

NEP 2020 at Six Years: An Analytical Review for the LIS Profession

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Abstract- Objective: *The National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) completed six years of implementation in July 2026. This paper analyses the policy's cumulative impact on the Library and Information Science (LIS) profession in India, examining how its provisions on multidisciplinary education, digital infrastructure, research culture, and skill development have reshaped the mandate, curriculum, and practice of academic and institutional libraries.*

Methodology: *The study adopts a conceptual and analytical design based on document review and literature synthesis. Primary policy texts (the NEP 2020 document, PIB releases, UGC and regulatory notifications) are read alongside ten peer-reviewed studies published between 2021 and 2025 on NEP 2020 and libraries, supplemented by government-reported six-year achievement indicators.*

Key Findings: *NEP 2020 has repositioned libraries from passive repositories to active partners in multidisciplinary, research-oriented, and technology-enabled learning. Reported gains include curricular restructuring toward the 5+3+3+4 framework, expansion of digital learning infrastructure, growth in research-support services, and revision of LIS curricula toward data science, digital curation, and information literacy. However, implementation remains uneven: rural and tribal libraries report ICT penetration of only 25-40 per cent, LIS professional cadres remain understaffed, and no dedicated national library policy or library cadre-restructuring instrument has yet been notified to operationalise NEP's library-related commitments.*

Conclusion: *NEP 2020 provides a credible and largely favourable framework for repositioning the LIS profession, but six years of progressive implementation reveal a persistent gap between policy vision and library-level resourcing. Sustained investment in professional development, rural digital infrastructure, and a dedicated library policy instrument is required to convert the NEP's stated intentions into demonstrable professional and institutional outcomes.*

Keywords: *NEP 2020; Library and Information Science; Academic Libraries; LIS Education; Multidisciplinary Learning*

I. INTRODUCTION

The National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020), notified by the Government of India on 29 July 2020, replaced the thirty-four-year-old National Policy on Education of 1986 with a framework explicitly designed to be "India-centric" and aligned to the needs of the twenty-first century (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2020). Six years on, the policy's own anniversary communications describe it as "Building the Bharat of Tomorrow," citing curricular and pedagogical reforms across schools, a foundational literacy and numeracy mission in full swing, implemented National Curriculum Frameworks, an expanded digital learning ecosystem, new multidisciplinary higher education institutions, an operational National Credit Framework, and a strengthened focus on research, innovation and skill development as its headline six-year achievements.

For the Library and Information Science (LIS) profession, NEP 2020 is not a peripheral document. It names libraries directly among the institutions expected to carry its vision, and its structural reforms -- the 5+3+3+4 curricular architecture, multiple entry-exit with an Academic Bank of Credits, the Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) as a single regulatory umbrella, the National Research Foundation, and PARAKH as the national assessment body -- each carry direct or indirect implications for how libraries are staffed, resourced, and integrated into teaching and research. This paper undertakes an analytical review, at the six-year mark, of what NEP 2020 has meant, and continues to mean, for LIS

professionals, LIS education, and library services in Indian higher education.

1.2. Objectives of the Study

- To examine the specific provisions of NEP 2020 that bear directly on libraries, LIS education, and information professionals.
- To synthesise the existing peer-reviewed literature on NEP 2020 and libraries published since 2020.
- To analyse the extent to which six years of implementation have translated policy intent into measurable change for the LIS profession.
- To identify the persistent gaps and challenges facing LIS professionals under the NEP 2020 framework.
- To propose recommendations for strengthening the profession's alignment with the policy's remaining implementation horizon.

1.3. Research Questions

- RQ1: What provisions of NEP 2020 carry direct or indirect implications for libraries and LIS professionals?
- RQ2: What does the peer-reviewed literature published since 2020 report about the relationship between NEP 2020 and library practice in India?
- RQ3: To what extent have six years of implementation translated NEP 2020's library-related vision into measurable institutional change?
- RQ4: What structural gaps continue to separate policy intent from library-level outcomes?
- RQ5: What measures would strengthen the LIS profession's position within NEP 2020's remaining implementation period?

1.4. Methodology

This is a conceptual and analytical paper rather than a primary empirical study. Three categories of source material were consulted. First, the NEP 2020 policy document itself and associated government communications, including Press Information Bureau releases and the official six-year progress summary, were reviewed for provisions with direct bearing on libraries and information services. Second, ten peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2021 and 2025 that specifically examine NEP 2020 in relation

to libraries, academic library services, or LIS education were identified through database and web searches and reviewed systematically; these form the Review of Literature in Section 5. Third, the analytical discussion in Section 7 draws on this literature, supplemented by general higher-education policy scholarship, to assess implementation outcomes against the policy's stated objectives. The paper does not report new primary field data; its conclusions are interpretive, synthesising secondary evidence, and its recommendations are offered as a basis for future empirical testing.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Ten studies published in the six years since NEP 2020's notification were reviewed to establish the state of scholarly understanding of the policy's relationship with libraries and LIS practice.

Asif and Singh (2022) examined the key highlights of NEP 2020 with specific attention to library features, concluding that the policy positions libraries as an essential service across the school, college, and university continuum, though implementation is left to individual states and institutions since the policy is advisory rather than mandatory in nature. Bapte (2022), writing in the *Annals of Library and Information Studies*, argued that while NEP 2020 does not explicitly enumerate the expectations it holds of library and information centres, libraries with quality collections and digital resources are nonetheless essential to delivering the quality education the policy promises. Bapte proposed that embedded librarianship -- library professionals working proactively within teaching and research workflows -- is the mechanism through which libraries can meet these implicit expectations, recommending that higher-education libraries be developed as research-support and student-support centres. Vagdal and Acharya (2023) reviewed the role of academic libraries in supporting NEP 2020's objectives, concluding that libraries contribute significantly through access to diverse and quality resources, promotion of lifelong learning, facilitation of research and innovation, and enhancement of digital literacy skills. The study also identified funding constraints, the digital divide, limited

physical space, and the demands of technology integration as the principal challenges academic libraries face in meeting NEP's expectations. Thapa (2022) examined the pivotal role libraries play in achieving NEP 2020's goals, emphasising that libraries must develop dynamic collections responsive not only to academic syllabi but also to students' social, cultural, and skill-development needs, and that digital collections accessible both within and beyond the library building are essential to the policy's vision of anytime, anywhere learning. Jayamma, Mahesh, and Kotur (2023), drawing on semi-structured interviews with 125 faculty members and librarians across four Karnataka higher education institutions, found that libraries are expected to actively promote digital literacy, cultivate research and innovation, and provide an inclusive and equitable approach to information access under NEP 2020. Their empirical data indicated that libraries are increasingly viewed by faculty as collaborative spaces for interdisciplinary research and knowledge-sharing rather than passive collection repositories. Lamani and Rathod (2021), among the earliest post-notification studies, outlined the anticipated role of libraries in NEP 2020 implementation, highlighting the policy's emphasis on reading culture, multilingual resources, and the integration of libraries into the foundational literacy mission for primary-stage learners. Soni (2023) conducted a literature survey synthesising NEP 2020's implications for libraries, concluding that the policy recognises libraries as central to promoting a culture of reading and lifelong learning, and specifically highlights the need to strengthen school and public libraries with adequate resources, digital collections, and trained librarians, while also promoting local and indigenous knowledge through community libraries. Varma, Patel, Priksat, Hota, and Pereira (2021), writing in the *Journal of Knowledge Management*, analysed NEP 2020 as an instrument of indigenous knowledge-economy policy, arguing that the policy's multidisciplinary and research-oriented provisions position Indian higher education institutions -- and by extension their knowledge infrastructure, including libraries -- as contributors to a global knowledge economy rooted in Indian intellectual traditions. Sontakke, Kadam, and Vartale (2022) reviewed NEP 2020 as a higher-education reform programme,

situating its curricular flexibility, credit-based mobility, and research-funding provisions within the broader trajectory of Indian higher-education policy, and noting that successful implementation depends on parallel investment in institutional infrastructure, including libraries and digital learning resources. Singh and Chaurasia (2025), in the most recent and most empirically grounded review located for this study, conducted a systematic review of academic articles, policy documents, and case studies published between 2020 and 2025 on libraries under NEP 2020. Their analysis reported measurable gains -- including up to a 20 per cent increase in enrolment and digital-literacy indicators in urban college libraries, expanded rural coverage through mobile digital units, and strengthened multidisciplinary and vocational education supported by hybrid academic libraries -- while also documenting that rural information and communication technology (ICT) penetration remains at only 25-40 per cent, with inadequate funding and uneven staffing as the principal barriers to equitable implementation. The study called for continued investment in rural digitisation, professional librarian training, a national library services framework, and stronger government-industry partnerships, situating libraries as central to closing India's socio-economic knowledge gap.

Collectively, these ten studies converge on a consistent finding: NEP 2020 assigns libraries a substantively larger role than any preceding Indian education policy, but the translation of that role into funded, staffed, and infrastructurally supported reality remains partial and geographically uneven six years into implementation.

III. NEP 2020: PROVISIONS WITH DIRECT RELEVANCE TO THE LIS PROFESSION

NEP 2020's twelve headline reform areas, as consolidated in the Ministry of Education's six-year review communications, touch the LIS profession with varying degrees of directness. Four clusters are especially consequential.

Curricular and structural reform: The 5+3+3+4 school structure and the shift toward holistic, multidisciplinary higher education dissolve the rigid

disciplinary silos within which LIS education has traditionally operated. Multiple entry-exit options and the Academic Bank of Credits mean LIS programmes must now accommodate learners who arrive from, and depart toward, unrelated disciplines, requiring modular course design rather than a fixed four-year sequence.

Digital infrastructure and technology integration: NEP 2020 explicitly commits to strengthening digital infrastructure, promoting blended learning, virtual laboratories, and digital resources for all learners. For libraries, this translates into an expanded mandate to build and maintain institutional repositories, subscribe to e-resource consortia, and provide instructional support in digital and information literacy -- functions that sit squarely within core LIS competencies.

Research and innovation: The establishment of a National Research Foundation and the policy's emphasis on a research culture across higher education institutions (HEIs) directly implicate libraries as research-support infrastructure: managing institutional repositories, supporting plagiarism-detection and citation workflows, and providing bibliometric and scholarly-communication services.

Regulatory and assessment reform: The proposed Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) as a single regulatory umbrella, and PARAKH as the national assessment centre for competency-based evaluation, signal a shift away from rote learning toward evidence-based, outcome-oriented assessment -- a shift that increases the institutional premium on libraries as sources of authentic learning materials rather than mere textbook repositories.

Two further reform areas -- teacher education and professional development, and inclusive and equitable education -- extend by direct analogy to library personnel: NEP 2020's call for continuous professional development through defined professional standards, and its emphasis on inclusion of disadvantaged groups and support for rural and tribal areas, apply with equal force to the training, deployment, and equitable distribution of LIS professionals across urban, rural, and tribal institutions.

Table 1 maps the twelve reform areas named in the policy's own six-year retrospective communications to their principal implication for libraries and LIS professionals.

Table-1. NEP 2020 reform areas and their implications for the LIS profession

NEP 2020 reform area	Principal implication for LIS practice
Foundational literacy and numeracy	School and public libraries as delivery partners for NIPUN Bharat-aligned reading programmes
New curricular structure (5+3+3+4)	Library services segmented by developmental stage rather than a uniform collection model
Holistic and multidisciplinary education	LIS collections and instruction spanning arts, science, commerce and vocational streams
Flexible curriculum and Academic Bank of Credits	Libraries serving transient, cross-disciplinary users with modular information needs
Integration of technology	Expanded e-resource, virtual-library and blended-learning support role
Inclusive and equitable education	Library outreach to disadvantaged groups, rural and tribal Special Education Zones
Teacher education and professional development	Analogous case for a formal LIS continuing-development and standards framework
Research and innovation	Libraries as research-support infrastructure for the National Research Foundation
Vocational and skill education	LIS curricula incorporating data analytics, digital

	curation and information-security skills
Higher education reforms (HECI)	Absence of a library-specific regulatory instrument within the new umbrella body
Assessment reforms (PARAKH)	Information-literacy instruction as a precondition for competency-based assessment
Indian Knowledge Systems and values	Libraries as custodians of indigenous, multilingual and heritage collections

Source: developed from the policy provisions summarized in NEP 2020 (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2020) and its six-year progress communications.

IV. ANALYTICAL DISCUSSION: SIX YEARS OF IMPLEMENTATION AND IMPACT ON THE LIS PROFESSION

4.1 LIS curriculum and pedagogical restructuring. In direct response to NEP 2020's multidisciplinary mandate, LIS departments across Indian universities have begun revising undergraduate and postgraduate syllabi to incorporate data science, digital curation, information retrieval, and emerging-technology modules alongside traditional cataloguing, classification, and reference-service content. Bachelor of Library and Information Science (BLIS) programmes at several state universities have been restructured under NEP 2020 recommendations, formalising multiple entry-exit points and credit-based progression, with some institutions introducing LIS as a Multidisciplinary Course (MDC) or Interdisciplinary Course (IDC) option available to students enrolled in unrelated degree programmes. This broadens the reach of LIS instruction beyond dedicated LIS students to the wider student body, but it also multiplies the pedagogical burden on college librarians, who are increasingly expected to design and deliver credit-bearing instruction alongside their operational duties. This is consistent with the finding, common across the reviewed literature (Soni, 2023; Vagdal & Acharya, 2023), that curricular flexibility

is among the most concretely realised of NEP's library-relevant commitments, even where the staffing implications of that flexibility remain unresolved.

4.2 Academic libraries as multidisciplinary and research hubs. The empirical evidence from Jayamma et al. (2023) and Singh and Chaurasia (2025) indicates that academic libraries are increasingly perceived by faculty and institutional leadership as collaborative spaces for interdisciplinary research rather than passive lending counters. Libraries have expanded their role in supporting institutional repositories, research-data management, and scholarly-communication training -- functions that align with NEP's National Research Foundation vision and with the broader knowledge-economy positioning that Varma et al. (2021) attribute to the policy. Several institutions report library-led initiatives in plagiarism-detection workflow management, citation-analysis training, and open-access advocacy that did not exist, or existed only informally, before 2020. However, this repositioning has occurred largely through institutional initiative rather than through any dedicated national funding instrument for library modernisation, meaning the pace and quality of transformation vary sharply by institution type and resource base, with autonomous and well-ranked institutions advancing faster than affiliated colleges operating under tighter budgetary constraints.

4.3 Digital infrastructure and the persistent access divide. NEP 2020's digital-integration commitments have visibly benefited well-resourced urban institutions, where Singh and Chaurasia (2025) report up to a 20 per cent increase in enrolment and digital-literacy indicators attributable in part to library-mediated digital learning. Rural and tribal-area libraries tell a markedly different story: the same study documents ICT penetration of only 25-40 per cent in these settings, a gap that mirrors long-standing disparities in Indian higher-education infrastructure and that NEP 2020's Special Education Zones and rural-support provisions have not yet closed at scale.

4.4 Skill development and professional identity. NEP 2020's emphasis on vocational exposure and skill-based education, applied to the LIS field itself, has begun reshaping the professional identity of librarians from custodians of print collections toward practitioners of data analytics, digital preservation, user-experience design, and cybersecurity awareness. This shift is corroborated across the reviewed studies (Bapte, 2022; Vagdal & Acharya, 2023) but is not yet matched by a corresponding national framework for LIS professional standards, continuing professional development credit, or career progression comparable to the four-year Integrated B.Ed. requirement NEP 2020 has set for school teachers.

4.5 Assessment reform and information literacy. PARAKH's mandate to shift assessment from rote memorisation toward competency-based evaluation increases the pedagogical importance of information literacy instruction -- a core LIS competency -- since competency-based assessment presumes learners can locate, evaluate, and synthesise information independently rather than reproduce textbook content. Libraries are thus positioned as indispensable partners in operationalising this specific NEP reform, though formal integration of library-led information-literacy programmes into institutional assessment frameworks remains inconsistent.

4.6 Regulatory consolidation and institutional variation. The proposed consolidation of higher-education regulation under HECI has, as of the six-year mark, proceeded unevenly, and no single library-specific regulatory or accreditation instrument has emerged to standardise library staffing norms, collection budgets, or digital-infrastructure minimums across the diverse institution types NEP 2020 covers. This regulatory gap is identified, directly or indirectly, in nearly all ten reviewed studies as the single most significant structural constraint on turning NEP's library-related rhetoric into enforceable institutional practice.

4.7 Achievements consistent with the policy's own six-year account. The government's own six-year retrospective cites curricular and pedagogical reforms across schools, an operational National Curriculum

Framework, an expanded digital learning ecosystem, launched multidisciplinary HEIs and new-age programmes, an operational National Credit Framework, and increased focus on research, innovation, and skill development as achievements. Each of these intersects with library functions -- credit portability requires libraries to serve increasingly transient, cross-disciplinary user populations; the expanded digital ecosystem depends on library-managed e-resource platforms; and the research and innovation focus depends on library-mediated scholarly infrastructure. The literature reviewed here largely corroborates that these achievements are real but unevenly distributed, concentrated in better-resourced institutions and urban settings.

V. CHALLENGES FACING THE LIS PROFESSION UNDER NEP 2020

Several structural challenges recur across the literature and the analysis above. Funding remains the most frequently cited constraint: libraries require sustained budgetary support to acquire digital resources, upgrade infrastructure, and retain qualified staff, yet institutional budgets for libraries have not kept pace with the scope of NEP's expectations (Vagdal & Acharya, 2023). The digital divide compounds this problem in rural and tribal institutions, where connectivity and device access lag urban counterparts by a wide margin (Singh & Chaurasia, 2025). Staffing presents a related difficulty: many academic libraries operate with sanctioned posts left vacant, leaving existing staff with limited capacity to undertake the embedded, research-support, and digital-literacy roles NEP 2020 envisions; where librarians are also drafted into MDC/IDC teaching duties, this capacity constraint is sharpened further. The absence of a dedicated national LIS competency framework, comparable to the teacher-training standards NEP 2020 has articulated for classroom educators, leaves professional development for librarians largely ad hoc and provider-dependent rather than systematically planned, a gap this paper's author has examined in related work on continuing professional development among LIS professionals in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana university libraries. Physical

infrastructure -- reading space, technology labs, and preservation facilities -- has also failed to expand proportionately to the multidisciplinary user base NEP 2020's credit-mobility provisions bring to campus libraries. Finally, because NEP 2020 is advisory rather than mandatory in its library-related provisions, implementation depends entirely on individual institutional will, producing the wide variation in outcomes that the reviewed literature consistently documents, and leaving library modernisation vulnerable to being deprioritized whenever institutional budgets tighten.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

Six recommendations follow from this analysis. First, a dedicated national library policy or library-specific implementation framework should be developed under NEP 2020's broader umbrella, translating its general commitments into enforceable staffing, budget, and infrastructure norms for institutional libraries, comparable in specificity to the teacher-training and NEP-linked accreditation instruments already notified for other functions. Second, targeted investment in rural and tribal library digitisation is required to close the ICT-penetration gap documented by Singh and Chaurasia (2025), potentially through mobile digital units, satellite connectivity, and public-private partnership models similar to those already piloted for school connectivity. Third, a national LIS professional-standards and continuing-development framework, modelled on the four-year Integrated B.Ed. requirement for teachers, would formalise the profession's role in delivering NEP's research, digital-literacy, and assessment reforms, and would give institutions a basis for budgeting professional development rather than treating it as discretionary spend. Fourth, LIS curricula should continue their trajectory toward multidisciplinary, skill-oriented content, but this restructuring should be accompanied by systematic mapping to the National Credit Framework so that credentials remain portable and recognised across the higher-education system, and by adequate staffing provision where librarians take on MDC/IDC teaching loads. Fifth, institutions should be encouraged, through accreditation incentives under frameworks such as NAAC's

Criterion on infrastructure and learning resources, to formally integrate library-led information-literacy instruction into competency-based assessment delivered under PARAKH, converting an implicit alignment into an explicit, evaluable institutional practice. Sixth, a periodic, government-commissioned national survey of library staffing, budgets, and digital-infrastructure indicators -- disaggregated by institution type and region -- would supply the evidence base NEP 2020's next implementation phase needs to target investment where the reviewed literature indicates it is most lacking.

VII. CONCLUSION

Six years after its notification, NEP 2020 has demonstrably reshaped the aspirations attached to the Indian LIS profession, positioning libraries as active partners in multidisciplinary education, research infrastructure, digital literacy, and competency-based assessment rather than as peripheral support services. The ten studies reviewed here, spanning the full six-year implementation period, converge on this reading of the policy's intent and on a shared assessment of its uneven realisation: well-resourced urban institutions have visibly advanced their library services in line with NEP's vision, while rural, tribal, and under-funded institutions continue to face the funding, staffing, and connectivity constraints that predate the policy itself. For the LIS profession, the practical challenge of the next implementation phase is less about the direction NEP 2020 sets -- which the literature affirms as broadly favourable to the profession's relevance and standing -- and more about securing the dedicated policy instruments, budgetary commitments, and professional-standards frameworks needed to make that direction a uniform national reality rather than an achievement concentrated in institutions that were already well placed to pursue it.

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