

Education in Dharma Rajya: A Targeted Plan to Realize NEP 2020

India's education system holds a central role in realizing Dharma Rajya, a vision of society founded on harmony, creativity, and inclusive leadership. Rooted in these principles, modern India faces rapid technological transformation—starting with the widespread adoption of the Internet in the 1990s and accelerated by mobile networks, the rise of the Internet of Things (IoT) in the 2010s, and, by the 2020s, a surge of change propelled by Artificial Intelligence (AI). Today's students, though surrounded by these advances, often lack the depth of understanding required to connect innovation with their personal and societal growth.

To flourish in this new era, individuals must appreciate themselves as integral parts of nature, actively embracing mutual dependence and personal growth through spiritual awareness. Yet, the fast pace of technology has contributed to shrinking attention spans and diminished human connection, threatening the transmission of cultural values.

Educational institutions are thus uniquely positioned to restore relevance and ensure a strong foundation for learning in the 21st century. Early holistic development and the cultivation of authentic leadership qualities—expressed through action, not just rhetoric—can help students remain both resilient and grounded.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 offers a transformative framework, but its success relies on timely, coordinated action. This report presents a strategy that addresses systemic barriers, proposes a cost-effective foundational reform for grades 3–12, and aims to nurture inventive and confident leaders capable of fostering harmonious and prosperous communities—laying a strong foundation by 2035 for India to become a holistic global leader.

Despite a rise in literacy (77% as per NSO 2023), learning outcomes remain poor: fewer than half of Grade 5 students can read Grade 2-level texts (ASER 2023) and India ranked 72nd of 74 in the PISA 2009 assessment, with no recent benchmarking data.

Transforming India's educational landscape is imperative to achieving Dharma Rajya—ensuring every student attains the skills, character, and vision needed to contribute meaningfully to a thriving, ethical society.

Current spending is poorly allocated to reward mediocrity and suppress creative learning and needed skillset. A fundamental shift in teaching and learning requires a good implementation strategy reallocating the existing resources, not a lot of fresh funding.

Changemakers must address systems change (from rote learning to creative learning) and mindset change (competing with self than with peers). Direct service by pumping funds lacks sustainability unless it is associated with systems change and mindset change.

Systemic Challenges Hindering Educational Progress

Rote Learning Culture: The legacy of colonial-era rote learning suppresses critical and creative thinking essential for the 21st-century economy.

Infrastructure Gaps: Roughly 30% of rural schools lack basic needs like electricity or clean water (UDISE 2023), disproportionately impacting marginalized communities.

Regional Disparities: Varied curricula and uneven resources across states inhibit cohesive national development.

Despite these challenges, India's talent—reflected in global leaders like Satya Nadella and Sundar Pichai—shows the nation's potential, which urgent reforms can unlock.

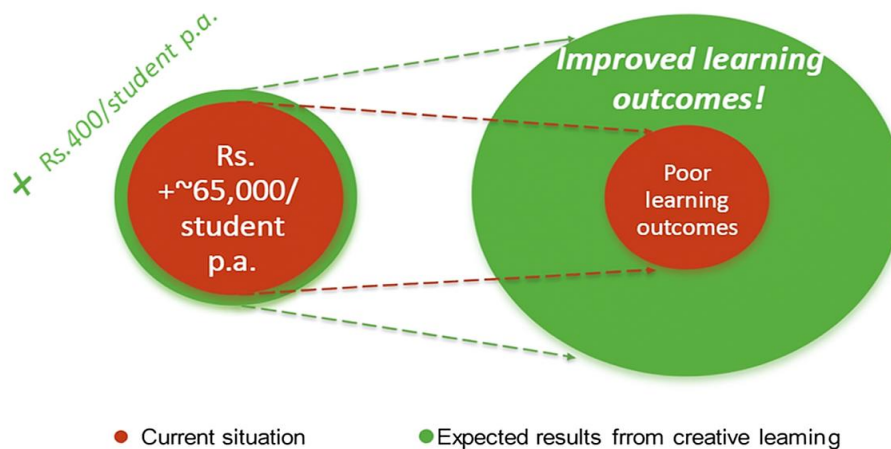
A Cost-Effective Model for Transformative Change

Secondary education costs about ₹65,000 per student yearly (with significant state disparities; Telangana spends ₹108,000). Investing an additional ₹400 per student annually, only 0.6% more, can deliver outsized benefits through a five-pronged approach:

- **Structured, Competency-Based Assessments:** Periodic evaluations based on learning outcomes linked to Bloom's taxonomy to foster critical thinking and problem-solving.
- **Targeted Remediation:** Addressing individual gaps in foundational literacy so each child can advance 1–2 cognitive levels.
- **Experiential Learning:** Implementing project-based activities and digital learning tools to drive engagement and self-improvement.
- **Adaptive Learning:** Using technology to personalize challenges to each student's abilities, enabling gradual progression.
- **Continuous Improvement:** Leveraging real-time data on student performance to refine teaching methods and curricula.

This strategy will enhance cognitive skills, employability (currently at 46%, India Skills Report 2023), and India's global competitiveness.

The Impact



4

*** It is possible to find the needed Rs.400 in current spending by eliminating waste.

A Structured Six-Step Transformation

1. Rote Learning to Creative Learning:

Children's natural curiosity forms the basis of creativity. By moving away from rote memorization toward exploration fueled by curiosity, students become more engaged, and creative learning becomes the norm. Reducing grade pressure and implementing targeted support—such as structured, competency-based assessments followed by teacher-led remediation—empower students to challenge themselves and develop deeper understanding.

2. Creative Learning to Creative Thinking:

When students learn at their own pace, competing with themselves rather than others, they engage more meaningfully with subject matter, which strengthens innovative problem-solving skills. Lowering academic stress further supports cognitive growth and allows creativity to flourish. Experiential learning and adaptive digital tools can accelerate the transition from creative learning to creative thinking.

3. Creative Thinking to Confidence:

Regular exposure to challenges through iterative problem-solving and opportunities for reflection builds self-assurance. As students overcome increasingly complex tasks, they naturally gain confidence in their abilities.

4. Confidence to Inclusivity:

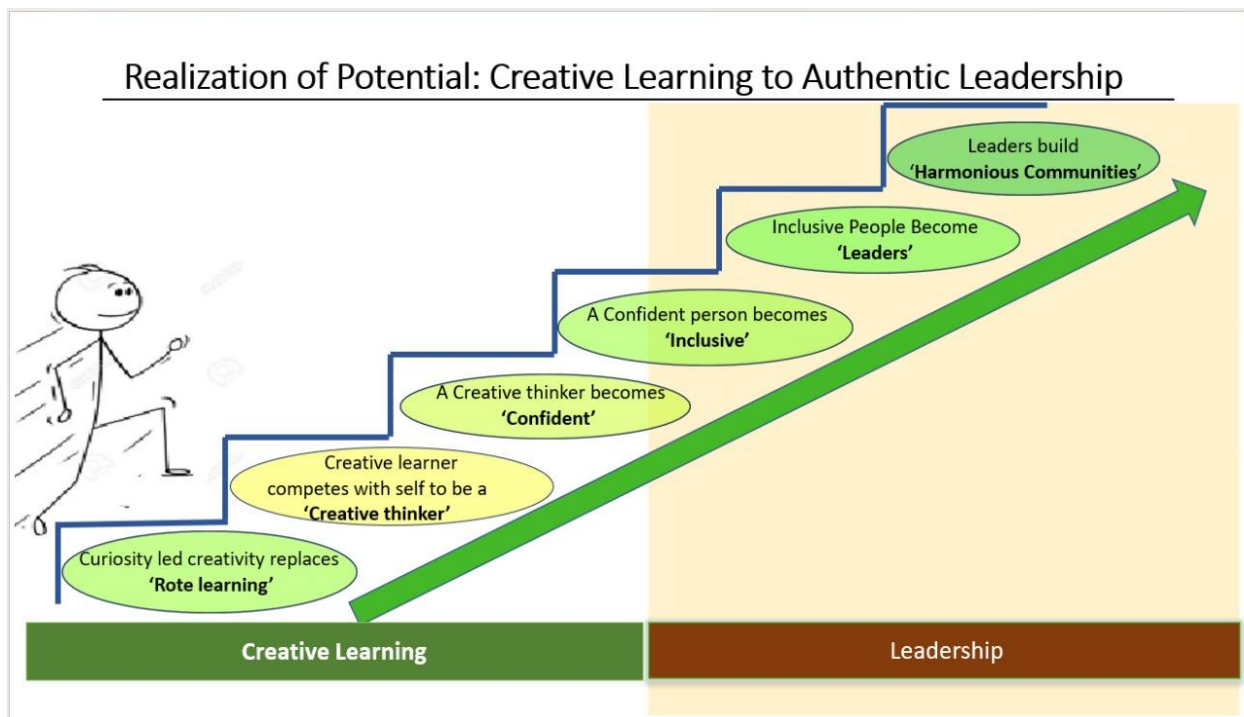
Self-assured learners are more open to working alongside peers from diverse backgrounds. Collaborative projects and shared learning experiences foster inclusivity and mutual respect within the classroom.

5. Inclusivity to Leadership:

Teamwork and exposure to various perspectives—especially through the active involvement of skilled, trained mentors—cultivate essential leadership skills. Participation in community-based initiatives and structured mentorship programs further develops students' capacity to guide and inspire others.

6. Leadership to Harmonious Communities:

Capable leaders learn to harmonize personal goals with broader societal needs, building communities grounded in cultural unity, cooperation, and technological advancement.



Immediate Path Forward

- **Universal Creative Learning** for all primary and secondary students.
- **Leadership Development:** Focus on 5–10% of students to create a ripple effect throughout schools.
- **Teacher Upskilling:** Expand NISHTHA to train 2.5 million teachers by 2027, closing the current 40% gap in adequately trained educators (UDISE 2023).
- **Community Involvement:** Schools function as resource-sharing hubs, engaging parents and communities.
- **Technology at Scale:** Expand platforms like DIKSHA, SWAYAM, and NDLI, aiming for national digital parity by 2028.

Pilot Programs:

Roll out the six-step plan in 100 districts by 2026, leveraging national digital monitoring tools (PARAKH, Vidya Samiksha Kendra).

An independent task force will ensure accountability, manage funding, and address the digital divide, using models such as Singapore's education reforms. Boosted rural connectivity (e.g., Bharat Net) and targeted pilots will ensure equitable adoption.

Higher Education: Paving the Way to 2035

NEP 2020 aims to increase India's higher education gross enrollment ratio (GER) from 28.4% (2021–22) to 50% by 2035 through:

Unified Regulation: Launch the Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) by 2026 to oversee standards and funding.

Flexible, Multidisciplinary Degrees: Four-year undergraduate options with multiple entry/exit points and credit transfers.

Internationalization: Attract top foreign universities, nurture global expansion of IITs, and guarantee scholarships to marginalized groups.

Regional Access: Establish one quality higher education institution per district by 2030, teaching in regional languages as needed.

Vocational Opportunities: Integrate vocational training into half of all curricula by 2025, supported by internships and practical training.

Research and Innovation: Strengthen the National Research Foundation to fund, mentor, and elevate research excellence.

Conclusion

Transformative education is the foundation of Dharma Rajya. With a focused six-step process, affordable investments, and systemic higher education reforms, India will foster a generation rooted in creativity, confidence, and inclusivity—bridging divides, honoring heritage, and securing a seat as a global knowledge leader by 2035. Collaboration, innovative financing, and robust oversight will be critical to building the harmonious, purpose-driven society envisaged by Dharma Rajya.