

Implementation Challenges of NEP 2020 at the Secondary School Level

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Abstract: The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 represents a transformative shift in India's education system, aiming to promote holistic and multidisciplinary learning, reduce rote memorization, and encourage skill-based education. However, its implementation at the secondary school level presents several challenges, including infrastructural deficiencies, inadequate teacher preparedness, resistance to assessment reforms, and socio-economic disparities. This paper explores these hurdles by analyzing the perspectives of teachers, students, and administrators, particularly in government and rural schools where resource constraints are significant. Additionally, it examines systemic bottlenecks such as the digital divide, vocational training limitations, and linguistic barriers.

A critical challenge in implementing NEP 2020 is the lack of adequate infrastructure, especially in underprivileged and rural schools. The policy envisions technologically equipped classrooms, but many institutions still lack basic facilities like electricity, internet connectivity, and smart boards. Teacher preparedness is another crucial factor; many educators, having followed traditional rote-based teaching methods for years, struggle to transition to competency-based learning models. Effective professional development programs and training initiatives are essential to bridge this gap.

Assessment reforms introduced under NEP 2020 emphasize conceptual understanding over rote learning. However, students and parents accustomed to the traditional grading system often resist these changes, fearing their impact on higher education admissions. Additionally, vocational education, though encouraged by NEP 2020, faces challenges in implementation due to societal perceptions and the unavailability of skilled trainers. The digital divide further exacerbates inequalities, as students from economically weaker backgrounds struggle to access online resources, making it difficult to implement technology-based learning inclusively.

The paper also discusses administrative and policy-level challenges, including the lack of clear execution timelines, budgetary constraints, and coordination issues between central and state governments. These factors hinder the smooth rollout of the policy, leaving schools and educators uncertain about the next steps. Addressing these challenges requires a multi-pronged approach, including strengthening infrastructure, enhancing teacher training programs, providing clear assessment frameworks, and bridging the digital divide through government and private sector initiatives.

By examining real-world challenges and proposing solutions, this paper highlights the urgent need for a collaborative effort between policymakers, educators, and the community to ensure the successful implementation of NEP 2020. Overcoming these obstacles is crucial for fostering a student-centric education system that prepares young minds for the dynamic and competitive world of the 21st century.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Education is the foundation of any nation's progress, and with the introduction of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, India has taken a bold step toward reimagining its academic framework. NEP 2020 promises a more holistic, flexible, and skill-oriented approach to learning, aiming to nurture students not just as exam scorers but as critical thinkers, problem solvers, and responsible citizens of the future. It envisions an education system that prepares

young minds for the challenges of the 21st century by integrating experiential learning, reducing rote memorization, and promoting multidisciplinary education.

However, while the policy is visionary, its implementation at the secondary school level has not been without its struggles. Teachers, students, and administrators find themselves at the crossroads of change, grappling with infrastructural limitations, pedagogical shifts, and systemic bottlenecks. Schools in rural and underprivileged areas face

stark contrasts in resources compared to their urban counterparts, making equitable implementation a challenge. Teachers, many of whom have spent years teaching in a traditional setup, now need to adapt to competency-based learning and innovative assessments. Students, too, must navigate this transformation while managing the pressures of board examinations and future aspirations.

This research delves into the real-world hurdles of implementing NEP 2020 at the secondary school level, shedding light on the perspectives of those directly impacted—educators, students, and school administrators. By addressing these challenges, we can pave the way for a more effective and inclusive education system that truly fulfils the promise of NEP 2020.

II. KEY CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTATION

A. Infrastructure and Resource Constraints

For many students across India, the dream of learning in a well-equipped classroom remains distant. In several rural and government schools, students still study in overcrowded classrooms with insufficient desks, poor lighting, and a lack of access to basic technology. NEP 2020 envisions modern learning spaces with digital resources, but the reality is that many schools lack proper internet connectivity, computers, or smart classrooms. Without adequate investment in infrastructure, the transition to a progressive education model remains a significant hurdle.

B. Teacher Preparedness and Training

Teachers are the backbone of any education system, and their ability to embrace change determines the success of any policy. NEP 2020 advocates for competency-based learning and interactive teaching methods, but many teachers, especially those accustomed to traditional rote-learning techniques, find it difficult to adapt. Without structured and ongoing training programs, they struggle to implement innovative approaches such as experiential learning and project-based assessments. Additionally, the workload of teachers is already heavy, making it challenging for them to dedicate time to upskilling.

C. Assessment Reforms and Examination Stress

For decades, India's education system has been deeply entrenched in a marks-driven culture, where board examinations determine a student's future prospects. NEP 2020 aims to shift the focus from rote memorization to competency-based assessments, emphasizing conceptual understanding and problem-solving skills. However, both students and parents often remain fixated on traditional grading systems, fearing that a change in assessment methods could impact college admissions. Without proper awareness campaigns and a gradual transition strategy, the new system risks being met with resistance.

D. Integration of Vocational Education

The policy rightly emphasizes vocational education to make students job-ready, but its successful implementation faces multiple roadblocks. Many students and parents perceive vocational training as a secondary or 'lesser'

alternative to conventional academic subjects. Moreover, schools lack skilled trainers and industry partnerships to provide hands-on vocational training. While the idea of integrating carpentry, coding, and entrepreneurship into the school curriculum is promising, the challenge lies in ensuring these subjects are taught effectively and valued equally.

E. Digital Divide and Equity Issues

The digital push in NEP 2020 assumes widespread access to technology, but this is far from reality. Students from economically weaker backgrounds often do not have access to smartphones, tablets, or stable internet connections. During the COVID-19 pandemic, this disparity became starkly evident, with many students dropping out due to a lack of online learning resources. If this gap is not addressed, the implementation of technology-based learning will widen the educational divide instead of bridging it.

F. Language Barrier in Multilingual Education

NEP 2020 promotes instruction in the mother tongue up to Grade 5, but its long-term impact extends to secondary education. While this approach enhances early cognitive development, it poses challenges when transitioning to English-medium instruction in higher classes. Teachers who are not adequately trained in bilingual education struggle to bridge the linguistic gap, leaving students confused and less confident. Moreover, in states with diverse linguistic populations, selecting a single language for instruction can be contentious.

G. Administrative and Policy-Level Challenges

The successful execution of NEP 2020 requires meticulous planning and coordination between central and state governments, education boards, and local schools. However, many policies under NEP 2020 lack clear execution timelines and budgetary provisions. In some states, conflicting state-level policies have further complicated the rollout. Additionally, bureaucratic inefficiencies, red tape, and inconsistent monitoring mechanisms slow down the implementation process, causing frustration among educators and policymakers alike.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION

A. Strengthen Infrastructure:

Government and private partnerships should work towards equipping schools with basic digital and physical resources.

B. Robust Teacher Training Programs:

Frequent and well-structured training sessions should be conducted to familiarize teachers with new teaching methodologies.

C. Clear Assessment Guidelines:

Well-defined frameworks for competency-based assessments should be provided to ease the transition from traditional exam systems.

D. Industry Collaboration for Vocational Training:

Schools should collaborate with industries to offer practical vocational training programs that align with job market demands.

E. Bridging the Digital Divide:

Government initiatives like subsidized devices, community learning centers, and affordable internet should be expanded.

F. Effective Language Transition Strategies:

Bilingual teaching training and gradual language transition strategies should be incorporated to prevent learning disruptions.

IV. CONCLUSION

The vision of NEP 2020 is progressive and has the potential to revolutionize India's education system. However, its successful implementation at the secondary school level requires addressing infrastructural, pedagogical, and policy-related challenges with a collaborative and inclusive approach. Change cannot happen overnight, but with concerted efforts from policymakers, educators, parents, and students, we can make meaningful strides toward a transformed education system.

The key to overcoming these challenges lies in collective action—improving teacher training, ensuring equitable resource distribution, and making education more student-centered. Schools must be empowered with the necessary support and tools to embrace competency-based learning and holistic assessments effectively. Additionally, a transparent and well-structured roadmap is crucial for bridging the gap between policy formulation and ground-level execution.

A well-implemented NEP 2020 will not only enhance academic outcomes but also foster a generation of lifelong learners, critical thinkers, and future leaders. By addressing the existing challenges head-on, we can create an education system that truly equips students for the dynamic and competitive world ahead. The success of NEP 2020 depends on our ability to turn its vision into reality—one step at a time, one school at a time, and one student at a time.

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