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WHITE BLACK LEGAL is an open access, peer-reviewed and refereed journal provide dedicated to express views on topical legal issues, thereby generating a cross current of ideas on emerging matters. This platform shall also ignite the initiative and desire of young law students to contribute in the field of law. The erudite response of legal luminaries shall be solicited to enable readers to explore challenges that lie before law makers, lawyers and the society at large, in the event of the ever changing social, economic and technological scenario.

With this thought, we hereby present to you

ANALYZING THE PRINCIPLES OF INTEGRAL EDUCATION WITH NEW EDUCATION POLICY 2020

AUTHORED BY - SAKSHI PRITAM DAS

INTRODUCTION

Education has consistently been acknowledged as a fundamental instrument for individual growth and national development. In the Indian context, where colonial paradigms of schooling shaped educational structures for an extended period, the pursuit of an Indigenous, holistic framework of education has remained a central concern within policy and intellectual discourse. Among the earliest thinkers to articulate the aspiration was Sri Aurobindo, whose concept of Integral Education sought to harmonize the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual dimensions of the learner. For Sri Aurobindo, education was not a mere process of information transmission or vocational preparation; rather, it was a conscious and dynamic endeavour to unfold human potential, foster inner discipline and prepare individuals for a fuller life of spiritual as well as civic engagement. He maintained the traditional values of education must be attuned to the learner's *swabhava* (innate nature) and more values, while remaining receptive to universal and global forms of knowledge.

The National Education Policy (hereinafter NEP 2020) marks a transformative departure from earlier approaches to education in India. Moving away from rigid, examination-driven structures, the NEP articulates a vision of an education system that is learner-centric, flexible, and firmly rooted in values, thereby signaling a significant reorientation of educational philosophy and practice. Through inquiry-driven learning, transdisciplinary tracks, and the integration of arts, sports, vocational education, and value education, it seeks to replace memorization and the rigid curriculum. NEP 2020 may be seen as an ideal moment to reexamine and critically assess the relevance of Aurobindo's philosophy in the contemporary world, as this vision shares many similarities with his in terms of comprehensive and integral education.

The Indian Constitution's recognition of the rights to equality, life, liberty, and education serves as the legal foundation for a system that is inclusive, non-discriminatory, and personality-oriented. And the policy that is established within the framework of constitutional democracy

is based on these ideas. From a jurisprudential perspective, NEP 2020 may be seen as the shift from Aurobindo's spiritual and philosophical goals to the realities of policy practice in a pluralist and secular society.

Nevertheless, globalization has introduced a consumerist culture into modern education, reducing it largely to a contest for employability and material success. This orientation fosters cut-throat competition and social restlessness, reflecting the philosophy of survival of the fittest, in which moral and spiritual values are often sidelined. Sri Aurobindo, in a way, had warned against the existence of such mechanical aims and insisted that the ultimate goal of education had to be a spiritual one rooted in the principle of dharma (righteousness). Therefore, his philosophy not only critiques the existing order but also offers a constructive pathway to re-conceptualize education as a maker of peace, harmony, and holistic growth in the twenty-first century.

The aim of this paper is to discuss the interrelation of principles of the Integral Education as given by Sri Aurobindo and the New Education Policy 2020, in particular, how the concepts of integral education are forming a base for the formation of the policy. This paper argues that while NEP 2020 reflects only a partial realization of what Sri Aurobindo envisioned, it nevertheless marks a significant step toward creating an education system that can equip India's youth for both self-realization and nation-building in the spirit of Atmanirbhar Bharat.

Sri Aurobindo's Principles of Integral Education

Sri Aurobindo, India's greatest philosopher-educator, developed a revolutionary concept of education widely referred to as integral education, combining tradition, consciousness, and integral development. His thought is based on the integration of the physical, mental, vital, psychic, and spiritual aspects of human existence, extending beyond the limited levels of mechanical memorization and practical purposes, to the development of the individual's own potential and the establishment of a righteous society.¹

Central to Sri Aurobindo's vision of education, there are seven interconnected principles, which seek to develop self-realization, moral citizenship, and ongoing growth within an individual.

¹ Rina Avinash and Pitale Puradkar, 'Sri Aurobindo's Education Policy in Pre and Post- Colonial India' (2019) 14 Philosophical Sciences.

These² are stated as follows:-

1. Nothing Can Be Taught

Aurobindo's first principle is that education is not just about memorizing facts but about bringing out the knowledge already existing inside a person. He depicts the teacher's role as a facilitator and not as an instructor; the teacher should enable the student to bring out their inbuilt capacities, without using strict lecture-based teaching methods. The derivation of the word education from 'educere', which means to bring forth, supports the idea that genuine development comes from within the student, spurred by guidance and not imposition.

This principle links directly with the constitutional values of autonomy, freedom of thought and the right to shape one's personality under Art 21 of the Indian Constitution³. Art 21, which guarantees the right to life and personal liberty, has been interpreted by the Supreme Court to also encompass the right to education and the holistic development of an individual's abilities. The various landmark cases, such as *Mohini Jain v State of Karnataka*⁴ and *Unni Krishnaan v State of Andhra Pradesh*⁵, affirmed that the right to education is intrinsic to the right to life, and it enables the realization of the dignity and self-fulfillment.

2. The Mind Must Be Consulted in Its Own Growth

Aurobindo's second principle is a refinement of the first: the student should be permitted to develop in accordance with his own nature. It is wrong, he argues, to hammer a child into a shape determined by parents, teachers, or curriculum. Rather, education policy should be open to individual differences in "swabhava" (nature) and "swadharma" (calling/duty).⁶

Modern education and the legal reforms, including NEP 2020, focus on student-centred learning, flexible choices, and combining different subjects, which reflects Aurobindo's idea that the mind should shape its own path. This is in harmony with Article 14⁷ (right

² 'The Principles of Integral Education' (The Incarnate Word, 1953) < <https://incarnateword.in/journals-and-magazines/sri-aurobindo-mandir-annual-1942-2015/1953-1/the-principles-of-integral-education> > accessed 10 September 2025

³ Constitution of India 1950, art 21

⁴ *Mohini Jain (Miss) v State of Karnataka* (1992) 3 SCC 666

⁵ *Unni Krishnaan v State of Andhra Pradesh* (1993) 1 SCC 645

⁶ 'Swabhava and Swadharma', CWSA – Essays on the Gita (The Incarnate Word) <<https://incarnateword.in/cwsa/19/swabhava-and-swadharma> accessed 10 September 2025.>

⁷ Constitution of India 1950, art 14

to equality) and Article 15⁸ (prohibition of discrimination), requiring schooling systems to embrace difference and diversity.

3. Work From the Near to the Far

Aurobindo's method of teaching starts with the concrete, like a student's own history, environment, and surroundings, and then gradually expands to wider intellectual and spiritual growth. This local-to-global approach avoids forcing outside or the abstract ideas too early and respects India's cultural diversity.

NEP 2020 follows this method by advocating for teaching in the mother tongue, cultural sensitivity, and curricula relevant locally for building a futuristic mindset among the students by conserving the heritage and also making them ready for contemporary challenges aligned with global outreach. The constitutional right of education under Article 21A⁹ reflects the legal relevance through the emphasis given in policy documents on education in the mother tongue.

4. Rootedness in National Culture with Universal Outlook

According to Aurobindo, integral education fosters a strong sense of national identity and cultural roots. It reflects India's tradition of humanism and tolerance; therefore, nationalism is not narrow or hostile. The goal is to create 'citizens of the world' who are rooted in India's culture but receptive to global ideas.

Constitutional ideals like preservation of the cultural and educational rights of minorities are included in Article 29¹⁰ and Article 30¹¹. Promoting pluralism and the right to culture in education are mentioned in NEP's blending of traditional Indian systems of knowledge and multilingualism.

5. Moral and Ethical Education

For Aurobindo, moral education is all about strengthening the ability of the student to differentiate between the right and wrong and not about external imposition. The most effective approach, he argues, is to invite and suggest, not command, thereby fostering self-regulation, ethical capacity, and responsible freedom.

⁸ Constitution of India 1950, art 15

⁹ Constitution of India 1950, art 21A

¹⁰ Constitution of India 1950, art 29

¹¹ Constitution of India 1950, art 30

The importance of education as a constitutional morality is a norm established by the Supreme Court, and developing citizenship virtues as part of the DPSPs. The NEP 2020's focus on value-based and constitutional education is a manifestation of the need for a curriculum that shapes both moral character and academic success.

6. Holistic Education

Aurobindo believed that developing a sensitive sense through arts, literature and creativity is essential for complete growth. This is not only about the artistic talent but also about learning to see the beauty, think about ideals, and discipline the mind. Today's education policy also values the creative economy and includes arts, humanities, and creative skills in the curriculum, showing that development is key to building well-rounded, innovative, and emotionally intelligent citizens. Legally, this supports Articles 15 and 29 of the Indian Constitution¹², which call for inclusivity and pluralism in education and prevent the exclusion of students who are gifted in non-academic fields.

7. Spiritual Education

Freedom from commercialism, sensationalism, and sheer rationalism is Aurobindo's last principle for integral education. Education should awaken higher consciousness, spiritual values, and enable students to express their highest selves. It should not only produce job-seekers but promote enlightenment, compassion, and universal brotherhood.

Legally, education is not limited to job-related skills but also includes the full development of human personality as protected under Article 21 of the Constitution. The Supreme Court has interpreted the right to life to include the right to education as a means of personal growth and dignity, as Article 21A further mandates Education as a fundamental right for children aged 6-14, thereby requiring the State to provide opportunities not only for literacy but for holistic development too. International Covenants, such as Article 13 of ICESCR¹³ which affirms that education must aim at the development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity. NEP 2020 reflects this by adding yoga, meditation, and personality development in the curriculum,

¹² Constitution of India 1950, art 15 & 29

¹³ International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (adopted 16 December 1966, entered into force 3 January 1976) 993 UNTS 3, art 13

echoing Aurobindo's belief that spiritual growth forms the foundation of a strong civil society.

NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY 2020

The NEP 2020

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 offers a transformative blueprint for reshaping India's educational ecosystem and signals a decisive shift towards integrating India's ancient intellectual traditions with contemporary societal and global aspirations. As the foundation of a new educational era, the policy envisions an inclusive, flexible and learner-centric system that not only meets International benchmarks but also authentically reflects India's civilizational ethos. To meaningfully appreciate the distinctiveness of NEP 2020 in comparison to earlier policies it is necessary to first examine the breadth and substance of its key features in details and subsequently situate them against the educational paradigms that preceded it.

Those systems prioritized expansion of access and physical infrastructure but adhered to a one-size-fits-all 10+2 model, privileging English, sidelining vocational and skill-based learning, and leaving students with few alternatives.¹⁴ High-stakes examinations functioned as decisive determinants of students' futures while higher education institutions largely operated in disciplinary silos, providing narrow academic choices and concentrating predominantly on professional fields such as medicine, law, or technology with minimal scope for interdisciplinary learning or flexibility.

With respect to constitutional guarantees such as Article 21A (right to free and compulsory education for children) and Article 21 (right to life, expanded by judicial interpretation to include education and full personality development), NEP 2020, on the other hand, reorients education as a tool for nation-building and individual potential realization. It promotes learner agency, freedom to enter and exit, and thorough assessments that prioritize learning over performance. The policy's Articles 14, 15, and 29—which protect equality, inclusion, and cultural diversity in education—ground students in India's pluralist culture while integrating 21st-century abilities like ethical reasoning, problem-solving, digital competency, and critical thinking.¹⁵

¹⁴ TS Rajeswari, 'Revisiting Sri Aurobindo's Views on Education and NEP 2020' (2019) 8 IJFANS

¹⁵ Harjinder, 'Implications of Educational Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo in 21st Century' (2024)

It also addresses the digital divide, integrates multicultural and multilingual approaches, and prioritizes equality by supporting marginalized communities. By granting instructors greater autonomy, encouraging research, and streamlining governance for transparency, NEP 2020 seeks to achieve a balance between innovation and accountability. According to Sri Aurobindo's holistic view of education, the strategy aims to fully develop human potential, rather than focusing solely on technical or economic advancement. Discussed below are some features of NEP 2020 that contribute to the policy being a unique system of education in India,

1. Inclusive and Multidisciplinary Education

A cornerstone of NEP 2020 is its commitment to fostering holistic development in learners. The policy represents a significant shift from the conventional, inflexible division of academic fields into distinct streams, including the humanities, science, and commerce. Rather than this, it promotes a multidisciplinary approach that empowers students to curate their own educational paths by integrating subjects across domains, such as combining physics with literature or mathematics with music. This flexibility is not confined to higher education but all levels of learning, thereby enabling the simultaneous development of cognitive, emotional, physical, and social abilities. The policy envisions the transformation of universities into expansive multidisciplinary institutions, and this will include the smaller, single-discipline colleges being absorbed by larger multidisciplinary universities. The integrated development of the body, mind, and spirit is emphasized in Indian Philosophical traditions, particularly those advocated by Sri Aurobindo.

2. The 5+3+3+4 Educational Framework

NEP 2020 substitutes the 10 + 2 system of education with a more developmentally oriented 5 + 3 + 3 + 4 system.¹⁶This new model fits into the changing psychological and cognitive requirements of children. The initial level is five years and starts at the age of three, and covers education of pre-primary level with a focus on playing and activity-based learning. The next levels, Preparatory, Middle, and Secondary, are to develop the initial interest and the skills of the child to greater levels, introducing the pedagogies and content that are age-specific. The overall goal is to embrace a dynamic

¹⁶ Seema Rani Sethi, 'The New Education Policy 2020: Addressing the Challenges of Education in Modern India' (2023) VII IJRIS <www.rsisinternational.org>.

and research-based strategy that allows us to establish gradual learning and make education interesting, up-to-date, and rooted in practical situations.

3. Universalization and Fair Access to Education.

The policy has high aims of a universal enrollment, to have a 100 percent Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in pre-primary and secondary education by 2030, and also 50 percent GER in higher education by 2035.¹⁷ NEP 2020 has a high priority on inclusivity with specific interventions to address the gaps in enrollment and retention between girls, socio-economically disadvantaged groups (SEDGs), and children with disabilities. Policies such as the development of special education zones, gender-inclusion funds, and linguistic and resource provisions to marginalized populations have been offered not only to achieve access but also equity in the achievement of education.

4. Inherent Literacy and Numeracy.

Since educational inequalities usually start in their early life, NEP 2020 proposes a National Mission of Foundational Literacy and Numeracy. The mission aims at making sure that every child is able to achieve simple competencies in reading, writing, and arithmetic by the third Grade 3 level.¹⁸ The program involves the combination of early childhood care and education (ECCE) and primary education, the creation of inclusive assessment systems, and detailed teacher training programs. Its goal is to create a strong base of lifelong learning and academic achievement.

5. Curriculum/Pedagogical Reforms.

The policy proposes an extensive restructuring of curricula content in all disciplines, which entails a decrease in rote memorization and a greater emphasis on conceptual learning, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. Change in the pedagogical approaches will involve switching to the experiential, interactive, and inquiry-based methodologies where students are encouraged to work on projects, in the field, on simulations, and in reflection. The paradigm of assessment shifts towards continuous, competency-based, and formative assessment and abandons high-stakes annual

¹⁷ Press Information Bureau, Government of India, 'National Education Policy 2020' (29 July 2020).

¹⁸ "National Initiative for Proficiency in Reading with Understanding and Numeracy (NIPUN Bharat)" (PIB, Government of India, July 2021)

assessments.

6. The Multilingualism and Language Policy.

NEP 2020 emphasises the value of language differences and the need to retain the rich Indian culture. It proposes that teaching should be in the mother language or the regional language at least up to Grade 5 and ideally up to Grade 8. The policy facilitates the three-language formula, which focuses on the concomitant development of the skills of two languages in India and on exposure to the classical languages like Sanskrit and also to modern international languages. The vision of language education is that it is a means of national unity, appreciation of culture and readiness to the world.

7. Professional and Apprenticeship Training.

Vocational education is placed at the center of the curriculum, with the aim of ensuring that at least 50 percent of the students are undergoing vocational training by 2025, and this would start at the high school level. Click or tap here to enter text. The curriculum will cover an array of skills such as technical trades, entrepreneurship, coding, and digital literacy. NEP 2020 will facilitate the incorporation of apprenticeships and internships and seek partnerships with the industry to increase employability, innovativeness, and economic relevance.

8. Review of Examination and Assessment Systems.

The policy recommends restructuring of board exams to effectively capture what students have really learned, their critical thinking ability, and their conceptual knowledge. The assessments will be low-stakes and modular and will be supported by frequent formative assessment. There are institutions like the Performance Assessment, Review, and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development (PARAKH),¹⁹ which are created in order to make assessment practices standard, transparent, and impartial. There is also the introduction of an Academic Bank of Credit and a credit transfer system that ensures the flexibility of academic moves between institutions and subjects.

9. Higher Education Change.

The NEP 2020 imagines the complete redesign of post-secondary education, and this

¹⁹ NCERT, 'About PARAKH' (NCERT) <https://ncert.nic.in/parakh/about.php> accessed 10 September 2025.

will promote the integration of institutions into large multidisciplinary universities in line with global best practice. Academic courses of professional institutions, including law, engineering, and medicine, are being encouraged to increase. The policy introduces a multi-entry and exit system by which the students can now venture to take certificates, diplomas, or degrees at various levels and return to acquire additional qualifications. The establishment of the National Research Foundation (NRF) is one step further to the higher level of quality of research and more finances, as well as the combination of academic research and needs of society and industry.

10. Professional Development and Teacher Education.

Since teachers are the backbone of the educational system, NEP 2020 demands the introduction of a four-year combined Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) as the minimum qualification to be employed as a teacher.²⁰ The policy is directed towards ongoing professional development, mentoring, and the professional development and growth of teachers. It also encourages a higher degree of autonomy in the decision-making process of the pedagogical process and seeks to eliminate bureaucratic restrictions that interfere with the new teaching behaviours.

11. Educational Technology.

NEP 2020 proposes to create a National Educational Technology Forum where best practices can be shared and the use of open learning platforms and access to open educational materials can be scaled. The policy acknowledges the digital divide and calls forth particular attention to enhance ICT infrastructure, enhance digital literacy among teachers, and ensure that accessible e-content, particularly in underserved and rural areas, is accessible.

12. Making Regulation and Governance lean.

To enhance efficiency and reduce institutional fragmentation, NEP 2020 suggests the establishment of a single regulatory body that would address higher education, except for law and medicine. It is mandated to this organ to ensure transparency, lessen

²⁰ Teacher and Teacher Education Background Paper for Teacher's Fest' (NCERT/Ministry of Education, Government of India, <https://www.education.gov.in/shikshakparv/docs/background_note_teacher_education.pdf> accessed on 9 September 2025

bureaucratic encroachment and to increase institutional autonomy and innovativeness. It is alleged that the policy will balance the roles of the various regulatory bodies with a view to coming up with a consistent and responsible system of governance.

13. Values, Ethics and Citizenship Promotion.

The policy brings into the learning experience teaching of the constitutional values, ethical reasoning, empathy, and diversity respect. Equality is accorded to co-curricular and extracurricular studies such as arts, culture, sporting and services to the community, in addition to the academic activities. NEP 2020 has the vision of developing socially responsible and ethically based citizens who can take India to the forefront in a more interconnected and dynamic globalized world.

INTER-RELATION BETWEEN SRI AUROBINDO'S PRINCIPLES AND NEP 2020

Constitutional Mandate

The National Education Policy 2020, envisioned with the Constitutional mandate of Art. 21A, the Directive Principles, and the core constitutional and moral values such as equality, inclusivity, and scientific thinking, have been the most significant changes in India's education system post-Independence. The policy also aligns with the ideals expressed by Sri Aurobindo over a century ago, and the policy can be seen as a partial realization of Aurobindo's philosophy on Integral Education and National Education. However, the alignment is not completely in fulfillment of the ideals and the principles stated by Sri Aurobindo, as the policy is in a way that is connected to the language of the constitution and modern development goals, highlighting both benefits and limitations.

Holistic Development

One of the major areas of bringing inclusivity to the policy and the principles is the idea of holistic development. Aurobindo believed that education should not focus solely on intellect; it must also nurture the body, mind, emotions, and spirit. He argued that physical development and a clear mind are essential foundations for spiritual growth. NEP 2020 reflects this ideal by promoting sports, yoga, arts, crafts, and value-based activities alongside cognitive learning. It aims to foster creativity, emotional resilience, ethical awareness, and spiritual well-being. The policy encourages yoga and meditation from an early age and promotes health, arts, and

community service. This suggests that the policy is moving towards integral education. However, it expresses the spiritual aspect of Aurobindo's philosophy in more neutral terms, like mindfulness, wellness, and personality development. NEP 2020 presents a path to inner awakening and self-realization more as a means to improve balance, productivity, and resilience; therefore, using this approach to fit for a secular democracy, it is diminishing the deeper significance of Aurobindo's vision.²¹

Child-Centric Pedagogy

Aurobindo insisted that "the teacher's business is to suggest and not to impose," consulting the child's mind in its own growth. NEP 2020 echoes this by promoting learner-centered methods, project work, inquiry-based learning, peer collaboration, and flexible subject choices to reduce rote memorization. Teachers are envisioned as guides and mentors, supported by reforms (four-year integrated B.Ed., continuous professional development, and mentoring) to become reflective educators. In principle, these measures advance Aurobindo's ideal of embodying values through teachers. In practice, however, entrenched exam culture and heavy workloads impede this shift.

Role of Teachers

The role of the teacher highlights this gap further. For Aurobindo, as previously stated, teachers were more than just knowledge transmitters; they were mentors who embodied values such as truth, discipline, and creativity—principles they aimed to instill in students. NEP 2020 carries this idea forward by promoting respect, autonomy, and ongoing training for teachers. Its proposals for a four-year integrated B.Ed., career advancement options, and a National Mission for Mentoring demonstrate a commitment to developing reflective, innovative, and empathetic educators. Still, a significant gap exists between vision and reality, especially since many government school teachers often face low pay, excessive administrative duties, and a lack of motivation. Without systemic and meaningful changes to improve these working conditions, the vision of teachers as mentors may remain more of an ideal than a lived reality.

Assessment Reforms

This gap between vision and reality is also evident in how students are assessed. Aurobindo

²¹ Vyas Parimal, 'Implementation of National Education Policy 2020 Through Adoption of Sri Aurobindo's Approach to Integral Education' (2024) 1 Asha Paras International Multidisciplinary Research Journal.

criticized the fearful and competitive environment created by exams, as previously mentioned. He believed that genuine education transforms knowledge into wisdom through reflection, not memorization for high-stakes tests. NEP 2020 proposes a significant shift toward continuous assessment and holistic evaluation, recommending the use of portfolios, self-assessments, and peer reviews as alternatives to the limited one-answer format of board exams. The shift from assessing learning to assessing for learning reflects Aurobindo's insistence that education should foster confidence and self-mastery. The real challenge lies in implementation, as India is deeply entrenched in the coaching industry, competitive exams, and parental anxiety regarding assessment.

Multidisciplinary

Another key area of alignment is the policy's commitment to a flexible, multidisciplinary, and inclusive curriculum. NEP 2020 dismantles the rigid boundaries between science and humanities, curricular and extracurricular activities, vocational and academic tracks. Students are encouraged to combine disciplines based on their interests, while higher education institutions are designed with multiple entry and exit points. This reflects Sri Aurobindo's principle that all of an individual's abilities should be developed together, rather than narrowing education into strict specialization. He envisioned education as a process of nurturing well-rounded human beings instead of producing narrowly focused specialists. NEP 2020 operationalizes this vision by allowing, for example, a physics student who wants to pursue music, or an aspiring Chartered Accountant interested in philosophy. Such interdisciplinarity recognizes each learner's unique swabhava (innate nature) and swadharma (true vocation). However, challenges such as inadequate infrastructure in many colleges, faculty diversity, and resources needed to offer authentic interdisciplinary programs remain, making this vision more aspirational than widespread.

Cultural Rootedness with Global Outlook

Aurobindo also underlined the significance of keeping an open mind to global knowledge throughout the world while firmly establishing education according to our country's cultural ethos. He believed that India's future lies in blending its spiritual heritage with modern science, offering the world a new synthesis, and NEP 2020 embodies this philosophy by incorporating Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS), classical languages, regional traditions, and local crafts into the curriculum. The shift from English languages to be the medium of instruction to mother tongue to be the medium of instruction until at least Grade 5 and ideally Grade 8, reflects

Aurobindo's view that preliminary education must be rooted according to the child's natural linguistic setting and also marks as a decisive step from colonial models of education that was given importance more than the local Indian languages and culture.

Such a move echoes Article 29(1) of the Indian Constitution, the right of citizens to conserve their unique language, script, or culture, and Article 51A(f), which states that it is a fundamental duty to maintain the rich cultural heritage of India. The principle has been affirmed by judicial interpretation: in *T.M.A. Pai Foundation v. State of Karnataka*²² the Supreme Court was of the view that the right to set up and run schools also enforces linguistic and cultural identity and that the statutes would uphold the rule of law and dignity in every individual within the community. In the case of *English Medium Students Parents Association v. State of Karnataka*²³ The significance of mother-tongue instruction in early learning was identified. Simultaneously, the focus on global skills of NEP 2020 is what will make Indian students ready to be integrated into the global economy. In this connection, the policy can be characterized as an Aurobindonian direction: strong in terms of the national culture but at the same time open and responsive to the world's concepts.²⁴ But there is strong resistance to mother-tongue education also because many parents still prefer English-medium schools. There are also not enough books and materials in regional languages, and since English is seen as giving social and economic advantage, it makes the policy hard to put into practice.

Value-based and Spiritual Education

Another important connection is the NEP's intention to prioritize valued and spiritual education. Earlier policies have tended to treat moral education as an add-on. NEP 2020 tries to make values part of everyday school life through activities like community work, nature learning, projects on empathy and discussions on gender and social issues. The important practices of yoga and meditation, for example, and mindfulness are not to be related to a religious significance but as practices of self-discipline and personal development. This supports Aurobindo's position that education should develop capacities in a person to prepare themselves for a higher life or provide a pathway towards a deeper spiritual purpose. On the

²² *T.M.A. Pai Foundation v. State of Karnataka* (2002) 8 SCC 481

²³ *English Medium Students Parents Association v. State of Karnataka* (1994) 1 SCC 550

²⁴ Sudeb Ghosh and Birbal Saha, 'Sri Aurobindo Ghosh's Integral Education: An Education Of The Body, Mind And The Intellect' (2024) 2 *The Social Science Review A Multidisciplinary Journal* < <https://tssreview.in/?article=sri-aurobindo-ghoshs-integral-education-an-education-of-the-body-mind-and-the-intellect> > accessed on 9 September 2025

other hand, there is a limit, i.e., since India is a secular country, NEP 2020 cannot frame education directly as a spiritual journey. Instead, it presents these ideas in the form of wellness and value education. This makes the policy more inclusive for all traditions but it also reduces the deeper spiritual meaning that Aurobindo had in Mind.

Inclusivity

Inclusivity is yet another key area where NEP 2020 reflects Aurobindo's principle of universalism. He believed that every person, regardless of their background has a divine potential that is essential to the good of the society. NEP 2020 also aims recognizing potential gaps for girls, marginalized groups, differently-abled children, and those from low-income background and offers the targeted resources, inclusive of teaching practices, and support systems to promote equity. This commitment aligns with Aurobindo's vision as well as the constitutional guarantees of equality (Articles 14 and 15) and cultural rights (Articles 29 and 30). More than just numbers, bridging the existing gaps requires political will and steadfast and sustained investment.

Limitations

Despite these significant alignments NEP 2020 fails to embrace the spiritual aspect of Aurobindo's teaching about education. For Aurobindo, education was also a medium of personal awakening and national renewal. For NEP 2020, education mainly serves as a tool for nation-building and developing human capital. The language of the policy emphasizes global competitiveness and economic growth just as much as holistic development. This difference is partly due to constitutional requirements as the State cannot officially promote spiritual beliefs, and also due to developmental needs. In a country where millions still lack basic literacy, policymakers often focus on employability and global integration over personal awakening.²⁵

In summary, NEP 2020 aligns with Aurobindo's spirit while also offering reality-based recommendations which can be considered in a way as a pragmatic approach. It is derived extensively from Aurobindo's principles, inclusive of holistic growth, learner autonomy, mother-tongue instruction, cultural roots, value-based education, dignity of labor, and inclusivity. However, it surrounds these concepts in secular, constitutional, and developmental

²⁵ Aditi Dubey, 'Integral Education: Insights from Sri Aurobindo's Philosophy of Education and It's Common Aspects with NEP 2020' (2025) 3 International Journal of Trends In Emerging Research And Development < <https://researchtrendsjournal.com> >.

terms. It cannot fully replicate his spiritual vision, nor can it provide the deep, individualized mentorship that integral education demands. NEP 2020 cannot escape from structural issues rather than ideological ones. Aurobindo's model thrived in the ashram school because it was a small, dedicated community.²⁶ Applying this model and having a spiritual approach to a system serving over 250 million students is an extraordinary challenge.

Overall, however, the positives outweigh the negatives. NEP 2020 represents a significant step toward an educational framework that resonates with India's core principles while preparing students for the wider world. Its success will rely on persistent and long-term teacher training programs, adequate resources such as financial, intellectual, and capital, changes in societal attitudes toward vocational education, and meaningful assessment reform. It will also require policymakers to creatively blend spiritual and moral dimensions into secular settings, similar to Delhi's Science of Living curriculum²⁷, which teaches mindfulness, emotional resilience, and digital detox without invoking religious practices. Such innovations indicate that Aurobindo's vision can be practically implemented if approached with sensitivity to constitutional values.

The relationship between Sri Aurobindo's philosophy and NEP 2020 is best understood as a selective adaptation marked by constructive engagement rather than complete adoption. While NEP 2020 does not fully embrace Aurobindo's ideals as limited by the constitutional principles, such as secularism, social realities, and practical constraints, it still incorporates his principles in meaningful ways. Moving forward the focus should be on reinforcing and expanding upon those ideas rather than finding out what is not there. If implementation is approached with dedication and creativity, NEP 2020 has the potential to be a significant step toward realizing Aurobindo's vision, i.e., an education system that cultivates free, creative, self-reliant, and spiritually conscious individuals, balancing current needs with the broader aspirations of the nation.

²⁶ *ibid*

²⁷ Dhulia Meghna, 'Happiness Curriculum out, "Science of Living" in: Delhi Govt Schools to Teach Mindfulness, Digital Detox from August | Delhi News - Times of India' (2025) <<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/delhi/happiness-curriculum-in-govt-schools-makes-way-for-science-of-living/articleshow/121628870.cms>> accessed 9 September 2025.

Conclusion

The National Education Policy marks a pivotal shift in India's education system, one that is distinctly influenced by the enduring principles of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy of education. For decades, the colonial exam-centric model prioritized grades over the holistic development of an individual, i.e., a structure that Aurobindo critiqued sharply, advocating instead for education that nurtures the body, mind, heart, and spirit of every child. NEP 2020 embraces this vision by promoting flexible, learner-centric pedagogy, multi-disciplinary curricula, and value-based education, moving decisively away from mechanistic schooling models.

Aurobindo's educational principles resonate with NEP 2020. The policy emphasizes preliminary education in the mother tongue, inquiry-based learning in which teachers are like mentors rather than just information transmitters, and a recognition of each student's unique nature (swabhava) and individual's purpose (swadharma). The holistic nature of NEP's inclusion of arts, sports, vocational talents, yoga, and moral education speaks to Aurobindo's complete development of the notion of a human being. Moreover, NEP acknowledges that academic achievement is not the only indicator of success, and it presents equal value for extra-curricular and creative activities for developing self-reliant citizens.

At the same time, NEP 2020 necessarily translates Aurobindo's spiritual vision into secular terms, framing it in the language of wellness, resilience, and personal growth. Given India's constitutional commitment to secularism and pluralism, the deeper spiritual dimension is inevitably moderated. Moreover, the significant challenges, such as the strong exam culture, society's preference for English medium education, uneven funding at national and state levels, and the limitations faced by teachers, etc., will require sustained political will, increased financial investment, and active participation from educators and stakeholders.

Despite these hurdles NEP 2020 marks a big step forward. It is the first policy in India to remove the rote learning and exam-centered education policy, grounding itself in India's cultural ethos while also preparing students to meet the demands of the Globalized World. In this sense, it stands as a living acknowledgment of Sri Aurobindo's vision of integral education.