

HARMONIZING EDUCATION: ANALYZING HOW NEP 2020 AND THE INDIAN KNOWLEDGE SYSTEM CONFRONTING THE Pervasiveness OF SHADOW EDUCATION

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Abstract

India's National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) represents a landmark reform in the country's educational landscape. While it addresses various aspects of the education system, a critical concern it seeks to tackle is the proliferation of shadow education, often referred to as "coaching culture" in the Indian context. NEP 2020 recognizes the prominence of shadow education and its implications on educational equity and quality. Consequently, the policy encourages the integration of technology in education, early childhood care and education, formative assessment and flexible board exams for reducing the need of coaching among students. This research investigates the key provisions and strategies outlined in the NEP 2020, aiming to transform India's education landscape by reducing the reliance on shadow education and enhancing the overall quality of formal education. Additionally, this paper delves into the pivotal role of India's rich knowledge system in addressing the escalating issue of shadow education. By examining traditional pedagogical methods and indigenous learning practices, we explore how integrating these time-tested approaches can provide a viable and culturally resonant solution to mitigate the prevalence of shadow education. This exploration contributes to a deeper understanding of the intrinsic strength that has fueled India's intellectual prowess across generations.

Keywords: Formal Education, Indian Knowledge System, NEP 2020, Reforms, Shadow Education

Introduction

The National Education Policy, 2020 has introduced a comprehensive framework that aims to reduce the proliferation of shadow education. Shadow education, often referred to as the parallel tutoring or coaching industry (Mori and Baker, 2010; Malik, 2017), has grown substantially in recent years (Gupta, 2022), exerting pressure on students and families while exacerbating educational inequalities (Lee & Shouse, 2011; Bhorkar & Bray, 2018; Kim et al. 2022). The NEP 2020 takes a comprehensive approach to mitigate the influence and necessity of shadow education by introducing progressive changes in curriculum design, assessment methods, and pedagogical practices, aiming to foster a more holistic and well-rounded learning environment within the formal education system. The policy represents a significant step towards addressing the challenges posed by the shadow education industry in India and fostering a more equitable and inclusive educational environment where every student has the opportunity to thrive within the formal education system, thus mitigating the expansion of shadow education in the country. Furthermore, the policy represents a concerted effort to ensure that all students have access to high-quality education and reduce the need for supplementary, often expensive, shadow education. In addition, the NEP 2020 also emphasizes the use of technology in education, providing access to high-quality educational resources online. This can level the playing field, ensuring that students, regardless of their socio-economic background, have equal access to educational opportunities NEP 2020 seeks to redefine the traditional education system by emphasizing critical thinking, creativity and holistic development, which is particularly relevant in context of Shadow Education. Moreover, NEP 2020 also envisions an education system that seamlessly integrates the ancient wisdom of the Indian knowledge system with contemporary pedagogical methods. The Vedas, Upanishads and other Vedic literature form the foundation of the IKS (Kapoor & Singh, 2005). IKS, deeply rooted in India's rich heritage of traditional knowledge systems, offers a holistic and culturally relevant approach to education. IKS places importance on traditional knowledge systems, which can make formal education more relevant and engaging. By recognizing the inherent value of indigenous knowledge systems, the NEP seeks to diminish the reliance on parallel tutoring systems and foster an environment where the formal education sector can adequately cater to the diverse needs of learners, thereby creating a more equitable and robust educational landscape. Furthermore, by integrating the traditional wisdom and practices into the curriculum, educators can provide a holistic educational experience to the children that can reduce the need for additional tutoring. This intricate interplay between NEP 2020, Indian knowledge system and the mitigation of shadow education is crucial in shaping the educational trajectory of the nation. As we delve into the intricacies of NEP 2020 and the Indian knowledge system, it becomes imperative to explore how these initiatives intersect with the challenge of shadow education, aiming to forge a more equitable and holistic educational journey for the nation's learners. In the first part of the present study the investigators will present the provisions of NEP 2020 that will be helpful in alleviating the need of shadow education and in the second part, the investigators will describe the role of IKS in reducing the expansion of shadow education.

Key Provisions of NEP 2020 to Reduce the Expansion of Shadow Education

The National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) in India aims to reduce the expansion of shadow education, which refers to private tutoring or coaching outside the formal education system. Shadow education is often seen as a result of deficiencies in the formal education system and can exacerbate educational inequalities. NEP 2020 introduces several measures to address this issue.

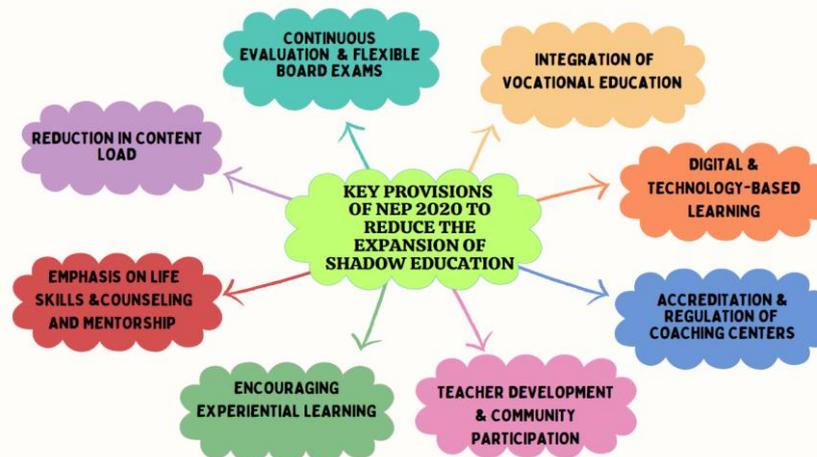


Figure 1: Key Provisions of NEP 2020 to Reduce the Expansion of Shadow Education

1. **Continuous evaluation:** It is evident from several studies that one of the major factors for the expansion of shadow education is to score good marks in high-stake examinations and entrance tests. Baker et al. (2001) have highlighted that shadow education is pervasive

since high stakes assessments are used in most national education systems. Furthermore, Roy & Montebon (2015) have also stated that parents send their children in shadow education for achieving high examination scores. In this regard, NEP 2020 has the potential to reduce the pressure of high stake examinations from parents and children by focusing on the formative and continuous evaluation of the children. For this purpose, the policy has recommended the strategies such as modular board exams and best of two attempts for redesigning the board exams. The policy may result in a shift from a high-stakes board examination system to a more holistic and continuous evaluation model. By doing so, it aims to reduce the intense pressure on students, which often leads to a reliance on coaching or shadow education for exam preparation. NEP 2020 aims to reduce the need for excessive rote learning and high-stakes exams by promoting critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills within the formal education system. This can potentially reduce the dependence on shadow education for exam preparation.

2. **Early Childhood Care and Education:** It is apparent from the studies that nowadays parents send their children to private tuitions from their early years because of the fear of “Mathew effect” which states that a child who has good early experiences will utilize future experiences more efficiently (Lancker, 2021). In this respect, NEP 2020 recognizes the importance of early childhood care and education and thus aims to address the learning crisis that is prevalent at primary level. The policy also aims to attain the foundational literacy and numeracy skills among children by grade 3rd till 2025. By focusing on quality education from the beginning, there may be less need for remedial tutoring.
3. **Flexible Board Exams:** The policy suggests changes in board exams to test more conceptual understanding and application of knowledge rather than rote memorization. This shift can potentially decrease the reliance on coaching centers that often focus on memorization techniques for exams.
4. **Digital and Technology-Based Learning:** Presently, the nature of tutoring is changing over time. Now, the technology is playing a significant role in the delivery of shadow education (Bray, 1999; Bray & Lykins, 2012). During the covid-19 pandemic, a significant amount of supplementary tutoring moved online giving student’s advantage of time and space (Lee et al. 2023). Shadow educators are using technology for making tutoring more interactive and effective. In this regard, NEP 2020 promotes the use of technology in education, including the development of a National Educational Technology Forum. By providing quality digital resources and online learning opportunities, it can reduce the need for shadow education.
5. **Accreditation and Regulation of Coaching Centers:** The policy suggests setting up a regulatory framework for coaching centers to ensure quality and transparency. Accreditation and regulation can help control the growth of low-quality coaching centers that contribute to the shadow education problem.
6. **Integration of Vocational Education:** It is clear from numerous studies that students also join shadow education for the attainment of vocational skills and for fitting into the specific career (Alam & Zhu, 2023; Gupta, 2022). By integrating vocational education and skill development into the formal curriculum, NEP 2020 aims to provide students with diverse career options, reducing the reliance on coaching classes for competitive exams.
7. **Teacher Development:** Heyneman (2011) has highlighted that the best strategy to lessen the need for private instruction is to really lessen the need for private tutoring. A large number of studies have mentioned the teacher’s quality as an important factor behind the proliferation of shadow education. For instance, Bhorkar & Bray (2018) have accentuated the views of students in their study where students have emphasized that instructors of private tutoring were significantly more knowledgeable and motivating than those in formal educational settings. Additionally, the study of Dwita et al. (2018) has indicated that the reason behind student’s involvement in shadow education is the teacher’s inability to address the problems of individual student in the typically huge classroom. Furthermore, Punjabi (2019) has expressed in the study that the methods of instruction used by private tuitions are seen to be more methodical and effective than those found in traditional classroom settings. These studies are indicating the need of teacher’s training and professional development. In this respect, NEP 2020 focuses on improving the quality of school education by enhancing the training and skills of the teachers. Well-trained and motivated teachers can reduce the need for external coaching.
8. **Encouraging Experiential Learning:** Huang, (2013) has revealed that students join shadow education for both remediation and enrichment purposes. The policy encourages experiential and practical learning, which can make the formal education system more effective and enriching and can address both the needs of students which will consequently reduce the need for external coaching.
9. **Counseling and Mentorship:** The studies have revealed that parents who adopt intensive parenting style wants to closely monitor the progress of their child and wants to provide personal attention or mentorship to their children (Bray, 2013) and as a result they invest in shadow education. Furthermore, Bhorkar & Bray, (2018) in their study have highlighted the responses of students, in which students have revealed that instructors in shadow education are more knowledgeable than school teachers and provide better guidance to them. On this matter, the policy promotes the provision of academic counseling and mentorship within schools, which can assist students in their academic journey and reduce the need for external coaching.
10. **Emphasis on Life skills:** Life skills play a significant role in making the learning effective. Life skills help a person to view the problem from multiple aspects and deepen his or her understanding about the problem and its solution (Prajapati, 2017). In this regard, NEP 2020 places a strong emphasis on the development of life skills, including critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, and interpersonal skills. If implemented effectively, this emphasis on analytical skills could reduce the need for rote memorization and, subsequently, the reliance on coaching for exam preparation.
11. **Community Participation:** The studies have revealed that one of the reasons of expansion of shadow education is that parents think that they can freely express their thoughts and opinion in shadow education rather than formal schooling (Kim & Jung, 2019). Through shadow education, they feel involved in their children education. Additionally, teachers also face limitations in pedagogical choices and autonomy in formal education system (Gupta, 2021). On this matter, the policy encourages community participation in the education system. Engaging parents, communities, teachers and local stakeholders in the learning process can contribute to a supportive environment, reducing the perceived need for shadow education.
12. **Reduction in Content Load:** The studies on shadow education have highlighted that majority of the formal school fails to complete the vast syllabus due to the lack of time. For instance, Bray & Lykins, (2012) have stated the responses of the students in which 53% students have reported that the full syllabus had not been covered in schools, thus they received support from private tutoring. Furthermore, Ghosh & Bray, (2020) have stated the responses of teachers in which they have reported their difficulty in covering the syllabus within the bounded time. In this regard, the policy aims to reduce the curriculum content to the essential core, promoting a deeper understanding of the subjects. If schools effectively implement this reduction in content load, it may alleviate the pressure on students, reducing the perceived need for supplementary coaching.

These provisions collectively aim to create a more inclusive and flexible education system, addressing the issues associated with shadow education. Implementing these provisions effectively can contribute to mitigating the prevalence of shadow education in India.

Indian Knowledge System and Shadow Education

The Indian knowledge system is deeply rooted in a rich history of philosophy, literature and scientific achievements. Ancient texts like the Vedas and Upanishads have shaped India's intellectual landscape, emphasizing holistic learning and the pursuit of wisdom. Traditional education systems such as Gurukuls played a crucial role in imparting knowledge across various disciplines. The Indian knowledge system holds immense importance in strengthening the present education system by providing a foundation rooted in diverse disciplines. Drawing from ancient texts, philosophies, and practices, it offers a holistic approach to education that goes beyond rote memorization. Integrating elements of the Indian knowledge system into the current education framework can enhance critical thinking, creativity, and a deeper understanding of subjects. Furthermore, incorporating traditional Indian methods, such as experiential learning and Gurukul-style mentorship, can foster a more interactive and engaging educational experience. This can help students develop practical skills alongside theoretical knowledge, preparing them for real-world challenges.

Additionally, IKS holds significant importance in addressing the challenges posed by the growth of shadow education. By leveraging the strengths of traditional education, several strategies can be employed to mitigate the need for excessive private tutoring.

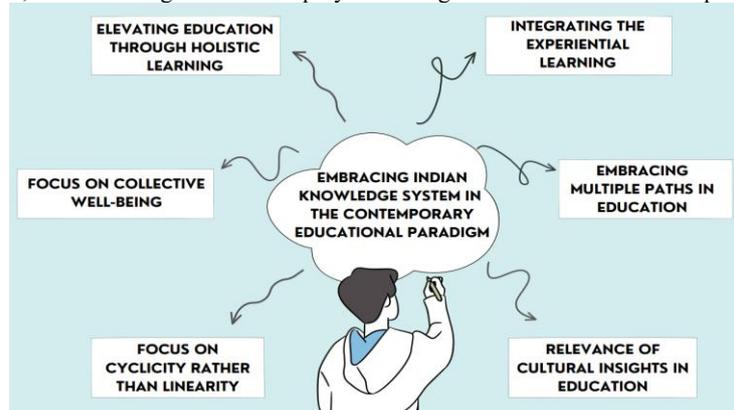


Figure 2: Embracing Indian Knowledge System in the Contemporary Education Paradigm

Elevating Education through Holistic learning:

The ancient Indian Knowledge system focused on the holistic development of the individual and followed the holistic approach towards learning. This system often includes not only intellectual aspects but also moral, emotional and spiritual dimensions. Moreover, the Gurukul system in ancient India exemplifies holistic learning, where the major aim of guru (teacher) was ensuring the holistic development (physical, mental and spiritual) of the shishya (student) (Sharma, 2023). For this purpose, students were instructed to perform yoga, meditation, performing the daily chores and chanting of mantras. These activities used to contribute to more meaningful learning experiences by improving the student's health, concentration, and peace. Therefore, the implication (Holistic learning approach) of Indian knowledge system could be useful in providing a complete and enriching educational experience to learners, thereby mitigating the demand for shadow education.

Integrating the Experiential Learning:

Experiential learning is central to the IKS. Traditional Indian education has often been rooted in practical experiences, where individuals learn through direct engagement with the material rather than relying solely on theoretical knowledge (Sharma, 2023). The old Indian philosophical thoughts also supported the practice of experiential learning. For instance, advaita Vedanta considered experiential knowledge as nitya (constant) knowledge and sensory knowledge as anitya (variable) knowledge. Additionally, the nyaya philosophy also considered experience as a valid source of knowledge (Sharma, 2023). The Gurukul system, an ancient Indian model, also exemplifies experiential learning. In Gurukuls students used to live with their teachers (gurus) in a close-knit community, engaging in real-life situations, discussions and practical applications of knowledge. This approach contrasts with the traditional rote memorization and aids in the development of critical thinking and problem solving skills. Additionally, this approach may contribute to a more comprehensive educational experience, potentially diminishing the perceived need for shadow education.

Embracing Multiple Paths in Education

IKS doesn't believe on one path to truth instead it suggests following the multiple paths to find a truth. According to the Indian thought system, there exists a plurality of truth (Sharma, 2023). This idea is reflected in the diversity of philosophical and religious traditions in India, each offering its unique perspective on the nature of reality and the purpose of life. For instance, Jainism philosophy believes in anekantavada which suggests that truth and reality are perceived differently from various points of view, instead of insisting on a single, absolute truth (Long, 2018). Thus, Indian knowledge system emphasizes to utilize the divergent and critical thinking in the learning process. In the context of education, this principle further suggests that there isn't one-size-fits-all approach to learning. Different individuals may benefit from different educational paths, methods or philosophies. In this respect, fostering a well-rounded and inclusive curriculum that incorporates different viewpoints can improve the formal educational system and minimize the need for shadow education.

Relevance of Cultural Insights in Education:

The Indian knowledge system has a rich cultural heritage deeply rooted in ancient literature like the Vedas, Upanishads and epics like the Mahabharata and Ramayana. In ancient India the transmission of cultural knowledge was primarily an oral tradition. Gurukuls also played a crucial role in this process. Students used to live with their gurus in a Gurukul, imbibing not only academic knowledge but also cultural, ethical and practical wisdom. In Gurukul as well as home, individuals used to recite the ancient texts like the Vedas, Upanishads, puranas and epics such as Mahabharata and Ramayana, ensuring the preservation and transmission of cultural knowledge (Madhekar, 2020). By reflecting on the importance of cultural knowledge and traditions, Davis, 1896, highlighted that Bharthari (the famous linguistic philosopher) used to believe that critical thinking skills are developed through interaction with oral traditions. Davis, 1896 has further highlighted that Bharthari used to believe that a person who doesn't know other traditions, he or she knows nothing. But in present situation, we need to ask that who doesn't know his or her culture, what else he or she knows. By incorporating cultural knowledge, the education system can inspire creativity and innovation, nurturing a mindset that values both tradition and new ideas. Additionally, by incorporating rich cultural heritage and traditional wisdom within the formal curriculum, educational institutions can create a more engaging and meaningful learning experience for students, reducing the perceived need for shadow education.

Focus on Collective Well-Being:

The Indian knowledge system emphasizes on collective well-being through concepts like “Vasudhaiva kutumbakam” (the world is one family) and “Dharma” (duty/ righteousness). It encourages harmony, social responsibility, and the interconnectedness of all beings for the greater good. Kapoor & Singh (2005) have also accentuated the words of bhagvad gita and Mahabharata that individuals should receive knowledge that promotes lok samgraha, means the collective well being. But in present scenario, shadow education is creating inequalities in the society by being accessible to only well-off families. Hajar & Karakus, (2022) have highlighted that shadow education is perpetuating the inequalities in the society by giving advantage to the children of rich families and neglecting the children of poor families. This really contradicts with the essence of the Indian knowledge system, rooted in principles of interconnectedness and collective well-being. In this respect, the shadow educators and teacherpreneur should try to think about the collective well-being of the students rather than profit-making. Additionally, a shift towards a collective well-being approach in education aligns with the ethos of the Indian knowledge system and can contribute to a more balanced and equitable learning environment, potentially diminishing the demand for shadow education.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research illuminates the transformative potential inherent in the symbiotic relationship between the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and the rich tapestry of the Indian knowledge system. As we navigate the complexities of contemporary education, it becomes evident that the harmonization of these forces serves as a powerful catalyst in diminishing the pervasiveness of shadow education. NEP 2020, with its emphasis on holistic learning and inclusivity, resonates with the core values embedded in the Indian knowledge system, fostering an educational landscape that prioritizes collective well-being over individualized pursuits. As we navigate the intricate landscape of contemporary education, the convergence of NEP 2020 and the age-old wisdom of the Indian knowledge system offer a beacon of hope. By harmonizing these elements, we not only address the reasons of shadow education but also strike at the root causes, fostering an environment where the quest for knowledge is nurtured within the formal educational framework. This synthesis paves the way for a more equitable, inclusive, and culturally resonant educational system, echoing the essence of a harmonized approach to learning in the diverse tapestry of Indian education. As we move forward, the findings of this research call for sustained efforts to integrate the strengths of NEP 2020 and the Indian knowledge system, ultimately steering education towards a brighter, collective future.

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