

Empowering High Schools for Viksit Bharat 2047 Integrating SDGs and NEP 2020 for Education and Healthcare

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Abstract

India predicts becoming a developed nation by 2047 under the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047. Achieving this requires transformative reforms in education and healthcare, especially at the high school level where young citizens are prepared for the future. This paper examines the role of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) particularly SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being) and SDG 4 (Quality Education) together with India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 in shaping high school education and healthcare practices. India must ensure that the nation's adolescents have access to quality health care, education, and an equitable environment to flourish (SDGs). Adolescents face unique challenges related to health, education, and other aspects of their wellbeing. Prominent challenges include early marriage, unequal gender and social norms, limited access to education and health services, restricted self-agency, and substance abuse, among many others. Despite this reality, adolescent issues are commonly neglected, not least because this age group is typically considered to be strong and healthy. In India, as in most low- and middle-income countries, this misconception masks both traditional and emergent challenges, particularly those related to urbanization and the modernization of society. The analysis highlights the policy interventions necessary to ensure holistic development, preparing India's youth to contribute to a knowledge-driven and healthy society.

Keywords: Quality Education, Healthcare, NEP 2020, SDGs, wellbeing of adolescents, Viksit Bharat

1. Introduction

Education and healthcare are two foundational pillars of national development. In the journey toward Viksit Bharat 2047, India's growth narrative must prioritize quality education and healthy healthcare systems, particularly for school students. High schools serve as a critical bridge between foundational learning and higher education or professional life. Integrating quality education with accessible healthcare ensures not only intellectual growth but also physical, emotional, and social well-being. Although nearly one-fifth of India's population is aged 10–19 years, adolescent health and well-being are often under-prioritized. India's youthful population represents a tremendous opportunity—the demographic dividend. To fully realize these economic benefits and achieve global targets such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), it is essential to provide adolescents with access to quality education, comprehensive

healthcare, and an equitable environment in which they can thrive.

- **SDG 3:** Good Health and Well-Being, Promotes ensuring healthy lives and well-being for all ages. For high school students, this includes nutrition, mental health, reproductive health education, and preventive healthcare.
- **SDG 4:** Quality Education Focuses on inclusive, equitable, and quality education with lifelong learning opportunities.

NEP 2020, Advocates for Holistic, Multidisciplinary, Skill-oriented education aligned with global standards, emphasizing health awareness, life skills, and well-being as integral components of schooling. These three create a comprehensive pathway for shaping future-ready citizens.

As NEP 2020 Perspective towards the Quality

Education in High Schools:

Holistic and Multidisciplinary Learning: NEP 2020 promotes competency-based curricula, critical thinking, problem-solving, and integration of STEM with arts, values, and vocational skills.

- **Equity and Inclusion:** Ensuring access to marginalized groups, girls, and differently abled learners, reducing dropout rates.
- **Teacher Development:** Professional training, digital pedagogy, and mentorship for teachers.
- **Skill Orientation:** Exposure to coding, entrepreneurship, research, and innovation through Atal Tinkering Labs and vocational subjects.
- **Technology Integration:** Digital platforms, e-learning, AI-enabled tools to bridge urban-rural divide. The National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) marks a major shift from earlier policies of 1968 and 1986, promoting a holistic, flexible, and multidisciplinary approach to lifelong learning. By enabling learners to relearn, reskill, and retrain at any stage, it ensures their continued participation in the workforce. As discussed in the preceding para, this aligns with India's broader vision of empowering youths through quality education and healthcare, thereby contributing towards Viksit Bharat 2047.
- **Focus of this Research paper:** The purpose of this review paper was to present a comprehensive summary of the results from the review and qualitative interviews and discuss their implications for new investments in high school students Health and Nutrition. Policy, research and programming in India toward Viksit Bharat.
- **Review of Literature:** According to the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER 2023), significant disparities persist in access to quality education, while related health factors such as nutrition and well-being continue to influence learning outcomes, highlighting the close interconnection between education and healthcare in youth development.

The National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5, 2019–21) further indicates a high prevalence of anemia and malnutrition among adolescents, with girls being disproportionately affected. Similarly, the World Health Organization (2021) underscores the direct link between health and nutrition outcomes with cognitive development and academic performance. In line with these concerns, the National Education Policy (NEP 2020) emphasizes experiential learning, integrated health education, and mental health support, although systemic and implementation challenges continue to hinder its full effectiveness.

Objectives:

- To examine the status of quality education in high schools with reference to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 4) Quality Education.
- To assess the availability and effectiveness of adolescent healthcare services in alignment with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG3) Good Health and Well-being.
- To assess the role of NEP 2020 in bridging health and education at the high school level.
- To suggest a roadmap for achieving sustainable, equitable, and holistic student development.

2. Methodology

This study employs a qualitative approach, analyzing existing secondary data from UDISE+, ASER reports, NFHS-5, and NEP 2020. Additional insights are drawn from policy reviews, NITI Aayog's SDG India Index, and case studies of government initiatives. The discussion will begin with an overview of NEP 2020, followed by an analysis of its alignment with the SDG 2030 framework, and will conclude with the execution roadmap for Viksit Bharat 2047. Alignment of SDG 2030 & NEP 2020: India with its significant population, economic influence and being a signatory to SDG 2030 has already integrated the SDG goals into its national development agenda. The NITI Aayog, India's policy think tank is tasked with coordinating and monitoring the implementation of these SDGs. The Aayog regularly assesses progress of states and union territories on various SDG parameters by publishing SDG India Index. The government has also made

significant efforts towards its commitment to SDG 2030 agenda.

Table 1 Policy Interventions and Government Programs Advancing the SDGs in India

SDG'S	Initiative from Govt.	NEP 2020 Recommendation	Viksit Bharat 2047
SDG3: Good Health and Well Being	<p>1) School Health and Wellness Programmed (Ayushman Bharat) Deployment of health and wellness ambassadors in schools to promote healthy habits. Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY)</p> <p>Remarks: Health care of up to 5 lakh per family for secondary and tertiary care hospitalization.</p> <p>2) National Health Mission (NHM) Aimed to improve healthcare services delivery across urban and rural India.</p> <p>3) Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP): Improve the girl sex ratio and protect and educate the girl child.</p>	<p>Sports and physical education advocated being core part of the curriculum. Emotional well-being of students also catered through counselling and reducing stress.</p> <p>Remarks: Realizing the importance of healthy mind and body the NEP2020 propagates holistic education with compulsory physical education component.</p> <p>1-Sports & Physical Education as core curriculum component</p> <p>2-Emotional well-being & counselling</p> <p>3-Holistic health focus</p> <p>4-Gender-sensitive curricula & STEM participation, Advocates the elimination of gender biases in educational content and practices. Promotes gender sensitive curricula and increased female participation in STEM fields.</p> <p>Remarks: Promotion of female and transgender education shall pave way for equivalent or gender-neutral leadership opportunity thus creating a balanced society.</p>	<p>1-Universal health coverage with AI-driven preventive care and telemedicine accessible in every school and village.</p> <p>2-Integration of mental health literacy into school curriculum; every school has counsellors by 2047.</p> <p>3-100% of schools are equipped with fitness and nutrition monitoring systems using digital health records.</p> <p>4-Gender equality milestones: Complete elimination of gender disparity in literacy and STEM participation, with at least 50% women in leadership roles across sectors.</p> <p>5-Development of Green and Healthy Campuses ensuring safe drinking water, sanitation, mental health clubs, yoga, and sports infrastructure for all.</p>
<p>Remarks: Viksit Bharat 2047 highlight universal access, digital health integration, gender parity, and holistic well-being as the long-term vision.</p>			

SDG'S	Initiative from Govt.	NEP 2020 Recommendation	Viksit Bharat 2047
SDG4: Quality Education	<p>1) Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA): Ensures inclusive and equitable quality education till grade XII</p> <p>2) Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA): Remarks: Enables funding to higher education to promote quality education access to all.</p> <p>3) Mid-day Meal Scheme (MMS) Remarks: Free lunches to students in government schools to encourage enrolment</p>	<p>1-Aims to enable inclusive and equitable holistic education through experiential learning and skill development to produce globally competent graduates.</p> <p>2-It highlights ECCE.</p> <p>3- The holistic, multidisciplinary, multilingual, blended learning strategy of NEP2020 is targeted at ensuring education for one and all irrespective of age, status, gender or ability. Hence, the nation shall enhance its workforce.</p> <p>4- Establishment of world-class Indian universities that feature in the top global rankings, promoting research, innovation, and indigenous knowledge systems.</p>	<p>1-Universal digital literacy with <i>AI</i>-enabled personalized learning platforms for every child.</p> <p>2-100% Gross Enrolments Ratio (GER) from ECCE to higher education, ensuring no dropout by 2047.</p> <p>3-Expansion of skill-<i>based, vocational and entrepreneurship</i> education to prepare a globally competitive workforce.</p> <p>4-Nutritious meal guarantee in all schools (upgraded <i>Mid-day Meal scheme</i>) to eliminate malnutrition and improve cognitive learning outcomes.</p> <p>5-Education that fosters sustainability, ethics, and citizenship values, preparing students for leadership in a knowledge-driven economy.</p>
<p>Remarks: Viksit Bharat 2047 should project a vision of universal access, digital inclusion, global competitiveness, skill readiness, and equity in education.</p>			

2.1. Healthcare in High Schools - Policy and Practice

The Government of India has demonstrated commitment to improving the health, education and wellbeing of school students, with aims such as reducing early marriage, improving access to education, reducing substance abuse, and developing livelihood skills. The Government of India is making continuous efforts through schemes and initiatives like Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (to prevent child marriage and promote girls' education), Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan (for equitable and quality

education), Nasha Mukh Bharat Abhiyan (for reducing substance abuse), and Skill India Mission along with Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (to enhance livelihood and vocational skills). A major health initiative is the Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram (RKSK), launched in 2014 by the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare. It addresses adolescents' holistic health needs, including nutrition, mental health, sexual and reproductive health, and protection from violence and injuries, thereby ensuring their overall well-being and empowerment and many more government Initiatives

for high school students Health and Nutrition.

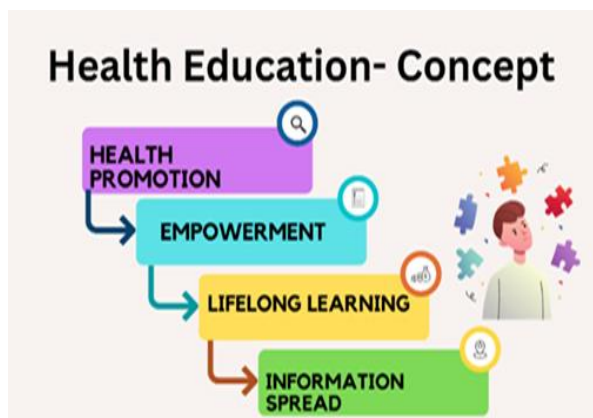
- **School Health and Wellness Programmed (Ayushman Bharat):** Deployment of health and wellness ambassadors in schools to promote healthy habits
- **Nutrition and Mid-Day Meal Schemes:** Expanding into PM-POSHAN with fortified meals to address anemia and malnutrition.
- **Mental Health and Counselling:** Addressing stress, exam anxiety, and adolescent issues through trained counsellors and peer-support systems.
- **Preventive Healthcare:** Vaccination drives, hygiene campaigns, fitness activities like Yoga, and sports for overall well-being.

2.2. Interaction in Education and Healthcare

- **Healthy Body, Healthy Mind:** Nutritional security and healthcare support enhance learning outcomes.

- **Life Skills Education:** Linking curriculum with health awareness—nutrition, environment, gender sensitivity, digital safety.
- **School as a Wellness Hub:** Schools evolve into community centers promoting both education and health literacy.

The concept of “Healthy Body, Healthy Mind” emphasizes that nutritional security and healthcare support are crucial for academic success, while life skills education, which includes nutrition, environmental awareness, and digital safety, must be integrated into the school curriculum. Schools should function as wellness hubs, transforming into community centers that promote education and health literacy to foster students' overall well-being and create a more positive learning environment.



<https://www.slideshare.net/VigneshLoganathan2/relationship-between-health-and-human-development>

Figure 1 Health Education – Concept

3. Suggestions toward Viksit Bharat 2047

The integration of healthcare and education in high schools is central to realizing the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047. The following strategies may strengthen India's progress toward achieving SDG 3 and SDG 4.

- **Strengthening Healthcare in Schools (SDG 3):** Expand RKSK and Ayushman Bharat School Health Programmed to cover all high schools, ensuring regular health check-ups, nutrition counselling, and mental health support.

- Enhance Preventive Healthcare by institutionalizing vaccination drives, menstrual hygiene programmers, yoga, and fitness initiatives.
- Strengthen Mental Health Support by training school counsellors and peer mentors to address exam stress, anxiety, and adolescent challenges.

4. Advancing Quality Education (SDG 4)

Implement NEP 2020 effectively with focus on experiential learning, life skills education, and

multidisciplinary approaches.

- Integrate Health Literacy into Curriculum, nutrition, gender sensitivity, environment, and digital safety must be taught as part of holistic education.
- Teacher Training and Capacity Building to promote awareness of adolescent health issues and adopt inclusive pedagogies.
- Digital Access and Equity by bridging the digital divide, ensuring all adolescents have access to technology-enabled learning.

5. Education–Health Integration for Holistic Development

Schools as Wellness Hubs: Schools should function not only as centers of academic learning but also as community hubs for promoting health literacy and social well-being. **Healthy Body, Healthy Mind Approach:** Linking nutritional security and healthcare to academic outcomes will ensure improved learning levels, reduced dropout rates, and enhanced employability. **Public-Private Partnerships (PPP)** can be encouraged to provide resources for health infrastructure, digital tools, and counselling services in schools.

Conclusion

Education and healthcare are interdependent pillars for national growth. India's youthful population offers a demographic dividend that can only be realized by prioritizing adolescent health and education. Policies such as NEP 2020, RKSK, Ayushman Bharat, and PM-POSHAN provide a strong framework to achieve SDG 3 and SDG 4. However, effective implementation, convergence of schemes, and monitoring are crucial. By transforming schools into wellness hubs and integrating health with education, India can ensure that its adolescents grow into healthy, skilled, and responsible citizens, ultimately contributing to the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047.

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