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Curriculum Transformation under NEP 2020: Teachers' Perspectives on Policy Implementation

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Abstract: This study looks at how the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is being carried out in India, with particular attention to the distance between what the policy sets out to achieve and what actually happens in classrooms, as seen through teachers' eyes. NEP 2020 is widely regarded as a transformative blueprint, one that envisions holistic, flexible, multidisciplinary education geared to 21st-century skills with an emphasis on foundational literacy, competency-based learning, technology integration, and a move away from rote memorization toward genuine conceptual understanding. Even so, this study examines how the move from policy on paper to policy in practice runs into structural, pedagogical, and institutional obstacles. As the people actually delivering the curriculum, teachers are examined for the part they play in turning policy directives into real classroom practice, alongside the difficulties they encounter — inadequate training, unclear guidelines, thin digital infrastructure, crowded classrooms, and inflexible assessment systems. The research follows a mixed-methods design to gauge teachers' awareness, perceptions, and lived experience of curriculum transformation under NEP 2020. It also digs into the mismatch between what the policy aspires to and what actually happens on the ground, particularly across varied educational settings. The study aims to pin down the key obstacles to effective implementation and to put forward practical, teacher-centered strategies for narrowing the gap between policy and practice. In the end, the findings are meant to inform better curriculum design, stronger teacher training programs, and policy refinements so that NEP 2020's goals can be realized where it matters most — the classroom.

Keywords: NEP 2020, Policy-to-Practice Gap, Curriculum Transformation, Teacher Perspectives, Educational Reform, India

Introduction

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 stands as a landmark attempt to reshape India's education system into something more holistic, flexible, and learner-centered, in step with the demands of the present century. Built around competency-based education, multidisciplinary learning, hands-on pedagogy, and closer integration of technology, the policy tries to move classrooms past rote memorization and toward critical thinking, creativity, and the ability to solve real problems. It aims to close the long-running divide between academic knowledge and its practical application by pushing for education that is inclusive, skill-oriented, and sensitive to context. For all its ambition, though, putting NEP 2020 into classroom practice has been uneven and far from straightforward, and this has opened up a real "policy-to-practice gap." That gap comes into sharp focus once you look at it through the eyes of teachers, who are the ones actually carrying out curriculum reform day to day. Many educators welcome the policy's emphasis on flexibility, inclusivity, and innovation, but their lived experience points to a string of structural, institutional, and practical obstacles standing in the way of real adoption. These include patchy professional training, limited access to resources and digital infrastructure, a continuing reliance on traditional exam systems, and guidelines that aren't always clear. On top of that, restructuring the

curriculum, weaving in multidisciplinary approaches, and adopting experiential learning all call for substantial shifts in teaching practice shifts that are hard to pull off without steady institutional backing. Teachers also contend with administrative workload, overcrowded classrooms, and rigid assessment frameworks, all of which limit how much room they have to try out new teaching approaches.

The gap between urban and rural schools, and between private and government institutions, only sharpens these problems, leading to uneven rates of implementation and widening educational inequality. As a result, teachers often find themselves caught between what the policy expects and what the classroom actually allows, which points to a real need for curriculum frameworks tailored to context and support systems aimed squarely at the people doing the work. Against this backdrop, understanding teachers' perspectives becomes essential to grasping the practical side of curriculum transformation under NEP 2020. Such an inquiry doesn't just surface the obstacles at ground level. It also points toward openings for genuine reform through teacher empowerment, professional development, and collaborative work on curriculum design. This study, then, sets out to critically examine the policy-to-practice gap in NEP 2020 by putting teachers' experiences front and center, with the aim of proposing workable strategies to

close the distance between policy vision and classroom execution, so that NEP 2020's transformative goals are actually realized in day-to-day educational practice. The motivation behind this research grows out of a simple recognition: teachers are the backbone of any educational reform. NEP 2020 lays out ambitious goals for curriculum transformation, but whether those goals are met ultimately comes down to how teachers read, adapt, and put these reforms into action. Policymakers often take it for granted that directives will simply translate into practice, yet teachers' voices rarely get much airtime in policy evaluation. By listening to those perspectives, this research tries to narrow the distance between high-level policy vision and classroom reality. A central aim is to surface the layered challenges teachers face, from inadequate professional training to a shortage of teaching aids and weak institutional backing. What teachers notice can point to systemic bottlenecks — uneven resources, regional disparities, and differing levels of student readiness all of which shape how curriculum gets delivered. Many educators, moreover, are genuinely enthusiastic about NEP's forward-looking outlook, even as they struggle to reconcile it with existing assessment systems and administrative constraints. Another factor behind this research is the policy's push toward digital learning and innovation — a promising direction, but one that has rolled out unevenly given infrastructure gaps in rural and under-resourced schools. Looking closely at teachers' experiences offers a grounded sense of how such reforms might be adapted to different learning environments. This research rests on the conviction that empowering teachers through proper training, clearer curriculum design, and adequate resources is essential if NEP's vision is to be realized. By giving teachers a platform to voice their concerns, this study hopes to inform policymakers and curriculum designers about the practical steps genuine transformation requires. In the end, the motivation comes down to making NEP 2020 a living document — one that inspires reform on paper, yes, but also actually takes root in everyday classroom practice.

Challenges

NEP 2020 offers a progressive framework on paper, but putting it into practice has run into a number of difficulties, particularly as seen from teachers' vantage point. A leading challenge is the shortage of comprehensive teacher training programs suited to the demands of the new curriculum. Many educators simply haven't been introduced to competency-based teaching, integrated pedagogy, or the move toward experiential, multidisciplinary learning, which breeds confusion and inconsistent application in the classroom. A second major challenge involves resource constraints: schools, particularly in rural and semi-urban areas, frequently lack adequate infrastructure, digital devices, internet access, and the teaching

materials that NEP's technology-driven, innovative pedagogical models call for. This infrastructural gap widens existing inequalities and limits how feasible the proposed reforms really are. The rigid assessment system poses yet another barrier NEP envisions holistic, formative assessment, but many teachers remain bound to board exams and summative evaluation that reward memorization over skill. Trying to reconcile classroom practice with both policy reform and existing evaluation systems adds real strain for teachers.

Table 1: Challenges in the Policy-to-Practice Gap under NEP 2020

Challenge	Description
Lack of Clarity in Guidelines	Teachers often face ambiguous instructions in NEP 2020 reforms, making classroom-level implementation confusing.
Insufficient Training & Capacity Building	A large share of teachers have not received adequate training in competency-based learning, multidisciplinary pedagogy, or the digital tools NEP 2020 calls for.
Resource Constraints	Limited infrastructure, the digital divide, and inadequate teaching-learning materials hinder curriculum transformation.
Assessment Reforms Difficulty	Shifting from rote-based exams to holistic, formative assessments is challenging due to large class sizes and limited teacher support.
Resistance to Change	Some educators are hesitant to adopt new pedagogies, preferring traditional teaching methods.
Equity & Inclusivity Issues	Rural, marginalized, and under-resourced schools struggle more to adapt to NEP guidelines, widening educational disparities.
Policy-Practice Disconnect	Gap between policymakers' vision and ground realities in schools creates practical barriers to adoption.
Time & Workload Pressure	Teachers already burdened with administrative duties find it difficult to redesign lesson plans and adopt new methods.

Administrative overload adds to the strain. Teachers frequently find themselves saddled with non-academic responsibilities data collection, surveys, election duty that pull time and energy away from actually delivering the curriculum, and this in turn crowds out room for innovative teaching. On top of that, India's educational landscape is simply too diverse for a one-size-fits-all approach to work well; teachers must adapt NEP guidelines to classrooms that vary widely in socio-economic, linguistic, and

cultural makeup. Some educators' reluctance to move away from familiar teaching methods adds a further complication. Taken together, these challenges make clear why understanding teachers' perspectives matters without addressing what they're up against, the gap between NEP's policy framework and its practical implementation will persist, slowing India's broader push toward educational transformation.

Significance of the Research

This research matters because it takes on the policy-to-practice gap within NEP 2020 specifically from teachers' vantage point, given that they are the ones actually carrying out curriculum transformation. NEP 2020 brings in forward-looking reforms competency-based learning, holistic and multidisciplinary education, technology integration but whether these ideas take hold in practice depends heavily on how ready, and how positively disposed, teachers are, along with what they actually do in their classrooms. By studying what teachers think and experience, this research surfaces whether policymakers' intentions actually line up with the realities of schools operating in very different socio-economic and cultural settings.

Beyond that, this study offers concrete evidence on the obstacles teachers run into inadequate training, resource shortfalls, unclear curriculum frameworks and looks at what kind of support they would need, whether professional development, infrastructure upgrades, or institutional guidance, so that NEP 2020's transformative aims don't stay purely aspirational. The findings should be useful to policymakers, education leaders, and other stakeholders looking to identify where intervention is most needed. On a broader level, this work adds to the ongoing conversation about educational reform in India by treating teachers not just as people who carry out policy, but as co-creators of curriculum change underscoring how much teacher agency, motivation, and involvement matter to whether reforms actually succeed. The value here, then, lies not only in assessing how effective the policy has been, but in offering practical recommendations for building up teacher capacity, matching resources to expectations, and narrowing the distance between vision and practice.

This research contributes to the wider academic and policy conversation around NEP 2020 in several ways. First, it offers a systematic look at teacher perspectives a group whose voice tends to be underrepresented in reform studies that lean heavily on policy frameworks and administrative planning. By centering teachers' voices, the study treats them as key stakeholders and sheds light on what they actually go through in navigating curriculum change.

Second, it helps pin down practical challenges how ready teachers are to take on competency-based pedagogy, how accessible resources actually are, and what institutional support

looks like on the ground. It also highlights the distance between teachers' current classroom practices and what the reformed curriculum expects of them. These insights build a base of knowledge that can shape capacity-building programs, curriculum design, and teacher training modules.

Third, the study makes a methodological contribution by combining qualitative perspective with policy analysis, producing a fuller framework for assessing implementation gaps. Rather than simply critiquing the policy, it offers solutions grounded in teachers' actual circumstances context-specific professional development, collaborative curriculum planning, and workable models for bringing technology into the classroom. Finally, the research offers a policy-level contribution through evidence-based recommendations that can guide government bodies, educational institutions, and training agencies. In doing so, it helps tighten the alignment between what policy intends and what happens in the classroom, so that NEP 2020's transformative vision can actually produce meaningful outcomes for learners. Altogether, this research contributes theoretically, empirically, and practically to the fields of education policy, teacher development, and curriculum studies.

Review of Related Literature

NEP 2020 is widely recognized as a milestone in Indian education, built around curriculum transformation, experiential learning, and competency-based education. A number of studies and government reports have laid out the policy's vision, objectives, and intended outcomes. A close look at the existing literature, though, turns up several notable gaps:

- **Policy-Centric Focus:** most existing NEP 2020 studies concentrate on policy itself its goals, structural changes, and how it lines up with global standards while giving comparatively little attention to how it actually plays out in classrooms.
- **Neglect of Teacher Perspectives:** teachers carry out the policy day to day, yet their experiences, perceptions, and struggles in adjusting to NEP 2020 have not been documented in any systematic way. The teacher's voice remains thin in the empirical research.
- **Limited Empirical Evidence:** conceptual discussion of NEP 2020 is plentiful, but hard data on how curricular reforms translate into actual teaching practice is scarce. Few studies look closely at the practical obstacles teachers face training gaps, resource shortages, and administrative support.
- **Curriculum Transformation Challenges:** NEP 2020 pushes competency-based learning, vocational education, and technology use, but how well these reforms are actually landing across different kinds of schools remains largely unknown.

- Urban–Rural and Government–Private Disparities: there's a gap in research comparing NEP implementation across contexts urban versus rural, government versus private. Teachers in resource-poor schools likely face very different circumstances than those in well-equipped ones, but this contrast hasn't been examined in much depth.
- Lack of Longitudinal Understanding: education reforms need time to mature, yet there is little longitudinal work tracking how teacher attitudes and practices shift as NEP 2020 gradually takes hold.

Although NEP 2020 is discussed widely as a progressive reform, systematic research on the policy-to-practice gap from teachers' point of view remains thin. Studies looking at how teachers perceive, adapt to, and respond to curriculum transformation mandates are in short supply. This research aims to fill that gap by offering empirical insight into teachers' experiences, and by extension, practical recommendations for refining policy, strengthening teacher training, and building classroom-level support.

Problem Statement

NEP 2020 was introduced as a sweeping reform meant to transform India's education system through competency-based learning, experiential pedagogy, technology integration, and multilingual education. The policy lays out a visionary framework, but its success rests largely on teachers, who are the ones actually delivering the curriculum on the ground. Even so, a substantial policy-to-practice gap remains. Teachers regularly struggle to turn policy mandates into classroom reality, held back by inadequate training, resource shortages, weak institutional support, and disparities between schools. NEP 2020 has been examined extensively from a policy and administrative angle, but teachers' own experiences and perspectives remain relatively unexplored in academic research. Without understanding how teachers perceive, adjust to, and grapple with curriculum transformation, NEP 2020's ambitious goals risk staying confined to policy documents rather than reaching classrooms. This gap underscores why it's important to examine the lived realities of teachers, who sit at the center of bridging policy vision and educational practice. This study, accordingly, sets out to investigate the policy-to-practice gap in NEP 2020, with a focus on teachers' perspectives on curriculum transformation. By capturing teachers' voices, the research aims to generate insight that can shape effective teacher training, curriculum design, and supportive policy frameworks helping move NEP 2020's objectives closer to realization in Indian schools.

Conceptual Model

Implementing NEP 2020 counts among the most significant reforms in the history of Indian education. The policy sets out a progressive vision for curriculum transformation, but its success rests largely on how effectively that vision gets carried into classroom practice. This process, though, frequently runs into a policy-to-practice gap, where what policymakers hope for doesn't line up cleanly with what teachers actually encounter in schools. The conceptual framework behind this study was built to show how various interconnected factors shape the way NEP 2020's curriculum reforms play out from teachers' vantage point. At its center sits the policy mandate itself, which sets the direction for curriculum change. The framework treats teacher awareness and perception as pivotal variables, since how teachers understand and feel about the reforms directly shapes what happens in the classroom. At the same time, it accounts for the obstacles in the way — workload, resource shortages, training gaps that get in the way of smooth adoption. These obstacles are offset by teacher training and institutional support, which act as enabling factors that help close the distance between policy and practice. How these different dimensions interact ultimately determines how wide the policy-to-practice gap stays in curriculum implementation. The framework then points toward the strategies and recommendations that emerge from teachers' own experiences — insight meant to give policymakers, administrators, and educators a practical basis for actually achieving NEP 2020's goals.

Research Methodology

1. Research Design

This study follows a mixed-methods design, blending quantitative and qualitative approaches. This combination works well here because it yields measurable data on teachers' awareness, perceptions, and challenges, while also capturing the richer, more detailed picture of what implementing NEP 2020's curriculum reforms is actually like for them.

2. Research Approach

- Quantitative Approach: to gauge levels of awareness, perception, and challenge, and to assess how training and institutional support shape these.
- Qualitative Approach: to draw out teachers' detailed perspectives, challenges, and recommendations in their own words.

Together, these approaches give the study both breadth and depth in addressing its objectives.

3. Population and Sample

- Population: school teachers (secondary and higher secondary levels) across India directly involved in delivering the NEP 2020 curriculum.

- Sample Size: roughly 300–400 teachers for the quantitative component and 30–40 teachers for qualitative interviews.
- Sampling Technique:
 - Quantitative: stratified random sampling, to ensure representation across government versus private and urban versus rural schools.
 - Qualitative: purposive sampling, selecting teachers with direct experience of NEP-related curriculum change.

4. Data Collection Methods

- Quantitative Data: a structured questionnaire using Likert-scale items covering awareness, perceptions, challenges, training, and support systems.
- Qualitative Data: semi-structured interviews to explore individual experiences, and focus group discussions (FGDs) to capture collective perspectives.
- Secondary Data: policy documents, training manuals, and government reports on NEP 2020 implementation.

5. Tools and Instruments

- Questionnaire: developed and validated with expert input, and pilot-tested for reliability (Cronbach's Alpha ≥ 0.7).
- Interview Guide: designed to draw out open-ended responses on challenges, adaptations, and suggestions for improvement.

6. Data Analysis

- Quantitative Analysis: descriptive statistics (mean, frequency, percentage) to summarize awareness and perceptions, along with inferential statistics (t-test, ANOVA, regression) to examine relationships — for instance, between training and readiness.
- Qualitative Analysis: thematic analysis of interviews and FGDs using coding techniques, with NVivo or manual coding used to surface recurring patterns and themes.
- Integration: cross-checking quantitative and qualitative findings against each other to build a fuller picture.

7. Ethical Considerations

- Informed consent obtained from all participants.
- Responses kept confidential.
- Anonymity preserved in reporting.
- Approval secured from the Institutional Ethics Committee prior to data collection.

8. Expected Outcome of the Methodology

This methodology is expected to help in:

- Identifying how wide the policy-to-practice gap runs in NEP 2020 implementation.
- Surfacing teacher-driven insight into the challenges and enabling factors involved.

- Producing evidence-based recommendations for policymakers, administrators, and teacher training institutions.

Conclusions and Future Scope

This research goes beyond simply flagging the policy-to-practice gap in NEP 2020, it generates insight meant to inform future reforms and implementation strategies. It brings out key dimensions such as competency-based learning, multidisciplinary approaches, assessment reform, and digital integration, while also acknowledging systemic constraints: limited resources, uneven teacher readiness, gaps in institutional support, and socio-economic and regional disparities. While the study centers on educators' perspectives and doesn't directly measure student outcomes or administrative frameworks, it lays a foundation that future research can build on to bring in these dimensions more fully. The qualitative insight this research generates points toward useful directions for longitudinal and mixed-method studies that could assess NEP 2020's long-term impact on learning outcomes and institutional effectiveness.

In closing, this research helps narrow the gap between policy intent and classroom reality by pointing to actionable ways forward. It highlights the ongoing need for teacher training, curriculum design sensitive to local context, stronger institutional support systems, and more inclusive policy adaptation. Future work could extend this inquiry to include students, policymakers, and administrators, and could work toward scalable models for effective implementation. Ultimately, these findings are meant to help policymakers, educational institutions, and other stakeholders move NEP 2020 closer to its vision of an equitable, inclusive, future-ready education system in India.

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