user through social media (Kishore, 2015). Libraries are also making an effort to catalogue open access information. INFLIBNET (Information Library Network) has developed many services like Sodhganga-a repository of Ph.D. thesis and Vidya Mitra. It is also providing ILMS (INFLIBNET Learning Management Service) which can be used for conducting online classes, providing e-resources to students, maintaining record of assignments and projects and also to conduct examination (https://www.inflibnet.ac.in/activities/). Libraries of higher education institutions in India provide these INFLIBNET services to the users of their institutions. Libraries can support blended learning and flipped learning by providing e-learning resources to students and also provide guidance on making right information choices through reader's advisory service and reference service.

Computer labs are provided to students to access e-resources and complete their assignments. Libraries also provide rooms with wi-fi and LAN facility where students can bring their own laptops and other digital devices. Many libraries also provide e-book readers on loan. Libraries also cater to the needs of the disabled by providing information in Braille and audio; and provide equipments and software for easy information access by them.

2.3 Outstanding Research

NEP2020 states "outstanding research as a co-requisite for outstanding education and development" should be a guiding principle for quality education (NEP 2020, p.5).

Libraries of higher education institution support quality research by developing dynamic collection of print and e-journals and subscribing to e-databases by SCOPUS, Web of Science, etc. Information consolidation and repackaging is an important activity undertaken specially by special libraries and documentation centres to prepare products like research trend reports, state-of-art reports, technical reports, feasibility reports, digests, manuals, data sheets and documentation lists which are very important for researchers. Subject gateways created by libraries are authentic one-stop destination to get varied documents on a subject. Libraries provide many research support services like reference and referral service, literature search service, bibliographic service, indexing and abstracting service, translation service, current awareness service, plagiarism check, information literacy programs on research literacy, critical thinking, numerical literacy, visual literacy, author workshops, etc. Libraries are also creating institutional repositories of scholarly output by the members of the institution and data repositories of research data. With the advent of ICT, information is being provided by remote access. Libraries also provide infrastructural and technical support for training programs, workshops and conferences; which are usually part of research projects especially interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research projects.

2.4 Lifelong Learning

Learn-to-learn is an important objective of NEP 2020 (p.3). We not only have to provide our students with quality holistic education but prepare them to be lifelong learners.

Education and learning is the foundation of any society. To evolve, adapt and grow, it is essential to continue learning. So, learning has to be a continuous process for the development of a society and also for an individual. This process of gaining knowledge and skills that continues throughout a person's life is called lifelong learning (www.macmillandictionary.com). Lifelong Learning is the lifelong, voluntary and self-motivated pursuit of knowledge for either personal or professional reasons. As such, it not only enhances social inclusion, active citizenship and personal development but also competitiveness and employability (www.wikipedia.com).

Lifelong learning requires information literacy skills. American Library Association (ALA) defines information literacy as the ability of an individual to recognize one's information need, identify information resources to satisfy this need, locate and select the information, be able to access the required information, and use and communicate it ethically and legally.

Information literacy is an amalgamation of different skills like library literacy, research literacy, communication literacy, digital literacy, numerical literacy, resource literacy, etc. Libraries provide information literacy skills to their users, thus enabling them to become lifelong learners. UNESCO has emphasized on the importance of lifelong learning (UNESCO, 2004) and Alexandria Proclamation of 2005 describes information literacy as "essential for individuals to achieve personal, social, occupational and educational goals".

According to IFLA's (International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions) Guidelines on Information Literacy and Lifelong Learning, "information literacy and lifelong learning have a strategic, mutually reinforcing relationship with each other that is critical to the success of every individual, organization, institution, and nation-state in the global information society" (Lau, 2006). Libraries can play a key role in satisfying this objective of NEP 2020.

2.5 Community Engagement and Promotion of Indian Language, Arts and Culture

NEP 2020 says efforts should be made to involve community and alumni in teaching, guiding, mentoring (NEP 2020, p. 11). Students should be provided experiential learning and practice-based curriculum for school students through activities involving arts, quizzes, sports and vocational crafts and also visits to places of historical, cultural and tourist interests and it advocates involvement of local artists, craftsman and vocational experts (NEP 2020, p.12, 16). In higher education also, eco-clubs, activity clubs, community service projects, etc should be undertaken and students should be encouraged to participate in various activities (NEP 2020, p40).

"Rootedness and pride in India, and its rich, diverse, ancient and modern culture and knowledge systems and traditions" is one of the fundamental guiding principles of NEP 2020 for developing our education system (NEP 2020, p.6). To achieve this goal, it advocates developing a rich collection of multilingual documents; conducting fun activities on "The Languages of India", developing a "Sanskrit Language System"; developing a standard "Indian Sign Languages" and developing curriculum material for students with hearing impairment and also for students with other disabilities; and audio, video and textual collection on ancient knowledge system, tribal knowledge and indigenous and traditional ways of learning; (NEP 2020, p. 14,16, 17,53-56)

Collection of knowledge resources in accordance to the above guiding principles will be the foundation for satisfying this objective of NEP 2020. Libraries at state and national level, like the National Library, Kolkata, Khuda Baksh Oriental Library, Patna, Sarasvati Mahal Library, Tanjore to name a few, maintain rich collection of Indian history and literature. Special libraries like TKDL (Traditional Knowledge Digital Library), has developed a very good collection of documents on indigenous and tribal knowledge. Libraries could collaborate with digital humanities projects and help in data preservation, cataloguing and also discovery and dissemination of information (Debnath, 2019).

Extension services are an important part of libraries. Competitions on special days like Education Day, Earth Day, etc. and festivals; book-reading clubs; lectures by local experts, mobile libraries and branch libraries to increase accessibility to library resources; book exhibitions; musical nights; etc. are regularly conducted by libraries. These activities are conducted by the libraries with the help of students, teachers, administration and local community. So, libraries have always played a key role in promoting community engagement and Indian culture, history and ethos.

Libraries now-a-days also conduct innovative programs like "human library" where they call people from the local community to share their experiences with the students. This has proved to be very helpful in gaining insights in life skills, improving social adaptability, developing empathy as well as realizing one's own interest and potential. Libraries are also promoting scientific research through citizen science i.e. public participation in data collection and analysis for research. There are many citizen science initiatives by libraries namely SciStarter by Arizona University

Library, University College London, University of Barcelona, University of South Denmark, Qatar National Library (Ignat, T and others, 2018).

3. NEP 2020 Goals and Libraries: What needs to be done?

3.1 Proactive Role of Librarians

Librarians need to realize that libraries have a pivotal role in the implementation of NEP 2020. They will have to develop required skill sets and a growth mindset to prepare for it. The libraries will have to be transformed to meet the objectives and librarians will have to play a proactive role in this process.

A dynamic collection needs to be developed, not only based on the syllabus of the academic courses of the institution but a collection that will also cater to the social, cultural, political and other information needs of the students like leisure reading, skill developments, etc. and help in their holistic growth. Digital collection with facilities to access the same in the library as well as from outside library will have to be developed. Creation of institutional repositories, data repositories and indexing of open access resources will also be required. Libraries will have to network with other libraries and become part of consortia to provide a variety of resources to its users. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) based services have to be introduced so that library resources and services can be accessed at any-time from any-where. Libraries should provide innovative services like research support services; development and maintenance of learning management systems; discovery services; human libraries; information literacy programs on digital literacy, research literacy, critical thinking, etc.; to promote quality education and research. Also, libraries should focus on marketing of information resources and services for their optimum utilization (Amrit Pal Kaur, 2004; Thapa, 2016).

Librarian – teacher collaboration will be a prerequisite for effective teaching in blended mode and conducting activities, assignments, and projects. Librarian will have to work towards developing such a relationship which will help implement new teaching pedagogy. Community engagement will have to be fostered by reaching out to the local community not only to empower the community but also to develop library as a social learning space (Roy and Dasgupta, 2015).

But, providing quality services will need infrastructure development like construction of reading rooms, computer laboratories with Wi-Fi and LAN facilities, small discussion rooms, rooms for conducting classes/workshops in small groups, halls for large conferences and other cultural activities, get-your-own-device halls with LAN and Wi-Fi, maker spaces, etc. Librarian need to collaborate with the administration as well as local community and funding agencies at national and international level for the purpose.

3.2 Role of Teachers

Teachers also need to realize the importance of the libraries and how to get maximum benefits of the information resources and services provided by their library. Teachers should discuss with the librarians about the assignments, projects and activities they wish to conduct and also encourage students to visit the library and use the resources and services to complete their academic tasks. Library centric teaching and teacher-librarian collaboration can greatly increase the quality of education and research.

3.3 Role of Administration

NEP 2020 emphasizes on holistic growth of students and greater flexibility to teachers to introduce innovative teaching pedagogy to achieve the same. It also emphasizes on excessive use of technology to achieve these goals. Libraries can play a key role as facilitators in this teaching-learning process. But, this will not be possible without the support of the administration. Role of libraries needs to be recognized and defined. Financial, tactical and administrative support should be provided to redesign the education system with library at the pivotal position. Policies need to be drafted at local level for smooth implementation of NEP 2020.

Libraries are fast becoming digital libraries with huge collection of e-resources in text, audio, video and multimedia. Blended learning and ODL has led to development of MOOCS and other open resources. Institutional repositories and data repositories are also being created. Data created by students and teachers is also in digital form and is being stored by the use of Learning Management Systems. Institutions are installing MIS (Management Information Systems) to manage their day-to-day transactional data. This data is continuously increasing; we are now in the realm of big data. This big data needs to be managed efficiently and analyzed to get a deeper understanding of student experience and need, evaluate status of education and develop quality based student centric education system (Jadhav, 2019; Abdul Alim and Shukla, 2018). As libraries are in a pivotal position, clear policies defining the functions and role of libraries should be framed.

Planning for future is another area that needs to be focused. Libraries are accepting the ICT onslaught and adapting to the changing information landscape. Application of artificial intelligence based technologies like virtual reality, augmented reality, expert systems, natural language processing are already being used in the libraries abroad and we will have to plan for the same in our libraries (Liang and Chen, 2020; Wojcik, 2020). Support of administration will be a key factor in libraries executing their responsibilities and realizing the NEP 2020 goals.

CONCLUSION

Role of libraries has not been stated explicitly in NEP 2020 but the role of libraries in providing quality education cannot be overlooked. Libraries have always been an important and indispensable part of the teaching learning process since ancient times. Our world famous ancient universities like Takshashila, Nalanda and Vikramashila also maintained rich libraries. Libraries have been defined as the heart of an institution. NKC (National Knowledge Commission), 2007 also states that "Libraries have a recognized social function in making knowledge publicly available to all. They serve as local centres of information and learning, and are local gateways to national and global knowledge".

The objectives and guiding principles of NEP 2020, further enhances the role of libraries in school education and higher education. Quality education and research will not be possible without the support of libraries. The libraries too will have to evolve to meet this need. The transition from traditional libraries to modern technology enabled libraries has to be fast and smooth. NKC (2007) has given many recommendations for library reforms like setting up a national mission on libraries to look into the problems of libraries; extensive use of ICT in libraries; and encourage community engagement in libraries. These recommendations are aligned to the objectives of NEP 2020. Strategic planning at local and national level keeping the objectives of NEP 2020; challenges faced by libraries; and recommendations of NKC is the need of the hour. Successful implementation of NEP 2020 will be possible only through collaborative effort of all stake holders i.e. administrators, librarians, teachers, students and the local community.

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