



## Critical Analysis of the Application of New Education Policy 2020 to Hindustani Classical Music at Universities: Advantages and Challenges



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### Abstract

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, introduced by the Government of India, aims to transform the educational landscape by emphasizing multidisciplinary education, flexibility, and holistic development. This article critically analyzes the application of NEP 2020 to Hindustani classical music programs in Indian universities, exploring its potential advantages and inherent challenges. The policy's focus on integrating arts, promoting vocational education, and leveraging technology aligns with the needs of preserving and promoting Hindustani classical music. However, challenges such as infrastructure deficits, digital divides, and the preservation of the traditional guru-shishya parampara pose significant hurdles. Drawing on policy documents, academic literature, and qualitative analysis, this article evaluates the implications of NEP 2020 for music education, offering recommendations for effective implementation.

**Keywords:** National Education Policy 2020, Hindustani classical music, music education, multidisciplinary education, guru-shishya parampara, digital learning.

### Research Paper

#### Introduction

India's New Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is a transformative framework designed to overhaul the education system, aligning it with global standards and the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) for inclusive and equitable quality education. The policy emphasizes multidisciplinary education, experiential learning, and the integration of arts and culture into curricula to foster creativity, critical thinking, and holistic development. Hindustani classical music, a cornerstone of India's cultural heritage, stands to benefit from this paradigm shift, particularly in higher education institutions where formal music programs are offered.

Hindustani classical music, rooted in the guru-shishya (teacher-student) tradition, is characterized by its emphasis on improvisation, emotional depth, and intricate ragas. Universities offering degrees in this art form, such as Lalit kala kendra Pune University, Bharathi Vidyapeeth Pune, Visva-Bharati Kolkata, Banaras Hindu University, and others, face unique challenges in balancing tradition with

modern pedagogical approaches. NEP 2020's vision of flexible curricula, technology integration, and vocational training offers opportunities to enhance the accessibility and relevance of Hindustani classical music education. However, its implementation raises concerns about infrastructure, funding, vacant positions of professors at Universities and the preservation of cultural authenticity. (Govinda 25)

This article critically examines the application of NEP 2020 to Hindustani classical music programs in Indian universities. It explores the policy's advantages, such as promoting multidisciplinary learning and global exposure, and challenges, including the digital divide and potential erosion of traditional teaching methods. The analysis draws on policy documents, scholarly literature, and qualitative insights to provide a comprehensive evaluation. (Athavale et al. 47)

#### Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative, analytical, and interpretative approach to evaluate the implications of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 for

Hindustani Classical Music education at the university level. The research is based on a systematic analysis of primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include the official NEP 2020 document issued by the Ministry of Education and relevant guidelines and frameworks issued by the University Grants Commission (UGC). Secondary sources comprise peer-reviewed research articles, books, and academic reports on music education, higher education reforms, and policy implementation, accessed through recognized academic platforms such as Research-Gate and scholarly journals including the International Journal of Music Education.

A thematic analysis was employed to interpret the collected data. This involved identifying, categorizing, and critically examining recurring themes related to both the advantages of NEP 2020 (such as multidisciplinary education, curricular flexibility, and technology integration) and the challenges (including infrastructural limitations, teacher preparedness, and concerns regarding the preservation of traditional pedagogical practices).

In addition, social media discourse, particularly from platforms such as X, was used only as supplementary data to capture contemporary responses and practitioner perspectives on NEP 2020. This material was not treated as primary evidence but was utilized to contextualize and support insights derived from policy documents and academic literature, thereby contributing to a more grounded understanding of the practical implications of policy implementation. (Saini et al. 108)

## **Background: NEP 2020 and Hindustani Classical Music**

### **Overview of NEP 2020:**

NEP 2020 is a landmark policy aiming to universalize education, enhance quality, and promote lifelong learning. Key features relevant to music education include:

- **Multidisciplinary Education:** Encouraging the integration of arts, humanities, and sciences to foster holistic development.
- **Flexible Curricula:** Introducing multiple entry and exit points in degree programs and emphasizing vocational training.
- **Technology Integration:** Promoting digital platforms and e-learning to enhance accessibility.
- **Cultural Emphasis:** Recognizing the importance of Indian languages, arts, and culture in education.

These features align with the United Nations' SDG 4, which emphasizes inclusive and equitable education. (Singh Kaurav et al. 92)

## **Hindustani Classical Music in Universities**

Hindustani classical music, prevalent in North India, is taught in universities through structured programs, including bachelors and masters degrees in vocal and instrumental music (e.g., sitar, tabla). Institutions like Visva-Bharati, Lalit kala Kendra Pune University and Banaras Hindu University follow a blend of traditional guru-shishya methods and formal academic structures. The guru-shishya parampara emphasizes personalized mentorship, oral transmission, and long-term training, which contrasts with modern academic frameworks that prioritize standardized curricula and assessments. (Kurien and Chandramana 18)

## **Advantages of NEP 2020 for Hindustani Classical Music Education**

### **Multidisciplinary and Holistic Education**

NEP 2020's multidisciplinary approach allows universities to integrate Hindustani classical music with disciplines like history, literature, or technology, fostering creativity and critical thinking. For example, students could study the historical evolution of ragas alongside cultural studies or combine music with digital media for innovative compositions. This aligns with global trends in music education, enhancing students' career prospects in performance, production, or academia (Costa-Giomi, 1999). (Costa-Giomi 205)

The policy's focus on holistic development also complements the emotional and social benefits of music. Research shows music education promotes emotional self-regulation and empathy, which are vital for personal growth and societal contributions (Costa-Giomi, 1999). By embedding Hindustani classical music in a multidisciplinary framework, universities can produce well-rounded artists who preserve cultural heritage while adapting to modern demands. (Costa-Giomi 210)

### **Flexible Curricula and Vocational Training**

NEP 2020's flexible degree structures, with multiple entry and exit points, allow tailored learning paths for music students. For instance, students can pursue short-term certificates in specific ragas or advanced degrees combining performance and musicology (Kurien & Chandramana, 2020). The emphasis on vocational



training supports practical skills like music production, studio recording, and event management, improving employability in a competitive industry. (Kurien and Chandramana 21)

### **Technology Integration and Global Reach**

The policy's push for digital education aligns with the growing role of technology in Hindustani classical music. Platforms like YouTube and online music schools have expanded the art form's reach, enabling students to access global audiences. NEP 2020's National Educational Technology Forum (NETF) promotes digital repositories and e-learning platforms, which can host tutorials, performances, and archival recordings. This democratization enhances accessibility and fosters cross-cultural exchange, attracting international students to Indian music programs. (Soni 41)

### **Emphasis on Cultural Preservation**

NEP 2020 prioritizes Indian languages, arts, and culture, recognizing their role in national identity (Ministry of Education, 2020). For Hindustani classical music, this translates into increased support for programs in regional languages and traditional forms. The policy's focus on institutions like the National Institute for Pali, Persian, and Prakrit suggests potential for dedicated music research centers, preserving archival recordings and promoting non-commercial initiatives. (\*National Education Policy 2020\*56)

### **Challenges in Implementing NEP 2020 for Hindustani Classical Music**

#### **1. Infrastructure and Funding Constraints**

While NEP 2020 articulates an ambitious vision for arts and cultural education, its successful implementation in Hindustani Classical Music remains constrained by persistent infrastructural and financial limitations. The policy presupposes the availability of specialized facilities such as soundproof rehearsal spaces, performance halls, quality instruments, and digital recording infrastructure. However, many Indian universities—particularly public and rural institutions—continue to operate with minimal music-specific infrastructure, often treating music departments as peripheral rather than core academic units.

The proposed increase in public education expenditure to 6% of GDP has yet to translate into targeted funding for performing arts education (Govinda, 2020). In the absence of earmarked allocations, music departments are

frequently deprioritized within institutional budgeting processes, revealing a gap between policy intent and fiscal governance. For a discipline that depends heavily on physical space and acoustic quality, this mismatch poses a structural obstacle rather than a temporary shortcoming.

#### **2. Digital Divide and Pedagogical Limitations**

NEP 2020's emphasis on digital learning and technology integration introduces further implementation challenges for Hindustani Classical Music education. Although digital platforms can supplement learning, their effectiveness is uneven due to the digital divide, with only a limited proportion of students having consistent access to smartphones, computers, and high-speed internet (Soni, 2021). This inequity disproportionately affects students from rural and economically marginalized backgrounds, thereby contradicting the policy's stated commitment to inclusivity.

More critically, the pedagogical foundations of Hindustani Classical Music rely on embodied, oral, and immersive learning, which digital modes cannot fully replicate (Subhadip Das, 2023). The absence of sustained in-person interaction limits the transmission of subtle aspects such as voice culture, improvisational aesthetics, and raga grammar. Additionally, limited digital literacy among faculty—particularly senior practitioners trained exclusively in traditional systems—further weakens effective technology adoption, exposing a misalignment between policy-driven digital expectations and ground-level pedagogical realities.

#### **3. Tension between NEP Frameworks and Guru-Shishya Parampara**

A major conceptual challenge lies in reconciling NEP 2020's standardized academic structures with the guru-shishya parampara, which forms the epistemic core of Hindustani Classical Music. This tradition emphasizes long-term mentorship, individualized instruction, and experiential knowledge transfer—elements that do not easily conform to semester-based curricula, credit frameworks, or outcome-based assessments (Anant Athavale et al., 2021).

While NEP 2020 acknowledges Indian Knowledge Systems, its implementation mechanisms remain largely bureaucratic and uniform, raising concerns that scalability and formalization may inadvertently dilute depth and authenticity. Without flexible governance models that recognize alternative pedagogies,



universities may reduce the guru–shishya relationship to a symbolic reference rather than a functional educational practice.

#### 4. Faculty Shortages, Training Gaps, and Institutional Capacity

One of the most critical yet under-addressed challenges is the issue of faculty availability and preparedness. Many universities face shortages of qualified Hindustani Classical Music faculty, particularly practitioners with both advanced performance credentials and academic training. NEP 2020's expectation that faculty engage in multidisciplinary teaching, research, and technology-enabled pedagogy further intensifies this strain.

Moreover, existing faculty often lack structured opportunities for professional development in curriculum design, digital pedagogy, and assessment reforms (Väkevä 129). Institutional mechanisms to support faculty upskilling remain weak, reflecting broader issues of administrative capacity and academic governance (Soni 41). Without sustained investment in faculty recruitment, training, and retention, NEP 2020 risks becoming aspirational rather than operational within music departments.

#### 5. Commercialization, Governance, and Cultural Integrity

NEP 2020's encouragement of public–private partnerships and market-linked educational models raises governance-related concerns for Hindustani Classical Music education. While such partnerships may enhance resources, they also introduce the risk of commercial prioritization, where monetizable formats such as fusion or popular adaptations overshadow traditional forms.

In the absence of strong regulatory oversight and culturally informed governance frameworks, market forces may reshape curricula and performance practices in ways that compromise artistic depth and cultural continuity. This highlights a broader governance challenge: ensuring that institutional autonomy under NEP 2020 does not translate into unchecked commercialization at the cost of cultural integrity. (\*National Education Policy 2020\* 56).

#### Discussion

NEP 2020 presents a paradox for Hindustani classical music education: it offers transformative opportunities while posing risks to tradition and equity. The

multidisciplinary approach aligns with global trends, enabling students to combine music with technology or cultural studies, thus enhancing engagement and career prospects. Flexible curricula and vocational training further support employability, addressing the practical needs of music students.

However, challenges like infrastructure deficits and the digital divide threaten equitable access, particularly for rural and marginalized students. The guru-shishya tradition faces existential risks from standardized curricula and online learning, necessitating a balance between tradition and modernity. Hybrid models combining in-person mentorship with digital archives could bridge this gap, preserving authenticity while leveraging technology.

Stakeholder perspectives, gathered from academic literature and platforms like X, reflect mixed sentiments. Students value the flexibility and global exposure, but educators express concerns about funding and cultural dilution. Policymakers must address these issues through targeted investments and curriculum design that respects oral traditions while embracing innovation.

Recommendations to maximize NEP 2020's benefits for Hindustani classical music education, the following strategies are proposed:

1. **Shortage of qualified professors:** Vacant teaching positions can affect the quality of education, research output, and student support. To maintain academic standards, universities must prioritize the timely recruitment of competent faculty members.
2. **Invest in Infrastructure:** Allocate funds for music-specific facilities, such as soundproof studios and instrument libraries, to support practical training.
3. **Bridge the Digital Divide:** Develop low-cost, offline digital resources and subsidize access to devices and internet for disadvantaged students.
4. **Preserve Guru-Shishya Tradition:** Integrate traditional mentorship into formal curricula by recognizing gurus as adjunct faculty and providing stipends for their expertise.
5. **Enhance Faculty Training:** Offer professional development programs to equip music educators with skills in technology integration and multidisciplinary teaching.
6. **Promote Cultural Integrity:** Establish dedicated research centers for Hindustani music to preserve archival recordings and support non-commercial initiatives.



## Conclusion

NEP 2020 offers a transformative framework for Hindustani classical music education, promoting multidisciplinary learning, flexibility, and global outreach. However, challenges like infrastructure deficits, digital divides, and the risk of eroding the guru-shishya tradition require careful navigation. By investing in infrastructure, bridging digital gaps, and integrating traditional mentorship with modern pedagogy, universities can harness NEP 2020's potential to revitalize music education while preserving India's cultural heritage. Future research should explore case studies of NEP's implementation in music departments to assess its long-term impact.

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