

Perceptions of Teachers on National Educational Policy 2020

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Abstract

Formulation and implementation of policies are two different aspects that contribute to the overall achievement. The New Educational Policy (NEP) developed over time by engaging different stakeholders requires feedback from actual implementers at the grassroot level to ensure effective implementation in letter and spirit. The data on perceptions of 50 school teachers focused on three important areas—philosophical, curricular, and teachers’ aspects apart from awareness of principles of NEP, 2020. Various statistical tools are utilised for meaningful interpretation of findings such as descriptive statistics, ‘Pearson’s Correlation Coefficient’, ‘Wilcoxon Signed-Rank’, ‘Man Whitney U’, ‘Kruskal Wallis H’, t-test etc. The awareness of the fundamental principles of NEP was ranging from 44 per cent. The majority of school teachers were in the medium category of perception on philosophical (64.0 per cent), curricular (66 per cent), and teachers’ aspects (80 per cent) of National Educational Policy. The changes in teachers’ perceptions on New Educational Policy 2020 analysed the possible constraint in the implementation of NEP was discussed and appropriate strategies suggested.

INTRODUCTION

Inclusive and equitable quality education and promotion of lifelong learning opportunities for all by 2030 is envisaged in the 4th Sustainable

Development Goal. In this endeavour, education reforms are essential to be implemented for quality education. Based on broad consultation among stakeholders after a gap of

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34 years, the National Education Policy 2020 came into force with a vision, i.e., regardless of economic or social background there should be equitable access to quality education. The major changes in the education system bring the highest equity, integrity and quality from early childhood care (5 + 3 + 3 + 4). The policy aims to transform India's education system into an equitable and vibrant knowledge-based society by providing quality education (National Education Policy, 2020).

The implementation of policy in letter and spirit is a very critical element and often this step receives priority in the last and many challenges are encountered in its implementation. One of the barriers in the implementation of the policy is poor understanding of, and disagreement on objectives (Cambridge et al. 2014). The available resources, human resources, and infrastructure facilities (Jenkin et al. 2013) also impact the implementation. The organisations, institutions, services, and funding arrangements of the system (Buse et al. 2012) are also affected. Other key issues that influence the policy implementation are rapid changes in the technological and scientific advancements, knowledge landscape, need for skilled manpower, climate changes, epidemics, pandemics, etc., also.

However, the role of teachers is critical at the grass root level in the implementation of the policy and the success depends on understanding the philosophy and principles of the stated policy. The present study has twin objectives—(i) to analyse the awareness and perception of school teachers on the national education policy and, (ii) to identify the issues and challenges in its implementation.

METHODOLOGY

An exploratory research design was used for the present study and the data were collected through google form as physical activities were restricted due to the COVID-19 situation. Responses received from 50 teachers of six schools were analysed and discussed. The survey instrument on the awareness of school teachers comprised 13 statements related to fundamental principles of National Education Policy 2020. The perception component had subscales on philosophical aspects (4 statements), curricular (5 statements), and teacher (5 statements) and was measured on a 3-point continuum.

The data were subjected to descriptive statistics' 'Man Whitney U', Kruskal Wallis H and discussed accordingly, giving more importance to significant values.

The distribution of sample school teacher based on age revealed that the majority of them (78 per cent) were in the age group of 26–50 years and only 10 per cent were young (less than 25

years), and a few had more than 50 years of age (12 per cent). Females (72 per cent) were more among the sample respondents than males (28 per cent) with equal distribution (50 per cent each) in graduation and post-graduation education, but

the majority of them had more than 10 years of experience (32 per cent) and a significant number of school teachers were more or less distributed either in 4–6 and 7–10 years of experience category with 24 per cent and 26 per cent respectively (Fig. 1).

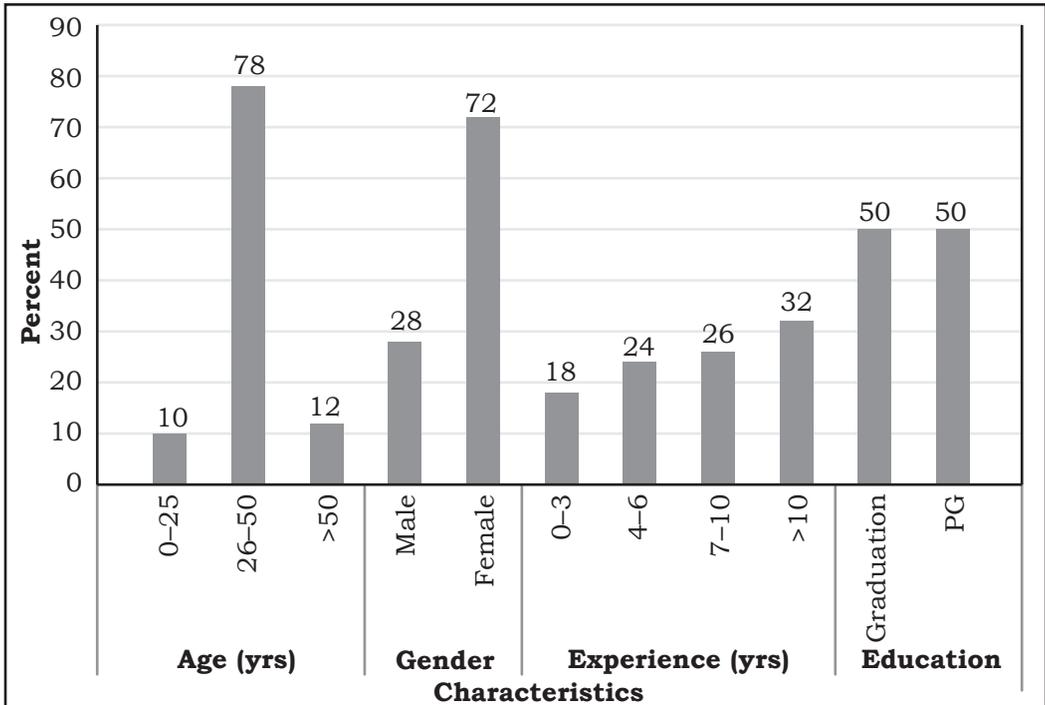


Fig. 1: Profile of School Teachers

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Awareness of National Education Policy

The awareness of the policies is very important for the better implementation, more so in case of NEP 2020. The consultative process of policy development had involved several of the stakeholders, but, still,

it is worth to know the awareness of school teachers who are at the ground level. The awareness on the fundamental principles of NEP was wide ranging from 44–86 per cent (Table 1). Individual items such as ‘recognising, identifying, and fostering the unique capabilities of each student for holistic development in both academic and non-academic

spheres' had the highest awareness (86 per cent). Awareness on the 'respect for diversity and respect for the local context in all curriculum, pedagogy, and policies' is about 74 per cent and about 68 per cent had awareness on 'extensive use of technology in teaching and learning and educational planning and management' etc. Among the total respondents, sixty per cent were seen aware on recommendations such as 'provision of flexibility for learners to choose their learning trajectories and programmes', 'no hard separations between arts and sciences, between curricular and extra-curricular activities, between vocational and academic streams etc.,' and 'multi-disciplinary and a holistic education across the sciences, social sciences, arts, humanities, and sports' with 52 per cent respondents exhibiting awareness of 'emphasis on ethics and human and constitutional values' and 'promoting multilingualism and the power of language in teaching and learning policies'. The awareness levels on a few selected items were less than 50 per cent, i.e., 'synergy in curriculum across all levels of education' (46 per cent) and 'according the highest priority to achieving foundational literacy and

numeracy by all students by grade 3' (44 per cent). Understanding the fundamental principles of policy enhances effectiveness and ensures uniformity in its implementation. Among many factors affecting policy implementation, awareness of the fundamental principles is the critical element. Adoption of a policy without compromising core components leads to its sustainability and yields expected outcomes. There is empirical evidence to suggest that successful outcome interventions are determined not only by the inclusion of specific intervention components which leads to behavioural change (Michie et al 2013) but also on the extent to which they are implemented in the real-world setting (Durlak and Dupre, 2008). Orientation of the teachers on the core principles and how to internalise in the implementation would be critical for the success. As 75 per cent of school teachers are possessing a B.Ed. degree, their understanding would be better than others. The proactive role of the school administrator is essential in organising such programmes. In the current digital era, many technology driven options are available for creating awareness on the National Education Policy to the school teachers before its implementation.

Table 1
Awareness of the Fundamental Principles of National Education Policy

S. No.	Are you aware of the following principles? of the National Education Policy?	Frequency (Yes)	Percentage
1.	Recognising, identifying, and fostering the unique capabilities of each student for holistic development in both academic and non-academic spheres.	43	86
2.	According the highest priority to achieving Foundational Literacy and Numeracy by all students by Grade 3.	22	44
3.	Provision of flexibility for learners to choose their learning trajectories and programmes.	30	60
4.	No hard separations between arts and sciences, between curricular and extra-curricular activities, between vocational and academic streams, etc.	30	60
5.	Multi disciplinarity and a holistic education across the sciences, social sciences, arts, humanities, and sports.	30	60
6.	Emphasis on conceptual understanding rather than rote learning and learning-for-exams.	31	62
7.	Creativity and critical thinking to encourage logical decision-making and innovation.	29	58
8.	Emphasis on ethics and human & constitutional values.	26	52
9.	Promoting multilingualism and the power of language in teaching and learning.	26	52
10.	More focus on life skills such as communication, cooperation, teamwork, and resilience.	31	62
11.	Extensive use of technology in teaching and learning and educational planning and management.	34	68
12.	Respect for diversity and respect for the local context in all curriculum, pedagogy, and policies.	37	74
13.	Synergy in curriculum across all levels of education.	23	46

Perception of School Teachers on National Education Policy 2020

The perception of school teachers was captured on three areas, i.e.,

philosophical, curricular changes, teachers’ aspects pertaining to NEP 2020. The distribution is presented in the following graph (Fig. 2).

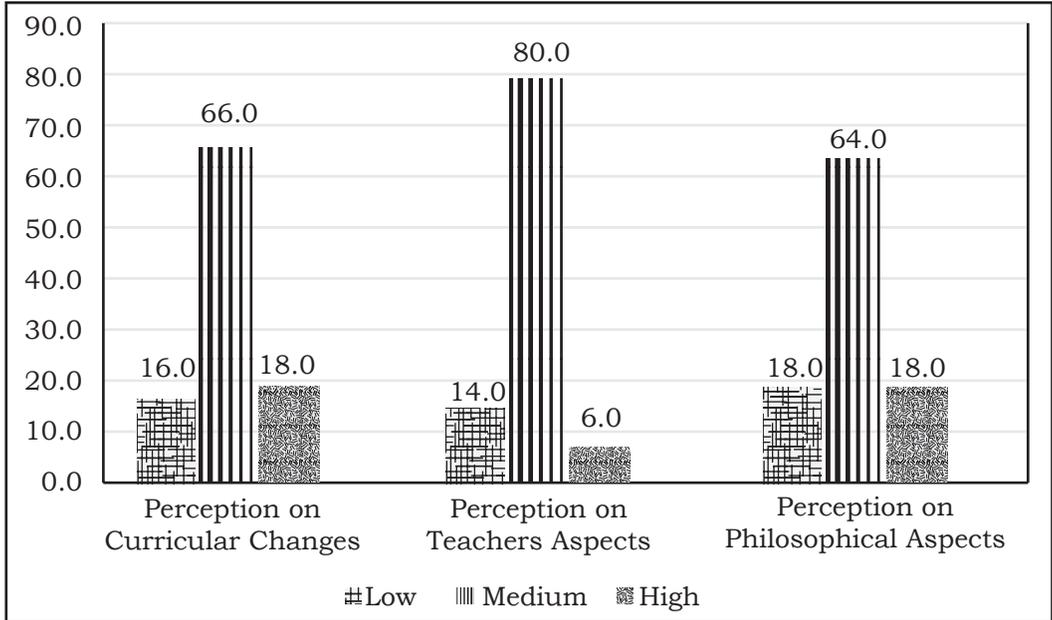


Fig. 2: Distribution of Teachers based on Perception on National Education Policy

The majority of school teachers had medium perception on philosophical (64 per cent), curricular (66 per cent), and teacher (80 per cent) aspects of National Educational Policy, followed by high category except in teacher aspects.

Majority of them had high perception related to teacher aspects (80 per cent). Around 65 per cent each had medium level of perception on philosophical (64 per cent) and, curricular (66 per cent) (Fig. 2). The perception of teachers about the

curriculum change enables them to shape their professional life by receiving curriculum and pedagogy freedom within an approved framework (Aithal and Shubhrajyotsna, 2020). The restructuring of the school curriculum will optimise and increase flexibility towards learning which leads to improvement in the quality of education. It can be concluded that with the National Education Policy a competitive environment can be created in respective fields.

Philosophical Aspects

Educational philosophies should broaden teachers' horizon and enhance their awareness on every step relevant to professional skill in the classroom. The statements on perception related to philosophical aspects based on students' overall development, skill development, life skills, the burden to implement etc., were indicated in Table 2. The majority of school teachers were in the 'undecided' category (42 to 70 per cent) for all statements followed by agree (24 to 30 per cent) and disagree (2 to 24 per cent) categories. Majority in 'undecided' category portray the need for more knowledge and empowerment of school teachers on the philosophical aspects, which are the foundations for overall development. The practice of philosophy is continuous

which is based on knowledge and understanding. The background knowledge on the philosophy of education helps to understand better the problems arising from educational theory and practice. Relatively a few (30 per cent) had indicated that implementation of NEP 2020 will bring a huge change in the overall development of students. Only 24 per cent of teachers believed that NEP 2020 will be a burden on teachers, students and parents. It helps the children to develop their skills freely instead of completing one degree after another (24 per cent). Bhatnagar and Das, (2014) reported that containing key personnel and resources committed to the change process and strong support systems are essential to change school practices in India which leads to the development of skilled human resource.

Table 2
Perception on Philosophical Aspects of National Educational Aspects

S.No.	Statements	Agree (%)	Undecided (%)	Disagree (%)
1.	Do you think that the implementation of NEP 2020 will bring a huge change in students overall development?	15 (30.0)	32 (64.0)	3 (6.0)
2.	NEP 2020 will provide the children to develop their skills freely instead of completing one degree after another.	12 (24.0)	35 (70.0)	3 (6.0)
3.	NEP 2020 will help in inculcating better life skills in the younger generation.	14 (28.0)	35 (70.0)	1 (2.0)
4.	NEP 2020 will be a burden on teachers, students and parents.	12 (24.0)	21 (42.0)	12 (24.0)

Figures in the parenthesis indicate the percentage

Curricular Aspects

According to the perception of teachers, it can be deduced that a better learning experience resulted from having access to the latest technology in every classroom (Aithal and Shubhrajyotsna, 2020). The statements on perception related to curricular aspects focused on students' vocational training, practical learning, restructuring, curriculum, flexibility, etc., were presented in Table 3.

The teachers' perception of curricular aspects ranged from 34 to 89 per cent. The majority of the teachers are optimistic about all items, except the statement on 'NEP 2020 will increase the chances of more practical learning instead of rote learning'. The emphasis in the present education system is on rote learning which is nothing but memorisation of information based on repetition. The innovative learner centred teaching methodologies are to be adopted which is limited by the quantum of the syllabus to be covered. Generally, learner centred teaching

methodologies require competencies, a lot of time and concerted efforts by the teacher. The shortage/inadequacy of quality teachers and lack of teaching competencies are hindering the process of learning.

A significant number of school teachers (84 per cent) perceived that bag less days will help the children to understand the importance of other professions. This perception is to be given importance while developing curricular and co-curricular activities. The choice-based curriculum is voiced as one of the ways to improve the quality of education. The dichotomy between commonality and diversity is always a challenge to balance the choice based curriculum and fixed curriculum. There is a need to develop a road map for the implementation of a flexible curriculum, which should not undermine the talent or merit at national level admissions.

A vast majority (about 89 per cent) of respondents agreed that restructuring the curriculum to 5+3+3+4 design will help to optimise students learning based on cognitive development (Table 3).

Table 3
Perception on Curricular aspects of National Educational Policy

S.No.	Statements	Agree (%)	Undecided (%)	Disagree (%)
1.	The bag fewer days where in the children will be taken out to intern in different fields will help the children to understand the importance of other professions as well which are quite lost in time?	42 (84.0)	5 (10.0)	3 (6.0)

2.	Vocational training will encourage children to move away from social media and engage themselves in real work?	40 (80.0)	6 (12.0)	4 (8.0)
3.	NEP 2020 will increase the chances of more practical learning instead of rote learning?	17 (34.0)	28 (56.0)	5 (10.0)
4.	Do you think that the quality of education will increase due to the provision of flexibility and choice of subjects to study?	38 (76.0)	11 (22.0)	1 (2.0)
5.	“Restructuring school curriculum and pedagogy in a new 5+3+3+4” design will help to optimise learning for students based on the cognitive development of children?	44 (88.8)	4 (8.0)	2 (4.0)

Figures in the parenthesis indicate the percentage

Teachers' Aspects

One of the important focal areas of the National Educational Policy is vocational education, which is directly linked to the career. According to the teacher's point of view, the student's background knowledge and life experiences will allow achieving a successful career path as per the NEP. Majority of teachers (82 per cent) felt the need for pre-service training for the position of the job of early childhood care and about 78 per cent opined that making four years of B.Ed. degree compulsory will make talented teachers lose their jobs and 74 per cent expressed that NEP 2020

decreases the number of unskilled teachers coming into this profession (Table 4). Only 38 per cent thought that regular teachers are able to take up the expertise vocational training. This portrays greater understanding of the competencies and orientation of the teachers towards vocational training. However, the professionalisation/professional development of the workforce helps the teachers to increase confidence, giving them the ability to follow good practices and transfer knowledge. The absence of it is a key challenge and is the most important obstacle to policy makers' efforts (Bhatnagar and Das 2014 and Kay et al., 2021).

Table 4
Perception on Teacher Aspects of National Educational Policy

S.No.	Statements	Agree (%)	Undecided (%)	Disagree (%)
1.	Will regular teachers be able to take up the expertise vocational training like carpentry etc.?	19 (38.0)	13 (26.0)	18 (36.0)
2.	NEP 2020 would increase the demand for quality teachers?	15 (30.0)	31 (62.0)	4 (8.0)
3.	As many of the teachers are employed in teaching field without a B.Ed., making 4 years of B.Ed. compulsory will make talented teachers lose their jobs?	39 (78.0)	8 (16.0)	3 (6.0)
4.	Do you agree that NEP 2020 decrease the number of unskilled teachers coming into this profession?	37 (74.0)	10 (20.0)	3 (6.0)
5.	Do teachers have to go through special training to be appointed for the position of the job of early childhood care?	41 (82.0)	1 (2.0)	8 (16.0)

Figures in the parenthesis indicate the percentage

The perception on teachers' aspect was high (Mean Rank=22.8) among the group of 7–10 years of experience as it was significant at 5 per cent level ($H=8.664$, $P=0.03$); which varies with the experience. Experience in teaching empowers teachers in several aspects of teaching perspectives.

The study also revealed that the experience was non-significant with reference to curricular changes ($H=3.802$, $P=0.28$) and philosophical aspects ($H=2.682$, $P=0.44$). It can be concluded that the teachers had equivalent perception among all academic environment aspects irrespective of experience, except teachers' aspects.

The perception on philosophical aspects ($U=235.5$, $P=0.71$), curricular changes ($U=213.5$, $P=0.39$), and teacher's aspects ($U=216.0$, $P=0.42$) was showing no variation among male and female (Table 5). This can be attributed to the fact that irrespective of the gender of the teachers, aspects like overall development, building skills, inculcating better life skills, undergoing vocational training, practical and experiential learning inherently leads to an increase in the quality of education and eventual optimisation in learning. This reveals that both the genders had equal perception about the academic environment aspects of NEP 2020. According to the perception of teachers,

it can be deduced that the support of parents, teachers, school climate, collaborative planning, individual student support, curriculum and

professional development are important, irrespective of experience and gender for implementation of NEP 2020.

Table 5
Perceptual Differences on NEP—Academic Environment

S. No	Perception on	Exp. (yrs)				Kruskal-Wallis H	Gender		Mann Whitney 'U' Test
		Mean Rank					Mean Rank	Mean Rank	
		0-3	4-6	7-10	>10		M	F	
1.	Philosophical Aspects	19.7	20.4	15.0	11.0	2.682	26.6	25.0	235.5
2.	Curricular Changes	13.5	17.0	21.5	23.0	3.802	26.5	22.7	213.5
3.	Teachers Aspects	18.9	13.5	22.8	1.0	8.664*	28.0	24.5	216.0

**Significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)*

Expected challenges in the implementation of National Education Policy 2020

The possible challenges in implementation of National Educational Policy as perceived by school teachers (Table 6) were lack of infrastructure facilities (80 per cent) followed by assignment of multiple roles to the teachers working at a time (76 per cent), financial issues (72 per cent), lack of proper management (66 per cent), lack of parental support (52 per cent), availability of efficient teachers (40 per cent), lack of awareness on NEP (40 per cent) and lack of standardised testing (24 per cent). Teachers when assigned multiple roles, may not be able to

concentrate fully on a single role, leading to decrease in work efficiency and overall educational output. Parents prefer their wards being given individual attention in classrooms which may not be possible when teachers are assigned multiple tasks. Teachers end up working overtime for the same pay which may result in frustration and less job satisfaction. Lack of awareness on NEP would result in fewer or no teachers complying with the NEP which makes the policy ineffective.

Gupta and Choubey (2021) and Bhatnagar and Das (2014) also mentioned similar challenges/issues regarding organisations, individuals, and facilities viz., time

spent on non-academic activities, lack of institutional and teacher autonomy to make innovations in higher education to attract many students, financial limitations,

parental pressure, infrastructure facilities, insufficient mechanisms for career management and progression of faculty and institutional leaders.

Table 6
Challenges faced by the Respondents

S. No.	Challenges	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Lack of infrastructure facilities	40	80.00
2.	Lack of availability of efficient teachers	20	40.00
3.	Lack of proper funding	36	72.00
4.	Lack of standardised testing	12	24.00
5.	Assignment of multiple roles to the teachers working at a time	38	76.00
6.	Lack of proper management	33	66.00
7.	Lack of parental support	26	52.00
8.	Lack of awareness on NEP	20	40.00

CONCLUSION

The teacher plays an important role in imparting quality education to the students. The motivation and empowerment of teachers are the precursor for the best possible future for our children and our nation. The onus also lies on the school administrators for creating an enabling learning environment. Based on the study, it is recommended that awareness

programmes on the national education policy should be organised. Teacher competency mapping specific to the implementation of NEP 2020 and organising capacity-building programmes are the key strategic interventions for effective implementation of NEP, apart from the development of required infrastructure etc. The digital ecosystem is also to be developed for uniform curriculum development, implementation and monitoring.

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