



## The spirit of national integration in NEP 2020: A tribute to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's vision

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### Abstract

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 reflects India's ambition to become a global leader in knowledge while staying rooted in its cultural and civilizational ethos. At the heart of this policy lies an intrinsic call for unity of language, culture, values, and purpose. As India celebrates the 150th birth anniversary of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, the architect of modern Indian unity, this paper revisits his vision of a united India and explores how NEP 2020 resonates with it. The paper emphasizes how the policy promotes national integration through multilingual education, inclusive and equitable access, value-based education, and celebration of India's rich cultural heritage. Through a deep analysis of policy provisions and field-level data, the paper concludes that NEP 2020 serves as a fitting tribute to Sardar Patel's lifelong commitment to Rashtriya Ekta (National Unity).

**Keywords:** NEP 2020, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, National Integration, Unity in Diversity, Indian Knowledge System, Civic Education

### Introduction

India's identity is rooted in its remarkable diversity—encompassing languages, religions, cultures, and traditions. While political unification established a single sovereign nation, sustaining unity in such diversity requires deeper emotional and cultural integration. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, revered as the “Iron Man of India,” recognized this imperative. His pivotal role in the political consolidation of over 560 princely states post-independence laid the groundwork for a unified Indian state.

As India commemorates his 150th birth anniversary, it is an opportune moment to reflect on how present-day policies embody his ideals. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 stands out as a transformative initiative aiming to cultivate unity, inclusiveness, and pride in India's pluralistic heritage. It not only modernizes education but also integrates values that resonate with Patel's vision of national solidarity.

### Objectives of the Study

The core objective of this paper is to analyze the National Education Policy 2020 in light of national integration, reflecting the ideological contributions of Sardar Patel. The sub-objectives are:

- To explore the NEP 2020 provisions that promote national cohesion.
- To assess how the policy aligns with Sardar Patel's ideals of unity and inclusiveness.
- To evaluate the implementation of NEP 2020 elements like multilingual education, value-based learning, and cultural programs in fostering emotional and national integration among students.

### Methodology

The research is grounded in a qualitative-descriptive framework, employing multiple data collection approaches:

- **Document Analysis:** Examination of the NEP 2020 document, government reports, and NCERT frameworks.

- **Secondary Sources:** Review of academic articles, books, and speeches by Sardar Patel.
- **Expert Consultations:** Insights from educators and policy experts on national integration through education.
- **Institutional Review:** Observations from 20 educational institutions (12 government and 8 private) across different zones in Lucknow city, selected via purposive sampling based on active NEP implementation.

The population included secondary and higher secondary schools affiliated with CBSE, ICSE, and Uttar Pradesh Board.

### Review of Related Literature

Existing literature highlights NEP 2020's integrative approach:

- Srivastava (2022) emphasized the role of value-centric education in national character building.
- Yadav (2021) analyzed NEP's emphasis on linguistic plurality and its role in fostering unity.
- Mahapatra (2021) discussed the significance of reviving Indian Knowledge Systems to build cultural identity.
- Chatterjee (2020) noted the NEP's alignment with constitutional values of fraternity and unity.

Collectively, these works underscore the policy's potential to continue the mission of national integration that leaders like Sardar Patel envisioned.

### Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel: Architect of National Unity

Sardar Patel's efforts post-1947 were not limited to geographic unification. His vision encompassed emotional integration, where every citizen felt an intrinsic part of the Indian identity. For Patel, education was instrumental in instilling civic responsibility, patriotism, and social

harmony. His famous quote, “*Manpower without unity is not a strength unless it is harmonized and united properly,*” captures the essence of his philosophy. He championed a nation where unity in diversity was not just a slogan but a lived reality.

**NEP 2020 as a Blueprint for National Integration**

**1. Multilingual Education and Linguistic Harmony:** The policy promotes foundational learning in students’ mother tongues or regional languages up to Grade 5, supporting the three-language formula. This initiative fosters respect for linguistic diversity while bridging cultural gaps.

**2. Revitalization of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS):** By embedding traditional Indian philosophies, arts, and sciences into curricula, NEP 2020 revives the ethos of unity through shared cultural heritage.

**3. Equity and Inclusion:** Special attention is given to socio-economically disadvantaged groups (SEDGs), including SCs, STs, minorities, and rural communities. Provisions like the Gender Inclusion Fund and Special Education Zones aim to create an equitable and integrated educational environment.

**4. Value-Oriented and Civic Learning:** The policy underscores moral education, empathy, ethics, and constitutional values to nurture responsible, community-oriented citizens.

**5. Cultural Exchange and National Programs:** Initiatives like *Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat* promote cross-cultural understanding through inter-state exchanges and language partnerships, directly strengthening national integration.

**Emotional Integration through Education**

NEP 2020 aims to instill emotional bonds among students by:

- Encouraging narratives of freedom fighters, including Sardar Patel, to inspire national pride.
- Promoting community involvement and civic engagement.
- Integrating projects and activities that emphasize social responsibility and cultural connection.

These strategies contribute to a sense of belonging and national identity among learners.

**Challenges in Policy Realization**

Despite the policy’s promise, several challenges hinder its full potential:

- **Linguistic Resistance:** Implementation of multilingual policies faces pushback in certain regions.
- **Teacher Preparedness:** There is limited training for educators in Indian Knowledge Systems and value education.
- **Rural-Urban Disparity:** Uneven access to resources creates inconsistencies in policy execution.
- **Identity Politics:** Regionalism and sub-national identities may conflict with integration efforts.

These challenges require coordinated policy execution, inclusive pedagogy, and robust teacher development programs.

**Data and Findings from Educational Institutions in Lucknow**

A review of 20 educational institutions in Lucknow revealed:

Sr. No.	NEP Provision	Implementation Rate (%)	Key Observations
1	Multilingual education (Grades I–V)	70%	Widely adopted alongside Hindi/English mediums
2	Value-based & civic education	60%	Common sessions on values, duties, and national awareness
3	Cultural exchanges (EBSB programs)	40%	Implemented mostly in central and private schools
4	Indian Knowledge Systems in curriculum	35%	Limited integration in subjects like yoga, history

**Key Findings**

- NEP 2020 is well-known among school administrators, but ground-level implementation is inconsistent.
- Linguistic integration is relatively more feasible than value-based or cultural modules.
- Teacher training in value-based pedagogy and Indian heritage is essential.
- Programs like *Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat* foster a genuine spirit of national unity when implemented.

**NEP 2020: An Enduring Tribute to Sardar Patel**

Though not explicitly referencing Sardar Patel, NEP 2020 encapsulates his ideals:

- **Unity in Diversity:** Through respect for languages and cultures.
- **Character Formation:** Via moral, civic, and ethical education.
- **Nation-Building:** By cultivating emotional and cultural unity through education.

The policy transforms education into a tool for national integration—aligning closely with Patel’s lifelong mission.

**Conclusion**

The National Education Policy 2020 signifies a paradigm shift not only in pedagogical direction but also in national vision. By emphasizing inclusion, multilingualism, Indian heritage, and civic values, NEP 2020 aspires to unify India’s youth in spirit and identity.

As the country commemorates 150 years of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, NEP 2020 stands as a living embodiment of his vision. To fully realize its potential, committed implementation, regular monitoring, and capacity-building efforts are essential. Only then can education serve as a binding force—uniting India in purpose, pride, and progress.

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