



Amitrakshar International Journal

of Interdisciplinary and Transdisciplinary Research (AIJITR)

(A Social Science, Science and Indian Knowledge Systems Perspective)

Open-Access, Peer-Reviewed, Refereed, Bi-Monthly, International E-Journal

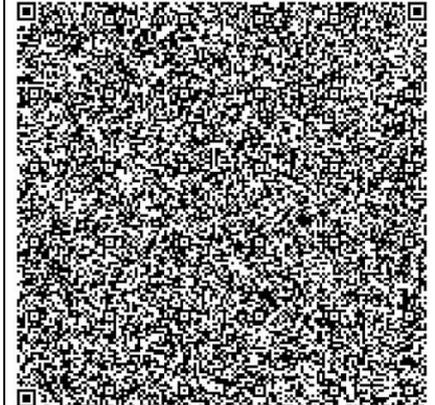
Challenges & Opportunities in Quality Academic Research with respect to NEP 2020

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Abstract

Research is the most feasible method to achieve goals. Research is the key driver of advancement of knowledge, uncovering new insights, critical thinking innovation and solving Complex problem. Along with academic skills undergraduate research also emphasize to prepare students for their higher studies and professional careers. Despite barriers like limited resources and mentorship that often hinder participation; by involving in research, undergraduate students will gain hands-on experience, collaborate across disciplines and develop a deeper understanding of real-world challenges. NEP 2020 underscores the need for an academic environment that fosters research at all levels, which encourages universities and colleges to prioritize research and establish research-oriented ecosystems. This research paper seeks to illuminate the National education policy 2020 includes key changes to the current system to deliver high quality higher education comprising research in universities and colleges. This paper will explore the Challenges & Opportunities in Quality Academic research, and strategies to foster a strong research culture, ensuring students are equipped for future academic and professional success.

Key Words: Research ethics, academic research, NEP 2020 critical thinking, innovation, professional success etc.



AIJITR - Volume - 3, Issue - I, Jan-Feb 2026



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INTRODUCTION:

Practical application reinforces theoretical knowledge through real world applications and solidify learning more relevant, engaging and effective. Academic research is a bridge among theoretical knowledge and practical applications, that rearing a culture of inquiry and discovery. It also serves all of which that are essential for professional success and over all development such as the foundation of critical thinking, interdisciplinary collaboration, and problem solving. The national education policy (NEP) 2020 advocates for a research driven academic culture, highlighting the need for early exposure to research practice. Align with global educational trends, the integration of research at the undergraduate level emphasizes the experiential learning and student driven inquiry. This paper critically reviews the opportunities of academic research, explores its challenges and presents strategies to cultivate a robust research culture in an Indian context.

PRINCIPLES OF NEP 2020:

The national education policy 2020 emphasizes the quality of higher education system in India. Higher education plays a pivotal role in promoting human as well as overall development of a country. Though there are many challenges in an India's higher education system and to overcome the challenges NEP 2020 includes the following key changes to the current system:

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DOI Link (Crossref) Prefix: <https://doi.org/10.63431/AIJTR/3.I.2026.23-27>

AIJITR, Volume 3, Issue –I, January-February, 2026, PP.23-27

Received on 19th February, 2026 & Accepted on 20th February, 2026, Published: 23rd February, 2026



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- A) For higher education system NEP 2020 focuses to establish multi disciplinary universities and colleges at least one in or near every district and more HEIs across India paying attention to the medium of instruction in Indian local languages.
- B) NEP 2020 gives attention towards a more multi disciplinary undergraduate education.
- C) Look towards faculty and institutional autonomy.
- D) Focuses to restructure curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and student support for enhanced student experiences.
- E) NEP 2020 asserts again strongly the fact that the integrity of faculty and instructional leadership positions through merit appointments and career progression based on teaching, research and service.
- F) Most remarkable inclusion the establishment of a national research foundation to fund outstanding peer- reviewed research and to actively seed research in universities and colleges.
- G) One of the central interest of NEP 2020 is the governance of HEIs by high qualified independent boards having academy and administrative autonomy.
- H) According to NEP 2020 for higher education regulation should be “Light but Tight “ by a single regulator.
- I) NEP 2020 focuses on to equity and inclusion, online education, open distance learning (ODL) and all infrastructure and learning materials accessible and available to learners with disabilities.

OPPORTUNITIES OF RESEARCH AT THE UNDERGRADUATE LEVEL:

There are several opportunities of research at the undergraduate level that are mentioned below :

- **ADVANCEMENT OF KNOWLEDGE:**
With the advancement of information technology, the rapid evolution of knowledge domains and the complexity of societal challenges, research at the undergraduate level has become more critical than ever. Academic research plays an important role in expanding the boundaries of knowledge. Research is a scientific as well as discovery oriented way. By engaging in research, students will be able to contribute to the discovery of new theories, concepts and applications.
- **DEVELOPMENT OF CRITICAL THINKING AND ANALYTICAL SKILLS:**
NEP 2020 helps to flourish in knowledge creation and to analyse information critically, assess various perspectives and develop well founded arguments of students by engaging them in research.
- **INTER DISCIPLINARY COLLABORATION AND PRACTICAL EXPOSURE:**
NEP 2020 navigates inter disciplinary research to enhance the quality of academic research emphasizing cross disciplinary collaboration. The new education policy also focuses on actively seed research in universities and colleges. Undergraduate research encourages collaboration across disciplines, fostering a holistic understanding of problems. For instance, research in educational technology requires input from education, psychology and computer science. Such inter disciplinary exposure prepares students for dynamic professional environments where knowledge integration is essential. Many Universities worldwide, including in India are recognising the importance of academic research integrating interdisciplinary collaboration and incorporating it into their academic framework.
- **PROFESSIONAL AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT:**
Research publications and conference presentations and overall research experiences enhance students academic profiles and opportunities for career. Many institutions and post graduate program and employers seek candidates with research experience as it elucidates the ability to handle complex projects, ability to take immediate action of any situation and also the ability of intellectual curiosity, self motivation etc. It is obvious that research experience provides students with a competitive edge in higher education and job markets. NEP 2020 emphasizes on holistic, multidisciplinary education and research that help to build student’s academic knowledge as well as the important of professional and life skills.
- **CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY AND POLICY FORMATION:**
At the undergraduate level research has the potential to address societal challenges. Some studies like related to environmental sustainability, public health and social inequalities contribute to policy making and community development.

CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH:

Despite the benefits undergraduate research faces several following challenges:

- **LIMITED RESOURCES AND FUNDING:**



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One of the most remarkable challenges at the undergraduate level research in India is research allocation and inadequate funding. Many undergraduate institutions struggle with inadequate funding. But academic research requires substantial financial support for research equipment. Students at undergraduate level faces difficulties to continue research work because of lack of laboratory equipment, research grants and technological support restricts students ability to conduct meaningful research.

- **INSUFFICIENT MENTORSHIP AND FACULTY SUPPORT:**

Many higher education institutions in India prioritize research along with traditional degree course. Effective research quests proper guidance from experienced faculty or mentors. Due to lack of faculty member of degree colleges is one of the most remarkable barrier of academic research. Decide these due to high faculty workload and limited incentives for research supervision, students often receive inadequate mentorship. These also influence on research work, affects the quality of undergraduate research. Absence of high quality mentorship and faculty support impact on high quality and risk taking research work .

- **RIGID CURRICULUM AND LACK OF RESEARCH INTEGRATION:**

Traditional curriculum of undergraduate level focus on road learning; so it fail to incorporate research methodologies. The absence of research oriented course work restricts students from engaging in research and research oriented any independent enquiry and critical analysis. The traditional curriculum hinders the research opportunities.

- **RESEARCH ETHICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL CHALLENGES:**

In the field of research, maintaining research ethics is the paramount authenticity of academic research. NEP 2020 emphasizes on research ethics and methodology. Because conducting an ethical research requires a deep understanding of methodologies, data collection techniques and ethical guidelines. But often the students of undergraduate level, the lack the necessary training in research ethics and methodology and so commending to compromised research integrity.

- **LIMITED AWARENESS AND MOTIVATION:**

Many undergraduate students remain unaware of research opportunities and also to perceive research as an advanced academic activity that were reserved for post graduate levels. Various misconception regarding research reduces students engagement in research projects.

- **PUBLISHING ISSUES:**

In India, researchers face challenges to publish their research work in reputed journals due to various matter, including harsh peer review processes; so publishing issues are the critical elements of academic research.

- **GENDER DISCRIMINATION IN RESEARCH WORK:**

In the field of academic research in India, gender discrimination is obvious in research. Mainly female researchers are facing challenges in progression of research work and to access research opportunities and over all career progression.

- **STRATEGIES TO FOSTER A STRONG RESEARCH CULTURE:**

The national education policy 2020 presents opportunities in the field of academic research and quest strategies to foster quality of academic research.

- **INCORPORATING RESEARCH INTO THE CURRICULUM:**

Educational institution shoot focus on to integrate research components into undergraduate course work. Such as project based learning, research based assignments and thesis requirements will encourage students for their active participation in research activities.

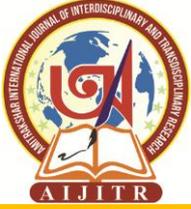
- **ESTABLISHING UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH CENTERS:**

Existed universities should take steps to develop dedicated undergraduate research centers that will provide require resources, worthiest mentorship and funding for student lead projects. These type of institution will naturalize the collaboration between students and faculty across disciplines.

- **ENCOURAGING INTERDISCIPLINARY AND INDUSTRY COLLABORATIONS:**

There are some dynamic benefits in collaboration with industries, research institutes and non governmental organisations. Because it can provide students practical experience working on industry relevant projects. Students also may gain and develop desirable skills. Various internship programs and collaborative research projects can bridge the gap between academia and industry needs.

- **STRENGTHENING FACULTY MENTAL SHEEP PROGRAMS:**



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For undergraduate research, colleges and institutions should introduce faculty development programs that will train educators to give adequate guidance to undergraduate researchers effectively.

- **PROMOTING RESEARCH AWARENESS AND STUDENT ENGAGEMENT:**

To create a dynamic research environment, universities and colleges should established research oriented clubs and also should organise research symposiums, conferences, seminars and competitions that may motivate students to participate in research.

- **TECHNOLOGY DRIVEN AND OPEN ACCESS RESOURCES:**

The advancement of technology can facilitate undergraduate researchers through the use of digital libraries, online research tools and artificial intelligence. Many open access research databases and journals provides students enough latest academic findings and also enhancing the quality of their research.

CONCLUSION:

Undergraduate research is an essential pillar of academic and professional development. It fosters innovation, critical thinking and inter disciplinary collaboration while preparing students for future challenges. Despite many challenges like rigid curriculum, limited resources; there are some strategies interventions can enhance research engagement among undergraduates. The national education policy (NEP)2020 provides a progressive framework to integrate research into undergraduate education. This is the landmark reform initiative of NEP 2020 to reshape India's higher education. This step will cultivate a strong academic research culture evolving knowledge, adequate research skills and this early exposure to research possesses students to become critical thinkers, problem solvers and future leaders in their respective fields.

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