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## NEP 2020 as a Catalyst for Entrepreneurship Development among Women and Rural Youth

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### Abstract

The National Education Policy 2020 in India is a significant change toward rote-oriented education to a multidisciplinary, skill-based, and experiential one. The policy shift has significant consequences on the development of entrepreneurship, especially for women and youth in rural areas, because they are economically vital to national development but tend to be inhibited by institutional disparities, poor access to quality education, institutional support, and unequal prospects. This is a systematic literature review that investigates whether and how NEP 2020 can be perceived as a catalyst framework of entrepreneurship development between these groups. The paper reviews literature on NEP 2020, entrepreneurship education, women entrepreneurship, rural youth entrepreneurship, vocationalisation, experiential learning, and inclusion in India using a structured review logic, which is based on identification, screening, eligibility, and thematic synthesis. The review concludes that NEP 2020 provides an excellent conceptual base towards entrepreneurship; it focuses on vocational exposure, flexibility, local relevance, creativity, critical thinking, experiential pedagogies, and inclusion. Nevertheless, the literature demonstrates that policy intent cannot be put forward as a guarantee of entrepreneurial performance. The ongoing obstacles like gender norms, financial marginalization, inadequate rural infrastructure, lack of institutional capacity, digital inequalities, and insufficient market connectivity are continuing to determine entrepreneurship patterns. The review finds that NEP 2020 has high catalytic potential, and its transformational effect will rely on the quality of implementation, the alignment of the ecosystem, and sensitive contextual institutional design.

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### 1. Introduction

Entrepreneurship has been seen to take a central stage in the developmental imagination of India since it is associated with the creation of employment, innovations, the creation of local values, and social mobility<sup>[1]</sup>. To a nation where people are diverse in demographic makeup, regions are unequal, and the labor market has skewed opportunities, entrepreneurship is not only a business phenomenon but a tool of inclusive development. It is in this larger context that women and rural youth have a uniquely significant place<sup>[2]</sup>. The role of women entrepreneurship in the household income, development of the enterprise, as well as in empowering women, providing them with the agency of choice, and transforming the social situation at the community level is rather significant. In the meantime, the rural youth entrepreneurship can address unemployment, underemployment, and distress migration and promote the locally embedded development. But both groups are struggling through consistent obstacles that are created by social standards, academic disparities, institutional marginalization, restricted access to funds, and poor ecosystem

assistance. Available literature on the topic of rural women entrepreneurship and rural entrepreneurial activity in India keeps pointing to the co-presence of aspiration and constraint, suggesting that the entrepreneurial intention can be present in many cases, but the problem is that it is hard to translate into a sustainable enterprise<sup>[3]</sup>. It is against this background that the National Education Policy 2020 comes in very handy<sup>[4]</sup>. The first significant education policy of the twenty-first century in India, NEP 2020, aims to change the landscape of the education system by refocusing it on the holistic development, flexibility, multidisciplinary learning, critical thinking, skill development, vocational education, experiential learning, and inclusion. The policy is specifically based on the argument of the narrowing down of strict academic and vocational tracks, exposing learners to the aspects of practical and work-related learning at an early age and the development of skills, which are pertinent to the economy of the twenty-first century<sup>[5]</sup>. The goals are particularly significant to the area of entrepreneurship since entrepreneurial ability is not developed by the execution of technical knowledge alone. It is also contingent on problem solving, creativity, confidence, risk taking, communication, context awareness, and ability to relate education to actual opportunities. Focusing on vocational exposure since school grades, internships, local crafts, experience-driven learning, and employability-based reform, NEP 2020 designs a policy framework that can hypothetically contribute to the growth of entrepreneurial activities<sup>[6]</sup>.

But the issue is not whether NEP 2020 refers to skills or vocational learning, but whether the literature justifies the idea that it can be a real trigger to becoming an entrepreneur among women and rural youth. That question will need synthesis as opposed to solitary commentary<sup>[7]</sup>. Despite the increasing amount of literature on NEP 2020, female entrepreneurship, and rural youth entrepreneurship, these areas tend to be disjointed. Other papers are devoted to the reform in education, others to social obstacles, others to higher education, and others to the development of skills or the restrictions of rural enterprises. The systematic literature review will be useful, as it assists in organizing this fragmented knowledge, spotting themes in it, determining conceptual connections, and identifying the gap between policy promise and the implementation reality<sup>[8]</sup>. The current paper will respond to that requirement by reviewing the literature at the cross-section of NEP 2020, entrepreneurship development, the role of women in the economy, and rural youth empowerment in India. In line with this, this paper attempts to provide answers to four review questions. To begin with, what is the conceptual support of NEP 2020 for the development of entrepreneurship in India? Second, which prevailing themes are present in the literature on women and rural youth entrepreneurship development in terms of education, skills, and institutional support? Third, what are recurring barriers and enabling conditions that are found in the literature? Fourth, what are the research and implementation gaps in the knowledge of the entrepreneurial implications of NEP 2020? The answers to these questions help the paper to add to the current debate on whether education policy can act as a lever towards inclusive entrepreneurship and not just formal employability. The

paper is especially topical, as the development strategy of India relies more and more on the expansion of the participation of the population in innovation and enterprise, not only of urban, male, and elite groups<sup>[9]</sup>.

## 2. NEP 2020 and the Entrepreneurship Development in India

NEP 2020 envisions Indian education based on the concepts that are directly applicable to the creation of an entrepreneur. The policy emphasizes multidisciplinary and holistic learning, flexibility of learning paths, the deemphasizing of strict divisions between vocational and academic sectors, early introduction to practical skills, and intensive focus on critical thinking, innovation, and experience-based learning<sup>[10]</sup>. It also promotes local irrelevance, inclusion, and capacity building as opposed to limited memorization. These shifts are very important in terms of policy-making since they promote learning through experimentation, problem-solving in context, and collaboration, as well as tying learning to real-world opportunities. The NEP framework on vocational education suggests that vocational exposure should be introduced at Grade 6 with internship and other practical learning experiences, which will normalize the notion that productive work, skills acquisition, and enterprise-related learning should not be an outlier to mainstream education<sup>[11]</sup>. The point is a significant conceptual break with the older models of education, which tended to completely separate formal academic education and livelihood-centered capability development. Equity and inclusion are also critical aspects of the policy as seen by women and the rural youths<sup>[12]</sup>. NEP 2020 acknowledges educational inequity based on socio-economic and geographical lines and supports the idea of more inclusive learning opportunities. In the case of women, particularly in the rural or semi-rural areas, entrepreneurship is not only limited by a lack of ideas but also by a lack of confidence, mobility, access to networks, and education systems that do not equip them to take economic agency. Entrepreneurship is viewed as an option to the volatility of wage earnings and migration, especially among rural young people, but the literature indicates that local factors, including ineffective institutional support, mentoring, and practical advice, can limit venture generation<sup>[13]</sup>. In this regard, the NEP proposal of experiential learning, local internships, vocational integration, and flexible learning pathways provides a potentially facilitative setting to entrepreneurship in case learning institutions apply these concepts to regionally specific curricula and ecosystem collaborations<sup>[14]</sup>. Meanwhile, the literature warns against the tendency to conflate the policy design and impact. With the same direction of curricula, faculty practice, institutional incentives, and external ecosystems, entrepreneurship can be facilitated by educational reform. Recent studies of experiential learning and entrepreneurship education in India and other similar settings indicate that although practical and action-oriented learning is more effective in building confidence and employability, implementation is often hampered by faculty preparedness, curriculum inertia, resource scarcity, and poor industry or community fit. Consequently, NEP 2020 is to be understood as a trigger policy framework as opposed to an automatic generator of

entrepreneurial effects. What is important about it is that it opens up space to the entrepreneurship-facilitating educational reform, but the achievement of this potential relies on institutional translation<sup>[15]</sup>.

### 3. Research Methodology

The paper uses a systematic literature review method to integrate extant information on how NEP 2020 can be used to prime entrepreneurship development among women and rural youth. The SLR approach was chosen due to the fact that the topic is in the overlap of various knowledge streams, including: education policy, entrepreneurship education, women empowerment, rural development, vocational learning, and youth enterprise. Conventional narrative reviews can be useful in describing the screening summaries, yet they might lack the clarification of screening logic, inclusion criteria, and thematic organization. Systematic review, in its turn, is also more explicit in explaining the method of literature identification, filtering, and synthesis, thus enhancing replicability and analytical rigor. The review of the present paper takes a PRISMA-inspired process of

identification, screening, eligibility evaluation, and thematic synthesis. The conceptualization of the literature search entailed four clusters of keywords, the first group of which included policy-related keywords, including, but not limited to, NEP 2020 and National Education Policy 2020 and vocational education and experiential learning; the second group focused on terms related to entrepreneurship, such as, but not limited to, entrepreneurship development, entrepreneurship education, and enterprise creation; the third group targeted target Academic databases and scholarly repositories which generally index education and social science research were searched to retrieve relevant literature (Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, ERIC, JSTOR, and selected policy documents and government background notes). Since NEP 2020 was published in 2020, the review has focused on the studies published in 2020 and beyond to analyse the policy-specific results, though it also uses the selected literature on women and rural entrepreneurship in India as a foundational resource where needed to identify the long-term barriers and conceptual trends.

**Table 1:** SLR Method Flow

| Component             | Details  |
|-----------------------|--|
| Section Placement     | Methodology  |
| Purpose of the Figure | To visually explain the systematic literature review procedure followed in the study.  |
| Figure Relevance      | It helps readers understand how the review was structured, screened, coded, and synthesized in a transparent and sequential manner.  |
| Step 1                | Identification: Relevant literature was searched using databases and policy sources with keywords related to NEP 2020, entrepreneurship development, women entrepreneurship, rural youth, vocational education, and experiential learning. |
| Step 2                | Screening: Duplicate and irrelevant studies were removed after reviewing titles, abstracts, and keywords.  |
| Step 3                | Eligibility: Full-text studies were assessed using inclusion criteria such as relevance to India, entrepreneurship, education policy, skill development, women, and rural youth.   |
| Step 4                | Thematic Coding: Selected articles were coded based on themes, target groups, methods, barriers, enablers, and links with NEP 2020 dimensions.   |
| Step 5                | SLR Synthesis: Final interpretation was developed to explain how NEP 2020 may act as a catalyst for entrepreneurship development among women and rural youth.  |
| Supporting Inputs     | Database sources, keyword combinations, inclusion criteria, and thematic categories.   |
| Methodological Value  | Enhances the rigor, transparency, and replicability of the review process.   |
| How to Refer in Text  | "Figure 1 presents the systematic review workflow adopted for identifying, screening, coding, and synthesizing the literature relevant to the study."  |

Peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly reviews, policy documents, official background papers, and empirically based studies that were directly relevant to at least one of the following themes included entrepreneurship education, vocational or experiential learning under NEP 2020, women entrepreneurship in India, rural youth entrepreneurship in India, or institutional barriers and enabling conditions about entrepreneurial development. The studies included in the research had to be relevant to the field of entrepreneurship, address something non-related to educational reform, not be duplicate articles or just a personal opinion, and lack analytical content. The last pool was not analyzed as a statistical meta-analysis data set, as the literature in this topic is too diverse in design, population, and outcome variables. Rather, the chosen articles were analyzed using thematic analysis, which enabled common patterns to be identified in policy, pedagogy, social constraints, and ecosystem aspects.

To achieve synthesis, data on each study were coded in multiple dimensions: author and year, target group, context, methodological approach, key findings, relation to NEP 2020 dimensions, and research gaps identified. This coding procedure assisted in the development of thematic clusters and not article-by-article description. The most powerful emerging topics were: NEP 2020 as an entrepreneurship-enabling policy framework; women entrepreneurship and structural inequality; rural youth entrepreneurship and local opportunity systems; the role of vocational, experiential, and skill-based learning; and policy implementation issues. The aim of the review was not to assert the direct causal influence of NEP 2020, which is difficult to do due to the relative novelty of the policy, but to consider the conceptual and institutional routes through which it can have a catalytic effect on the development of entrepreneurship and the barriers that can undermine this catalytic effect.

#### 4. Literature Review

The analyzed literature exposes three general trends. First, NEP 2020-related scholarship has grown continuously since the publication of the policy, yet much of it is more conceptual, policy-interpretive, or pedagogical than outcome-evaluative. Several articles talk about experiential learning, vocational integration, flexibility, and skill development as transformative possibilities under NEP 2020, but less research evidence presents the outcomes of these reforms on entrepreneurship among specific target groups. Second, the body of research on women entrepreneurs is far more extensive than that of NEP and often reflects consistency of challenges, namely, access to education,

confidence, institutional backing, finance, social norms, and market connections<sup>[16]</sup>. Third, the existing literature about rural youth entrepreneurship in India indicates the existence of great entrepreneurial ambitions with a focus on the enduring obstacles in translating the ambitions into viable businesses. These descriptive trends indicate that the most robust evidence base is not primarily in direct measurement of the NEP entrepreneurial results, but in relating the NEP educational principles to previously identified requirements in relation to the female and rural youth development of entrepreneurship. The literature is heterogeneous in terms of methodology<sup>[17]</sup>.

**Table 2:** Conceptual Linkage of NEP 2020 and Entrepreneurship Development

| Component                 | Details   |
|---------------------------|---|
| Section Placement         | Conceptual Background / Literature Review   |
| Purpose of the Figure     | To illustrate the conceptual relationship between NEP 2020 policy inputs, educational mechanisms, and entrepreneurship outcomes.  |
| Figure Relevance          | It provides a visual framework for understanding how policy reforms can influence entrepreneurial capability formation.   |
| Policy Inputs             | Holistic learning, vocational integration, experiential education, skill development, inclusion, and flexibility.   |
| Educational Mechanisms    | Entrepreneurial mindset, practical exposure, creativity, problem-solving, confidence, agency, adaptability, and opportunity recognition.  |
| Entrepreneurship Outcomes | Women's empowerment, self-reliance, rural youth livelihood creation, enterprise readiness, local innovation, and community development.   |
| Central Interpretation    | NEP 2020 functions as a catalyst when its educational reforms are translated into institutional practices and ecosystem-level support.  |
| Theoretical Value         | Connects policy design with educational processes and socio-economic outcomes in a structured manner.   |
| Literature Review Value   | Helps organize prior studies around the policy-to-outcome pathway rather than discussing them in an isolated manner.  |
| How to Refer in Text      | "Figure 2 presents the conceptual linkage through which NEP 2020 may influence entrepreneurship development by converting policy inputs into educational mechanisms and eventual entrepreneurial outcomes." |

The NEP 2020 stream is primarily dominated by review articles and policy debates, whereas the studies of women entrepreneurship consist of reviews, conceptual analyses, and sector-based case studies. Surveys or field-based observations are common methods of rural youth entrepreneurship research to determine behavioral characteristics, obstacles, and support requirements<sup>[18]</sup>. Such diversity can help them in thematic synthesis, but it implies the uneven distribution of evidence as well. The reasons why entrepreneurship education is important are widely debated, social and institutional barriers to entrepreneurship have been widely identified, and significantly less has been done to measure the effect of educational reform on entrepreneurial confidence, intent, or venture performance in women and rural youth in India. The descriptive character of the literature thus justifies the necessity of a synthesis between the conceptual optimism and implementation realism.

#### 5. Thematic Analysis and Discussion.

##### 5.1. NEP 2020 as a policy impetus to entrepreneurship development.

The initial key theme that surfaced during the review is the fact that NEP 2020 offers some powerful conceptual architecture when it comes to entrepreneurship development. This conclusion is based not only on the narrow understanding of the term entrepreneurship, but on the policy in general, which focuses on the holistic development of

capabilities. Practical exposure, interdisciplinary thinking, problem-solving, innovation, communication, and self-confidence in dealing with uncertainty are combined to encourage entrepreneurship<sup>[19]</sup>. NEP 2020 encourages such powers by trying to shift the system of education from a rote learning system to a system that focuses on critical thinking, experiential learning, flexibility, and integration of vocational knowledge in mainstream learning. The encouragement of the internship, domestic vocational exposure, and various learning opportunities provided by the policy is particularly important since entrepreneurship tends to develop when students are able to relate learning to the social and economic environment<sup>[20]</sup>. That is, the catalytic power of NEP 2020 is not tied to a particular module of entrepreneurship, but is instead the systemic redesign of learning. It is also noted in the review that educational transformation by entrepreneurship requires pedagogical practice. The recent debates on experiential learning under NEP 2020 indicate that practical competence and engagement by learners are enhanced by practical, project-based, and context-related learning. Corresponding results in the literature of entrepreneurship education indicate that experiential approaches to teaching are more efficient than passive learning in developing entrepreneurial agency, recognition of opportunities, and confidence. This is significant since a policy reform without pedagogical change would probably not be very effective. Entrepreneurship is

acquired by doing, thinking, experimenting, and being exposed to uncertainty rather than being taught in theory. Therefore, the role of NEP 2020 should be perceived as catalytic based on the fact that it justifies the transition toward learning environments in which entrepreneurial potentials can be developed through practice.

### **5.2. Development of women entrepreneurship within an education-based framework**

The second major theme is that the entrepreneurship of women needs to be conceptualized as an economic and socio-cultural phenomenon. The literature is consistent that women's enterprise development in India is influenced by a complex of educational access, confidence, social support, network inclusion, financial literacy, institutional support, and the gendered structure of opportunity in general. Rural women entrepreneurship reviews highlight that women are likely to be motivated and have local information, but are limited by patriarchal expectations, low mobility, caregiving roles, informal support, as well as limited market and capital access. Reforms in higher education and entrepreneurship-focused innovations can significantly help to transform this status by expanding the exposure, developing self-efficacy, normalizing leadership, and providing institutional access to women to participate in innovation and enterprise<sup>[21]</sup>.

In this sense, NEP 2020 is especially important as it integrates skills development and inclusion. The policy emphasizes more than once again on fair access and lessening social barriers in education. In the case of women, particularly in rural areas, it is improbable that the development of entrepreneurship can solely be achieved by policy rhetoric, but it needs the educational ecosystem where women are not treated as recipients of economic policy but as viable economic agents. The emphasis on multidisciplinary learning, vocational trajectories, flexibility, and experiences of NEP 2020 can potentially assist in narrowing the symbolic gap between education and enterprise. Education is an agency-making space when women are given the chance to work on projects, to have internships, local businesses, community-based skill training, and innovation work. The women entrepreneurship literature in the education sector indicates that the educational institutions can also be an entrepreneurial confidence incubator, provided that they go beyond the textbook content and focus on encouraging mentoring, innovation, and practical problem-solving. However, the literature also cautions that reform in education cannot be able to counter structural gender obstacles completely. In spite of women acquiring entrepreneurial knowledge and desire, they still might face challenges of family acceptance, resource control, access to funds, digital divide, movement, and access to growth-focused networks. Thus, the NEP 2020 is a necessary but not sufficient catalyst for female entrepreneurship. It can establish facilitating learning environments, though its effectiveness will be subject to interaction between institutions, community organizations, financial institutions, and local enabling mechanisms. This understanding is especially relevant to SLR interpretation since it helps to avoid exaggerating the influences of policy, yet acknowledges the relevance of policies.

### **5.3. Entrepreneurship among rural young people and the problem of turning the desire into action**

The available literature on rural youth entrepreneurship demonstrates a common conflict between the desire and action. High numbers of rural youths perceive entrepreneurship to be favorable, particularly due to the inadequacy of formal job opportunities, unpredictability of migration, and lack of local prospects that demand self-initiative. Nevertheless, research also shows that aspiration is not easily converted to venture creation. The rural young people experience limitations of insufficient mentoring, poor awareness of funding sources, inadequate hands-on training, socio-cultural values, technical constraints, and discrepancies between what is taught in school and what is available in the entrepreneurship realities at the local level. Field research in India reveals that informational, motivational, and contextual factors have an impact on the entrepreneurial behavior of rural youth, whereas barrier studies highlight the importance of financial, institutional, and technical constraints. And here the local relevance and vocational integration of NEP 2020 come in<sup>[22]</sup>. The urbanized or abstract pedagogies in themselves cannot be used to promote rural entrepreneurship. It needs curricula that are connected to local economies, regional resources, to agriculture-related value chains, to crafts, services, to digital micro-enterprises, and communal problem-solving. The encouragement of vocational exposure, internship programs, flexibility, and practical skill-building in NEP 2020 provides an opportunity to establish such localised learning pathways. When taken seriously, these features would assist the rural youth to appreciate entrepreneurship as not an ideal start-up in the distant future but as a form of local economic engagement. The educational institutes in rural and semi-rural India could thus become a point of entrepreneurial ecosystem formation that would bridge the learners with the local mentors, producers, cooperatives, markets, and infrastructures of skill development. Nevertheless, the literature is categorical that rural settings require differentiated implementation plans. Rural young people usually cannot access not only finances but also quality infrastructure, digital resources, mentorship, and entrepreneur role models. Unless NEP 2020 is applied in a place-based variation, it is possible that the entrepreneurial potential of the strategy will be concentrated in more resourceful institutions. In this way, the catalytic nature of the policy will rely on the ability to translate into pedagogies and institutional arrangements, which are grounded in the local setting. The review is therefore proposing that rural youth entrepreneurship is not to be viewed as a generic extension of education reform, but as a focused area of development that needs educational decentralization, local collaboration, and ecosystem support.

### **5.4. Vocational training, experiential learning, and skill-building as entrepreneurial solutions**

The fourth theme that runs across the body of literature is the fact that vocational and experiential learning is central to the development of entrepreneurs. NEP 2020 clearly aims at eliminating the historical dominance of academic education over vocational learning since it claims that skill-based and practical education should be incorporated in general

education. This change is particularly important to the entrepreneurship field since entrepreneurial competence can hardly arise through theoretical material only. Its reinforcement is reinforced by encountering tasks, production systems, local industry, market interactions, internships, experimentation, and solving problems in uncertain environments. This direction is strongly encouraged by the policy background notes on vocational education and skill building that propose the structured vocational pathways and the opportunities to learn through experience. This policy logic is upheld by the larger body of entrepreneurship education literature. Empirical research of experiential learning in business and higher education continually reveals that the use of practical and interactive pedagogy can enhance the levels of engagement, confidence, and readiness of learners to face the real world. In related studies of entrepreneurship education, the positive relationship between active learning and entrepreneurial community and increased confidence and entrepreneurial action orientation is linked with gender and social context, which still affect access and outcomes. These findings are particularly relevant to women and young people in rural areas, as the conventional classroom models frequently do not address the exposure weaknesses, network deficiency, and lack of social capital. When designed correctly, experiential learning can partially fill in those gaps by highlighting entrepreneurship as visible, practicable, and socially acceptable as part of the educational process. However, the review also concludes that the implementation challenges are also high. The faculty might not be well-trained to offer experiential or entrepreneurship-driven pedagogy. Institutions cannot have collaborations with local businesses, incubators, or community bodies. The infrastructure of rural colleges and schools can be lower, and it can decrease the quality of internships and practice-based learning. Such issues are important since entrepreneurship education is performative when it is confined to rhetoric, one-time workshops, or textbook descriptions. Thus, on the one hand, vocationalisation and experiential learning are one of the most promising mechanisms on the basis of which NEP 2020 can stimulate entrepreneurship, but on the other hand, they are one of the most implementation-sensitive elements of the policy.

### **5.5. Inclusion gaps, barriers in the ecosystem, and the policy-practice divide**

The last significant theme is the policy vision-ecosystem reality gap. In all the studies of women entrepreneurship, rural youth studies, and entrepreneurship education, a common theme appears: entrepreneurship cannot thrive solely based on skill rhetoric. It entails supporting ecosystems such as mentorship, access to credit, institutional advice, social legitimacy, market opportunities, and continued support. NEP 2020 provides an excellent framework for education; however, the literature indicates that the development of entrepreneurship will also be unequal when education reform is not adjusted to local economic ecosystems. Women still may have been subject to the constraints of patriarchy, asset inequality; young people in the rural areas still may have to deal with intra-structural

deficits and guidance gaps; the institutions still might have a problem with implementation because of the limited capacity. This policy-practice gap is analytically significant since it demonstrates that NEP 2020 must not be considered as a text but as a reform process. The literature has not indicated that the policy should be dismissed; quite to the contrary, the policy has been shown to be in line with most of the capabilities that entrepreneurship needs. Nevertheless, it also proves that educational reform can be nullified by structural inequalities when it is weakly implemented. The most convincing finding of the reviewed literature can thus be regarded as a mixed one: NEP 2020 can be viewed as an empowering and facilitating model, yet its entrepreneurial success with women and rural youth will be based on the quality of institutions, contextual adjustments, and alignment with financial, social, and local development support.

### **6. Research Gaps and Future Directions**

The review indicates that there are some significant research gaps. First, direct empirical research assessing the effects of NEP 2020 on the outcome of entrepreneurship development is lacking. The majority of works done are conceptual, policy-based, or interpretive. Consequently, the assertions regarding the entrepreneurial impacts of NEP 2020 tend to be inductive as opposed to being definitive. Future studies are required to investigate whether reforms associated with vocationalisation, flexibility, and experiential learning do, in fact, enhance entrepreneurial intention, self-efficacy, opportunity recognition, participation in a startup, or local enterprise formation among women and rural youth. Second, education policy analysis has not been well incorporated in the literature on women entrepreneurship and rural youth entrepreneurship. Most studies identify barriers to include finance, confidence, mobility, or infrastructure, yet few of them relate such results to curriculum design, pedagogy, institutional support, and educational pathways. The future work should be able to form more interdisciplinary models between entrepreneurship education and gender studies, rural development, and capability theory. This kind of work would assist in explaining the interaction of education reform with broader social systems, instead of thinking that education can only eliminate entrepreneurial inequality. Third, place-based and intersectional research is required. City women of higher education are not under the same entrepreneurial conditions as women of poor rural backgrounds, and the youth in rural areas is not a one-size-fits-all group. Specific research on the regions, particularly of low-resource districts and different state settings, is needed to comprehend the functionality of NEP-oriented reforms in different institutional settings. The evidence base would be greatly reinforced by longitudinal studies, case-based institutional studies, and comparative studies between educational ecosystems across state-level settings.

### **7. Conclusion**

This systematic literature review aimed to investigate whether NEP 2020 can be conceptualized as a driver of entrepreneurship development by women and rural youth in India. The review demonstrates that the answer is generally positive at conceptual and policy level. The enabling

framework that NEP 2020 offers is quite powerful as it focuses on experiential learning, vocational integration, flexibility, skill development, creativity, critical thinking, and inclusion. These factors are well in accordance with the educational circumstances of the formation of entrepreneurial ability. In the case of women, the policy provides

opportunities to develop agency based on skill-oriented, practical, and multidisciplinary learning. In the case of rural youth, it provides a point of contact with education and the economic realities of the area, and the possibilities of enterprise.

**Table 3:** Analytical Flow of Enablers, Barriers, and Future Directions

| Component             | Details  |
|-----------------------|--|
| Section Placement     | Discussion / Conclusion  |
| Purpose of the Figure | To summarize the main enablers, barriers, and future directions emerging from the SLR findings.  |
| Figure Relevance      | It helps integrate the study's findings into a concise analytical structure that is useful for concluding the paper.   |
| Enablers Identified   | Inclusive policy design, vocational exposure, experiential learning, mentoring, confidence building, and local opportunity orientation.                                      |
| Persistent Barriers   | Gender norms, financial exclusion, digital divide, weak institutional capacity, and inadequate rural ecosystem support.  |
| Future Directions     | Context-specific implementation, gender-sensitive curriculum design, rural ecosystem partnerships, empirical studies, and entrepreneurship outcome measurement.              |
| Core Insight          | NEP 2020 has strong catalytic potential, but meaningful entrepreneurial outcomes depend on implementation depth and ecosystem convergence.                                   |
| Discussion Value      | Demonstrates that policy intent and actual impact are separated by social, institutional, and infrastructural realities.   |
| Conclusion Value      | Provides a final synthesis of what enables entrepreneurship, what constrains it, and where future research and policy efforts should focus.                                  |
| How to Refer in Text  | "Figure 3 synthesizes the review findings by showing the interplay between enabling factors, continuing structural barriers, and the future agenda for research and policy." |

Simultaneously, the literature indicates strongly that the catalytic potential should not be mistaken for the guaranteed transformation. Gender structural constraints continue to influence women's entrepreneurship, and rural youth entrepreneurship is limited by inadequate infrastructure, a lack of mentoring, institutional support, and uneven distribution of finance and markets. Ecosystem development cannot be replaced by educational reform, as it can only be used to promote entrepreneurship. Thus, the real meaning of NEP 2020 is that it should legitimize and structure education reform that allows entrepreneurship; the inclusion of entrepreneurial results of the reform in practice is the question of the depth of the implementation, the institutional commitment, and the adaptation to the context. NEP 2020 can be interpreted as an optimistic, yet implementation-sensitive stimulus. It can rebrand education as an inclusive entrepreneurship platform among women and youth in rural areas, but the potential can only be actualized when the principles of the policies are translated into pedagogical action, localized ecosystem connections, and institutional support. To scholars, this implies that future research should not be based on policy passion but should produce concrete empirical findings. To the policymakers and institutions, that implies that the development of entrepreneurship should be a concerted effort in which education reform, gender inclusion, rural capacity building, and local enterprise ecosystems all act in concert and not separately.

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