

Perceptual Clarity of School Teachers About National Education Policy, 2020

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ABSTRACT

Indian Constitution in its Article 21 guarantees every person's inalienable right to live with dignity without discrimination. Quality education guarantees an individual's right to a dignified life and for achieving social justice. The National Education Policy, 2020 acknowledges the notion of 'putting the last first' and discussed about different strategies to promote quality education for all. The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptual clarity of school teachers towards implementation of National Education Policy (NEP), 2020 in schools. The study examined how teacher's socio-economic profile and awareness about NEP, 2020 influences their views. Descriptive Research design was adopted using a range of both qualitative and quantitative data to gather information. Purposive Sampling was used intentionally to select willing participants for the study from two different minority schools located in Ranchi, Jharkhand. For data collection, flexible approach was adopted. So, semi-structured interview schedule was administered to collect data from teachers. Interviews of different other stake holders were also taken to get a bigger picture of the problem. The study reveals that there exists very low awareness among teachers about NEP, 2020. The attitude of other stakeholders towards its implementation is very reluctant and they possess a strong resistant to change due to several reasons. The study also tries to highlight the present scenario of child education with due emphasis on government schools and concluded with recommendations discussing certain practical implications in providing training to teachers and resources. The study also navigated about possibilities of future scope of research in this area.

Key words: Perception, Inclusive, Dignity, Awareness, Digital Literacy, NEP, 2020.

Introduction:

Present education system in India along with quick modifications in legal and government policies, together made sturdy advancement towards minimising diverse socio-economic category gaps in different intensities of school education. But unfortunately, recent data signifies large disparities among the underprivileged sections of the society especially at the upper primary level of education (Kumar H. , 2022).

Education plays a significant role towards developing potential in human being along with its continuous contribution towards equitable and a just society. It is very pertinent that effective step towards universalization of high-quality education is the need of the hour. To cultivate India on global arena, it is the high time to develop and optimise India's emerging talents and resources for the better good of the society. According to recent statistics, India is the country with highest number of young minds. Henceforth, it is very vital to take active initiative to nurture young talents by providing high-quality learning opportunities to them (Kumar A. , 2022).

Present education system in India along with quick modifications in legal and government policies, together made sturdy advancement towards minimising diverse socio-economic category gaps in different intensities of school education. But unfortunately, recent data signifies large disparities among the underprivileged sections of the society especially at the upper primary level of education. Article 21 of the Indian Constitution guarantees every person's inalienable right to live with dignity without discrimination. Quality education guarantees an individual's right to a dignified life and for achieving social justice. The National Education

Policy, 2020 acknowledges the notion of 'putting the last first' and discussed about different strategies to promote quality education for all (National Education Policy 2020).

The Indian government swapped a 34-year-old National Policy on Education, 1986 with the New Education Policy of 2020 with several modifications like expanding the age group, inclusion of mother tongue as medium of instruction, integration of all streams etc (Aithal & Aithal, Analysis of the Indian National Education Policy 2020 towards Achieving its Objectives, 2020). The NEP, approved by the Indian Government, makes comprehensive restructuring in education system including teaching (University Grants Commission, 2020).

The rapid and profound shifts in human knowledge are actually reshaping our world. With rapid advancements in the field of machine learning and artificial intelligence, concerns have emerged regarding the potential replacement of many low-skilled jobs by robots. This evolving landscape prompts critical discussions on the future of work and the need for adaptability in the face of automation. The increasing demand for workers with interdisciplinary backgrounds, underscores the evolving needs of various industries. In India, bridging the gap between industry and academia is imperative, as it's been observed that despite being well-educated, students often struggle to secure jobs in the corporate sector or receive inadequate compensation upon employment. Addressing this misalignment requires a significant overhaul to ensure that education aligns with the demands of the job market, ultimately fostering better opportunities for graduates (Simao & Flores, 2010).

It's evident that young learners are increasingly reliant on technology for various needs, including academic development. As such, it's crucial to equip children and youth with not only technical skills but also the necessary knowledge, attitudes, and values that enable them to contribute meaningfully to India's social, economic, and political transformation. This holistic approach to education ensures that they are prepared not just for the workforce, but also to become active and responsible members of society, driving positive change in their communities and beyond (Bose, Ghosh, & Sardana, 2017).

Keeping in mind the fact that education is an essential component of basic Human Rights, in September, 2015, the United Nations implemented SDG4 which assures 'quality education' which in turn is also the key driver of broader Sustainable Development Goals 2030. It actually guarantees inclusive and quality educational opportunities for lifelong learning (Shukla, Singh, Bishnoi, & Padda, 2023).

Significant progress towards achieving SDG4, has been made, but challenges remain. The pace of change is slow and uneven, and significant disparities persist across various dimensions, including geography, gender, and age. 250 million children still remain out of school. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused a global learning crisis: the disruption and school closures have caused learning losses in 4 in 5 countries, with 147 million children having missed over half of in-person instruction in 2020-2021 (Radha & Arumugam, 2023). Despite global efforts to improve access to quality education, many challenges persist. Achieving universal access to quality education by 2030, as outlined in Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4), is a formidable challenge. Despite global efforts, progress has been uneven, with only a fraction of countries currently on track to meet this goal. The latest data suggests that approximately one in six countries are projected to achieve universal access to quality education by 2030 (Sunita, 2022).

The fact that 84 million children are still at risk of being out of school by 2030 is alarming and underscores the urgent need for transformed efforts and innovative solutions. Education is fundamental to individual and societal development, and leaving millions of children without access to education not only jeopardizes their future but also undermines broader social and economic progress (Gopalan, Nivithra, & Vezhaventhan, 2021).

Redefining the existing education systems and prioritizing education financing are crucial steps in addressing these challenges. Reforms are needed to ensure that education systems are inclusive, equitable, and responsive to the needs of all learners, regardless of their background or circumstances. The draft of New Education Policy, 2019 envisioned that there is a dire need of active and engaged collaboration between Government (Central and State), civil society, NGOs and all service providers to ensure and fastened the progress towards inclusivity and valued education for all. It should also be seen that no one is left behind in this process (Aithal & Aithal, 2019). By emphasizing the creation of an equitable and vibrant information society, the policy aims to harness the power of education to drive sustainable development and economic growth (Ramesh & Natarajan, 2020).

Statement of the Research Problem:

The chief objective of the New Educational Policy, 2020 is to transform India to a global knowledge superpower. In that direction more focus was given to development of life skills. But unfortunately, the gap between industry and academia has been a longstanding challenge in many countries, including India. This gap often results in a mismatch between the skills students acquire in educational institutions and the skills demanded by employers in the workforce.

There is a common observation in the current educational systems around the world. It highlights a significant gap between what traditional education offers and what the industry demands. This disparity often arises because traditional education tends to prioritize theoretical knowledge over practical skills and

real-world application. Students are lacking in the appropriate skills and competencies that will transform them to 'industry ready' professionals.

Indian Government specifically revealed in the draft of the National Education Policy, 2019 that two months' will be given time to teachers and other major stakeholders to gauge their understanding, opinions, and concerns regarding the NEP 2020. The awareness level of teachers about the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is vital for understanding how well it has been disseminated and understood among educators, who play a pivotal role in implementing educational reforms. The present study will try to understand the awareness level of the primary stake holders of schools about NEP 2020

Review of Literature:

Maruthavanan's study sheds light on the awareness level of teachers regarding the National Education Policy (NEP) of 2019, revealing that it's generally not above average. The researcher's observation of significant differences in awareness among school teachers based on gender, community, years of service, and family type suggests that various factors influence educators' knowledge of the NEP 2019. It was also found out that Female teachers' exhibit higher rates of unawareness compared to male teachers' highlights a specific gender disparity in knowledge about the NEP 2019 (Maruthavanan, 2020).

Another group of authors discussed in a study the impact of education on rural to urban migration patterns in specific areas of Telangana, and how this relates to the need for a new educational policy. The study suggests that education plays a significant role in influencing migration, and factors such as gender, location, type of institution, and family type may affect individuals' awareness and decision-making regarding migration. It was also highlighted that improving educational opportunities, especially in rural areas, could potentially reduce rural to urban migration by providing individuals with better prospects locally. There is a dire need of enactment of a New Educational Policy which in turn could take certain specific initiatives pertaining to universal accessibility to quality education, practical training and enhancing employment opportunities in rural areas (Fathima & Pandey, 2023).

Another study on implementation of New Educational Policy, 2020, suggests a significant shift in the higher education framework. It indicates that the traditional approach, which is educator-driven and emphasizes marks over skills, is being restructured to become more student-driven and focused on developing abilities like the development of critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity, and other essential skills alongside academic achievement. The study also tried to demarcate the challenges faced by the present education system to adhere to the ambitious objective of NEP, 2020. It was highlighted that there was existence of significant difference of opinion among the stake holders based on their location. The author also tried to highlight the prevailing situation of the Educational Policy and also suggested the need of providing adequately trained staff and resources (Gopalan, Nivithra, & Vezhaventhan, 2021).

According to another study, enrolment of a considerable number of students with disabilities have increased due to different initiatives in the existing legislations and policies. The study also talked about the impact of various socio-economic parameters upon the existing perception of teachers about inclusion of differently abled students in schools and other academic institutions (Sharma, Malik, & Nagy, 2022).

Very surprisingly it was observed that there was no statistically significant relation between teacher's perception of inclusion in regard to qualification, gender and years of experience. But on the contrary, the study discovered a statistically significant relation is existing between teacher's perception of inclusion and their interaction with differently abled students (Sharma, Malik, & Nagy, 2022).

Another study proposed that there is a misconception that females, in general, lack motivation towards knowing about NEP, 2020 and it's positive impact. In this regard, it was also ascertained that female teachers lacks sufficient intention about recent development (Maruthavanan, 2020).

One study was conducted on the awareness level of teaching community in Meerut district about NEP, 2020. It was found that a good number of teachers are aware about NEP but a considerable number of the sample was found confused about the purpose which is quite surprising. It was also seen that superficial knowledge is existing (Kumar, 2022). On the same plane, another study also concludes that primary school teachers have low awareness of the NEP, 2020. It was suggested that an awareness programme is needed to be organized by the Government of India exclusively for teachers and special training for female teachers and teachers from rural area is essentially required (M, 2022).

The author of another article seeks to understand the prevailing perceptions of parents about of the NEP, 2020. As parents are one of the major stakeholders so it is quite evident researcher also included research articles pertaining to parent's perception. The study also indicates that certain demographic factors such as age group, religion, and educational qualification of parents have a significant influence on the awareness level of the New Education Policy (NEP) 2020. However, other factors such as gender, employment status, and household income level do not seem to affect awareness levels significantly.

It's also interesting to notice that parents of students are majorly concerned about the quality of education their children receiving. Their focus is mainly upon competency and skill-based education. They also showed concerns towards improvement of the existing teaching – learning environment. They want a student friendly environment where children can gain useful professional knowledge. Parents are also of the opinion that

more interactions must take place between them and school so that they gauge their child's overall development (Sainwal, Badoni, Prasad, & Gossain, 2023).

Research Question:

What are the different factors influencing the perceptual clarity of School Teachers about the implementation of New Education Policy, 2020?

The primary objectives are as follows:

1. To study the socio-economic profile of the teachers based on their age, gender, educational backgrounds, years of teaching experience and location.
2. To study how these factors impact their perception and awareness about New Educational Policy, 2020.
3. To highlight the opinion and perception of parents and school authorities.
4. To suggest appropriate strategies towards improvement in teacher's awareness.

Research Methodology:

The researcher adopted Descriptive Research Design. Sixty willing school teachers from ten Government Middle Schools of Ranchi, Jharkhand were selected through Purposive Sampling technique. Ranchi city is capital of Jharkhand. As per 2011, population is 32988134. Out of which 75.95% is rural population and 24.05% is resident of urban area. Jharkhand suffers from extreme resource curse. 39.1% of its population is living below poverty line. Unemployment rate is also very high and 19.6% of children under 5 years are malnourished. The literacy rate of Jharkhand is also not very happening. 76.84% male are literate and 55.45% females (<https://www.census2011.co.in>).

With the help of semi-structured interview schedule, primary data were collected from the respondents based on different parameters like gender, location, year of service, professional degree, awareness and relevance level. Out of 60 respondents 10 teachers were interviewed personally to gather some personalized information which was not available during interview. Online sources, research articles and reports were used to substantiate the primary data. 5 parents and 5 individuals from school authority were also interviewed to get a bigger picture of the problem. The major limitation of the study is that the research was restricted to ten schools only. Due to different unavoidable reasons, the researcher could not include more schools. Online data collection technique could not be administered due to lack of digital literacy of the teachers.

Analysis:

Socio-Economic Profile of the Respondents –

Age wise distribution:

| Sl. No | Age (in years) | No. of Respondents |
|--------|----------------|--------------------|
| 1. | 25 - 34 | 19 |
| 2. | 35 - 44 | 16 |
| 3. | 45 - 54 | 15 |
| 4. | 55 and above | 10 |
| Total | | 60 |

Gender wise distribution:

| Sl. No | Gender | No. of Respondents |
|--------|--------|--------------------|
| 1. | Male | 25 |
| 2. | Female | 35 |
| Total | | 60 |

Location wise distribution:

| Sl. No | Location | No. of Respondents |
|--------|----------|--------------------|
| 1. | Rural | 22 |
| 2. | Urban | 38 |
| Total | | 60 |

Educational Qualification:

| Sl. No | Gender | No. of Respondents |
|--------|----------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. | Graduate | 20 |
| 2. | Post Graduate | 12 |
| 3. | Professional Degree (B.Ed. etc.) | 16 |
| 4. | Vocational Training | 12 |
| Total | | 60 |

Digital Literacy:

| Sl. No | Digital Literacy | No. of Respondents |
|--------|---------------------|--------------------|
| 1. | Excellent | 0 |
| 2. | Good | 10 |
| 3. | Poor | 15 |
| 4. | No digital literacy | 35 |
| Total | | 60 |

Awareness Level:

| Sl. No. | Are you aware about | No. of Respondents | |
|---------|---|---------------------|-----------------------|
| | | Male (19 out of 25) | Female (15 out of 35) |
| 1. | NEP replaced which policy of education? | 10 out of 19 | 6 out of 15 |
| 2. | Chairman of NEP, 2020 | 12 out of 19 | 10 out of 15 |
| 3. | Purpose of NEP, 2020 | 8 out of 19 | 5 out of 15 |
| 4. | New name of MHRD | 12 out of 19 | 12 out of 15 |
| 5. | 5+3+3+4 schooling structure | 3 out of 19 | 2 out of 15 |
| 6. | Minimum degree qualification requires for B.Ed. | 15 out of 19 | 10 out of 15 |
| 7. | 360-degree appraisal | 7 out of 19 | 2 out of 15 |
| 8. | ABC | 9 out of 19 | 4 out of 15 |
| 9. | | 2 out of 19 | 2 out of 15 |

Findings:

It was found that out of 25 male respondents, 19 of them are aware about the salient features of NEP, 2020. On the contrary, out of 35 female respondents, only 15 are aware which reflects the fact that awareness among female teachers is not satisfactory. Teachers from urban area are more aware about the NEP. Surprisingly, teachers who are associated with service for less than 10 years (10 out of 60) are better aware about the policy and its relevance. Young teachers are more aware about NEP, 2020. They also have knowledge about minimum degree qualification for B.Ed. They also know about the Assessment Methodology. They are very clear about 360-degree appraisal system. It was also seen that teachers (12 out of 60) having professional training or vocational degree are not only aware about NEP but having knowledge about chairman of NEP, 2020, purpose of NEP, 2020. They are also aware about 5+3+3+4 schooling structure and ABC.

It was very surprising that only 22 respondents out of 60 are fully aware about New Education Policy, 2020 but only 12 respondents found it also extremely relevant in today's education system.

Case studies were conducted with 10 teachers, 5 parents and 5 school management representatives. It was noticed that most of the teachers are aware about the New Education Policy, 2020 but unable to understand the nitty-gritties of the Policy. Most of them have never heard of 5+3+3+4 model and concepts like 360-degree appraisal system and Academic Bank of Credit System. Teachers are of opinion that there are several challenges which school is facing to implement NEP, 2020. Main challenge is of inadequate resources and lack of staffs. Problem was relatively more serious in rural schools. School authorities are of the opinion that due to insufficient financial resources, ineffective funds mobilization and inadequate infrastructural facilities, satisfactory implementation of NEP, 2020 is very difficult. They are also of the opinion that qualified teachers are not available and the existing teachers show extreme reluctance towards awareness and implementation of NEP, 2020. Female teachers and teachers coming from rural area are very less oriented about NEP, 2020. Another surprising finding is that teachers who have less than 10 years of teaching experience are more open and dynamic about NEP, 2020. They are ready to take this challenge and coming up with very innovative ideas towards efficient implementation. But the senior teachers are very pessimistic about this and not motivated to work in favour of implementation of the New Education Policy, 2020.

Face to face interactions with parents were also very beneficial for this study. They are of the view that they have complete faith on school authority regarding development of their children. But unfortunately, parents are very casual regarding their child's education. Quite a good number of students remain absent from school due to personal and familial reasons. Parents are not serious about the importance of education of their child. During personal interview, many teachers reported that during Parent Teacher Meeting, most of the parents remain absent due to different unrealistic reasons. This kind of attitude reflects the seriousness of parents regarding their child's education.

Conclusion:

The gap between industry requirements and academic curricula has persisted for decades even after innumerable unsuccessful attempts to implement NEP, 2020. Introduction of vocational courses (key aspect of NEP, 2020) which can provide practical skills and knowledge aligned with recent industry needs can be of great help. Creating a teacher-specific awareness campaign could indeed be beneficial for ensuring that educators are well-informed about the latest developments in the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.

Targeted awareness campaigns can help dispel certain stereotypes like female teachers lacks motivation towards latest developments. It will ensure that all educators, regardless of gender, are equipped with the knowledge they need to effectively implement educational reforms. This initiative could help address any potential gaps in awareness among educators, especially those in nuclear families who may have limited opportunities for professional networking and information sharing. By fostering a culture of continuous learning and professional growth among teachers, the education system can better adapt to the changing needs of students and society. In addition to awareness campaigns, providing support services such as teacher development programs, accessibility to different growth opportunities etc can enhance the quality of educators.

A perfect amalgamation of pure sciences and social sciences in the Indian higher education system is crucial for fostering a well-rounded and a comprehensive approach to learning. The transformation from educator-driven to student-driven education reflects a shift in focus towards empowering students to take charge of their learning journey and explore their interests and passions. Moving from a data-driven to an information-driven approach also involves not only acquiring knowledge but also understanding how to effectively process, analyse, and apply information in real-world contexts. Similarly, transitioning from marks-driven to skills-driven education emphasizes the importance of developing practical skills and competencies that are relevant to the needs of the workforce.

Moreover, the move from assessment-driven to exploratory-driven and from learning-driven to research-driven education signifies a shift towards fostering a culture of curiosity, inquiry, and innovation among students.

Finally, transitioning from the existing education to competency-based education underlines the importance of evolving core competencies and capabilities that are essential for success in the recent workplace. This approach aims to prepare students with the skills, knowledge, and attitudes needed to navigate complex challenges and make informed decisions in a rapidly changing world.

Henceforth the schools must take proper and meaningful initiatives towards implementing NEP, 2020. Government should organise awareness programmes of NEP-2020 suitable for different stakeholders who will be potentially benefitted by it but teachers need exclusive priority.

Teachers must receive suitable training to practice inclusivity and ensure justice for all is essential for the successful implementation of educational policies like the New Education Policy (NEP) in India.

The success of the NEP and other educational initiatives in India indeed hinges on how effectively they are implemented at the ground level. The success mainly depends on the availability of enough useful resources, support from the administration and appropriate training to teachers which in turn will help to transform updated policies into evocative actions.

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| Suggestions for Improvement | ✚ Teacher – only Awareness Campaign. |
| | ✚ Parent – School collaboration. |
| | ✚ Active participation of students. |
| | ✚ Partnership between parents – teachers – school authority. |
| | ✚ Curriculum reform |
| | ✚ Revamp existing evaluation system. |
| | ✚ Address existing Teaching – Learning Pedagogy (Play based/Activity based learning) |
| | ✚ Exclusive focus on teacher`s training. |
| | ✚ Address Resource Inadequacy on Priority |
| | ✚ Hire Professionals for training teachers. |

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