

Assessing Awareness of Primary and Secondary School Teachers about National Education Policy 2020

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ABSTRACT

The present study was conducted with the objective to assess the awareness of primary and secondary school teachers about basic characteristics of National Education Policy 2020. Total 100 teachers were selected for the study, out of which 50 were from primary level and 50 from secondary level classes. The data was collected through a structured interview schedule shared both personally and via google forms. The results showed higher level of awareness about characteristics like curricular restructuring, skill-based education, foundational literacy, creativity and experiential learning in both the groups. Low awareness was noted in course selection flexibility, development of ethical behaviour, implementation of internships, introduction of ashram shalas, learning through song, play, poetry etc., role of nutrients in development and National Professional Standards for Teachers. Comparatively higher level of awareness was found in secondary level schoolteachers. The study concluded that primary school teachers had lower level of awareness, especially about novel aspects of NEP that did not pertain to their daily teaching earlier.

Key Words: National Education Policy, Awareness, Teachers, Primary education, Secondary education, Vocation, skill.

INTRODUCTION

Indian government has announced the National Education Policy (NEP) in 2020. This policy document is conceptually sound, well-crafted, and futuristic in appearance. It includes the changes aimed at shaking up the current ailing educational system, which is out of step with evolving times and emerging technology.

However, the NEP 2020 document has mixed reviews. Academicians and policy makers have begun studying and researching upon the document and its characteristics. According to Devi and Raju (2020), the NEP

has three major characteristics, viz., high quality, equity and integrity spanning from school to higher education. With the current education emphasizing upon theoretical aspects, the new education policy aspires to develop skill, creative potential and analytical thinking NEP 2020 towards on School Higher education in addresses some challenges facing the existing education system: Quality, Affordability, Equity, Access and Accountability (Gahvane, 2020).

India has one of the world's biggest and most diverse education systems. Although, the country has nearly universalized primary education, there are still significant gaps. The

significant contributors to this gap are non-availability of schools for many of the children, insufficient funds for education cost, education system being filled with prejudices related to marks-based structure and less motivated teachers. NEP seems to be a solution for many of the problems with a mission is to ensure that all Indians have access to a high-quality education at a reasonable cost. NEP 2020's greatest achievement could be that it recognizes the need for less laws, more autonomy, improved teaching and learning methods, better teacher preparation, and more meaningful exams; in other words, it has provided India with a future vision.

NEP 2020 does have ambitious plans to revamp the present education system but its implementers i.e. the teachers have a most significant role to play. It is on their shoulders lies the potential impact of this ambitious document. Action originates from awareness. The teaching fraternity will have to be well aware about the various aspects of NEP 2020 and need to have a clear understanding of what this policy intends. Hence, the present study was conducted with the objective of assessing the awareness level of primary and secondary school teachers about NEP 2020.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present research is focused on identifying the awareness levels of primary and secondary school teachers about the National Education Policy 2020. The study was conducted purposively at Varanasi and Gorakhpur district of Uttar Pradesh, with the objective to assess the awareness of Primary and Secondary School Teachers about basic characteristics of National Education Policy 2020, related to school education. Total 100 teachers were selected for the study, out of which 50 were from primary level and 50 from

secondary level classes. The sample was selected through snowball technique questionnaire shared both personally and via google forms. The awareness scores were divided into three categories of low, medium and high levels of awareness. The statistical methods applied for data analysis were percentages and chi square.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Background Information

Information was collected pertaining to the background of the participants to gain a better understanding of their responses and views. Majority of the primary school teachers had the highest educational level of Graduation B.Ed. (34%) whereas the minimum will secondary school teachers holding a postgraduate plus B.Ed. Degree (40%). It was interesting to note that one fourth primary school teachers did not hold a B.Ed. degree, but either had a diploma in elementary education or had done the course of elementary teacher education. The average age of primary and secondary school teachers was 27.32 years and 36.89 years respectively. Majority of the teachers from both the groups were female, married and belonged to urban localities. About 54 percent of the respondents were from government primary schools and 68 percent from government secondary schools. Rest all belonged to the private schools.

Out of the 8 major characteristics (selected for this study) of national education policy 2020 (table 1) it was found that three were most popular in terms of awareness among the schoolteachers. However, the level of awareness varied among the two categories of participants. Awareness about the characteristics of curricular restructuring (78%, 82%), foundational literacy (76%, 64%) and education in regional languages (68%,

Awareness about Major Characteristics of NEP 2020

Table 1: Distribution of the respondents as per their awareness about major characteristics of NEP 2020 n=100

CHARACTERISTICS	PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS (n=50)	SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS (n=50)
Curricular Restructuring of 5+3+3+4	78	82
Integration of essential subjects and skills	54	84
Education in Regional Languages	68	80
Learning by Play	68	42
Emphasis on Foundational Literacy	76	64
Capacity Building of Teachers	42	68
Flexibility in Course Selection	32	40
Support for Gifted students	28	38

Data in percentages.

80%) was found to be the highest in both the groups of participants. Out of these three, only foundational literacy awareness was found to be higher in primary school teachers than secondary school teachers. The teachers were least aware about the flexibility offered in NEP for course selection (32%, 40%) and Support for Gifted students/special provisions for especially abled children (28%, 38%). Less than half of the primary school teachers knew about the capacity building aspect of NEP 2020. The chi square test statistic in case of foundational literacy ($\chi^2=12.8$, $p=0.0001$), regional languages ($\chi^2=14.59$, $p=0.0034$), integration of special education and skills ($\chi^2=5.6$, $p=0.028$) and learning by play ($\chi^2=11.3$, $p=0.0037$) was found to be statistically significant based on a level of significance (0.05).

This data presents an interesting picture, as the aspects most pertaining to their day-to-day job like curricular restructuring, skill-based education etc being well known in the teaching fraternity but at the same time some equally significant yet novel additions like provisions for especially abled children and increased choices in course selection

remaining quite unknown. It was heartening to know that the teachers were aware about the introduction of regional languages in teaching pedagogy. As per the study by Prabu and Mookkiah (2021) on the awareness levels of primary school teachers about NEP, it was found that less than quarter of the male primary school teachers had low level, 63.1 % of them had moderate and 15 % of them had high level of awareness. Regarding female primary school teachers, less number of respondents fell into the high levels of awareness. There was a significant difference between the awareness of New Education Policy (2020) primary school teachers' with respect to gender, type of management.

With vocational education (adding fun courses for hands on experience of vocational crafts) gaining highest importance and emphasis in NEP 2020 (Table 2), the awareness levels, sadly, wasn't enough. Secondary school teachers were more aware than primary teachers, especially about the introduction of vocational courses as early as in class VI (and teaching self-reliance at young age). Development of ethical Behaviour through education (like doing what

Awareness about Integration of Essential Subjects and Skills of NEP 2020

Table 2: Percentage Awareness about Integration of Essential Subjects and Skills of NEP 2020

Suggestions	n=100	
	PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS (n=50)	SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS (n=50)
Beginning of Vocational courses (fun course) from class VI-VIII	66	82
Implementation of Internship	52	58
Teaching Self Reliance at young age	44	78
Development of ethical behaviour through Education	24	32

Data in percentages.

is right and giving logical framework for ethical decision which in later stage will expanded to cheating, violence, plagiarism etc) was the least known aspect in this category with less than a quarter of the primary school teachers (24%) recording awareness about it. Overall, primary school teachers showed significantly lower awareness ($\chi^2 = 9.87$, $p = 0.0028$) [based on a level of significance (0.05)] about the vocation related suggestions of NEP 2020. This depicts an indifference on the part of our primary school teachers regarding vocational education, probably stemming from their notion that vocational education is a matter of higher education. With NEP 2020 emphasizing over vocational educational at an early stage, a need to change the outlook of our teachers is imperative.

A study by Maruthavanan (2020) found below average awareness levels of the National Education Policy. There was a significant difference among secondary school teachers on awareness on New Education Policy (2019) based on Gender. Male Secondary School teachers had more awareness than female teachers. Urban secondary school teachers had more awareness than Rural teachers. Government School teachers had more awareness than Self-finance teachers.

Early childhood care and education is

something that has been highly emphasised in national education policy 2020. Some very significant aspects like holistic development, mutual cooperation, learning by play has been inculcated into this new education policy. When it comes to awareness of primary school and secondary school teachers about these aspects of ECCE (table 3), it was found that primary school teachers had a significantly higher awareness (78%) ($\chi^2 = 10.30$, $p = 0.0029$) [based on a level of significance (0.05)] about the personal and public hygiene, teamwork and courtesy related aspects of ECCE whereas secondary school teachers were significantly more aware ($\chi^2 = 9.87$, $p = 0.0003$) [based on a level of significance (0.05)] about the holistic development-based education (80%). Awareness about emphasis on learning through art, story, song, play, poetry and introduction of Ashramshalas was found to be alarmingly low in primary school teachers (24% and 12%). Sports based education system was also fairly unknown in nearly half of the primary school teachers. Findings of this study begs more awareness in our primary and secondary school teachers regarding the early childhood care and education related suggestions of NEP 2020 because the role of our primary and secondary school teachers in implementation

Awareness about ECCE related Suggestions of NEP 2020

Table 3: Percentage Awareness about ECCE related Suggestions of NEP 2020 n=100

Suggestions	PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS (n=50)	SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS (n=50)
Flexible, multi-faceted, multi-level, sports-based education system	54	64
Attention should be given to develop good behavior, courtesy, personal and public hygiene and team work	78	68
Arrangement to achieve maximum results on the basis of holistic development	56	80
Emphasis on learning through art, story, song, play, poetry	24	42
Introduction of 'Ashramshalas' in tribal-dominated areas	12	18

Data in percentages.

of early childhood care and education is going to be most significant. According to Kurien & Chandraman (2020), the New Education Policy announced by Government of India (NEP 2020) was a welcoming change and fresh news amidst all the negativities surrounding the world due to the challenges posed by Covid-19 pandemic. The announcement of NEP 2020 was purely unexpected by many. The changes that

NEP2020 has recommended were something that many educationists never saw coming.

NEP 2020 lays emphasis over strengthening the foundational literacy and numeracy for all children under national mission (rest of the policy will be ineffective if the Indian students are lacking in this skill) via developing reading, writing and arithmetic at foundation

Awareness about Foundation Literacy and Numeracy in NEP 2020

Table 4: Percentage Awareness about Foundation Literacy and Numeracy in NEP 2020 n=100

CHARACTERISTICS	PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS (n=50)	SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS (n=50)
To achieve universal foundational literacy and numeracy in primary school by 2025	78	74
Nutritious Breakfast	24	32
Play Way Method	42	56
Development of physical, intellectual abilities through nutrients	12	20
Enhancing children's love for education	56	88
Regular Health Check-ups	34	68

Data in percentages.

level, nutritious breakfast, play way method, loving to learn, regular health check-ups to ensure good health etc. However, the data revealed (table 4) that apart from the aspect of enhancing children's love for education, foundational literacy and the play way method, awareness regarding the nutrition related aspect of physical and intellectual abilities was extremely low in both the groups as less than a quarter of the participants accepted knowing about the provisions of nutritious breakfast and role of nutrients especially in the foundational years. Inter group comparison showed a significantly higher levels of awareness in secondary

school teachers (88%, 68%) about suggestion of NEP to enhance the love for education in students ($\chi^2 = 8.97$, $p = 0.0042$) and about regular health check-ups ($\chi^2 = 11.43$, $p = 0.0026$) [based on a level of significance (0.05)] than the primary school teachers (56%, 34%). A study by Kaurav *et.al.* (2020) clarified that the objective of NEP 2020 is to strengthen the foundation of education in India by reinforcing holistic development by offering vocational training to students at the elementary and primary education level. The results of the study indicated that the central concern of the government is to evolve the current education system.

Awareness about Skill related Suggestions of NEP 2020

Table 5: Percentage Awareness about Skill related Suggestions of NEP 2020

n=100

CHARACTERISTICS	PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS (n=50)	SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS (n=50)
Enhancing Creativity	90	94
Skill based education to increase employment opportunities	94	82
Experiential learning helps in increasing practical knowledge	84	96

Data in percentages.

The Indian educational scenario has undergone a major shift in the last decade. This shift rose from the lack of specific skills in our degree holders and their sub-optimal performance in the job sector. Efforts have been made to shift our education and pedagogy from mere theories to inculcating practical skills in our student fraternity to make them more job ready. The data (table 5) showed the impact of these efforts as majority of the participants in both groups showed high levels of awareness in all skill related aspects of NEP 2020, be it practical knowledge (84%, 96%), creativity (90%, 94%), or employment opportunities (94%, 82%). It was found that skill related suggestions were known by most

of the teachers, and this indicates a welcome change in the primary and secondary level education of our country. There are many new things proposed in the NEP 2020 to get the right skill set at the right time like vocational courses along with the regular studies if the students opt the right course or subject combination according to the inborn talent the gap between industry and academia will be bridged in near future. Anything new requires some time to yield the results. NEP 2020 proposal has many new things, yet to be implemented and tested there are many areas where people need more clarification (Kalyani, 2020).

Awareness about Teacher related Suggestions of NEP 2020

Table 6: Percentage Awareness about Teacher related Suggestions of NEP 2020 n=100

CHARACTERISTICS	PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS (n=50)	SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS(n=50)
Emphasis on regular teacher recruitment instead of contract teacher	54	78
National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST) to be prepared by 2022	12	20
Honest teaching work will be encouraged	16	54
Innovation will be emphasized to improve the quality of teaching	34	58

Data in percentages.

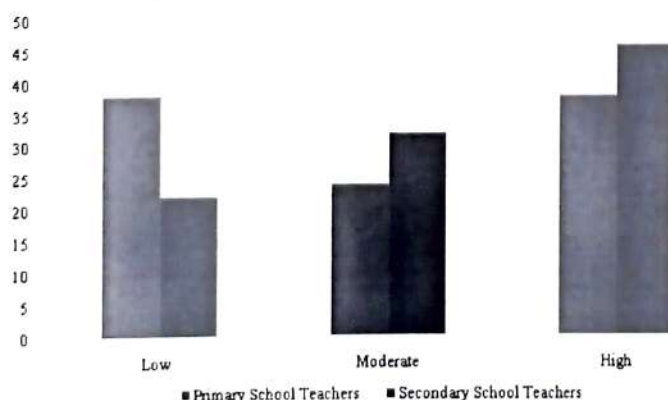
The data (table 6) under this head was found to be very surprising and interesting. Though the suggestions under this head pertained to the teachers themselves, surprisingly, the awareness levels were quite low, especially among the primary school teachers. NEP 2020 has suggested the formation of National Professional Standards for Teachers by the National Council for Teachers Education (in its restructured new form as a Professional Standard Setting Body) meant for quality teaching in the country, however, not even a quarter of the participants knew about this aspect. Nearly 78 percent of the secondary school teachers and over half of the primary school teachers did know of the emphasis over recruitment of regular teachers rather than contractual teachers in NEP 2020. Significant difference was found in the

awareness levels of primary (34%) and secondary school teachers (58%) about the aspect of emphasis on innovation for quality teaching ($\chi^2 = 13.98$, $p = 0.0002$) based on a level of significance (0.05).

In a study (Kalyani, 2020) to assess the awareness of teachers, students and parents about NEP 2020, it was found that the proposal of National Professional Standards for teachers and National Assessment Centre [Parakh] will increase the quality of teaching. It is required as an essential requirement according to the proposal of inviting foreign university to India this will lead to more competitive atmosphere and educators will have to improve. To meet the competition teachers will have to upgrade their knowledge.

Level of Awareness of Teachers about NEP 2020

Fig. 1: Level of Awareness of Teachers about NEP 2020



On the basis of scores obtained by the respondents (fig. 1), it was found that in primary school teacher category, 38 percent had low, 24 percent had moderate, and 38 percent had high level of awareness about NEP 2020. In the secondary school teacher category, 22 percent had low, 32 percent had moderate, and 46 percent had high level of awareness about the various aspects of NEP 2020. Overall, secondary school teachers had comparatively higher levels of awareness about NEP than primary level teachers.

CONCLUSION

NEP 2020 is going to be the driving force and guiding light for the Indian educational system for the decades to come. However, its impact will greatly depend over its understanding among the teaching fraternity, as teachers will be at the forefront in implementation of this NEP 2020. This study endeavoured to identify the awareness about some major characteristics of NEP 2020 among primary and secondary school teachers and found variation among the awareness levels of both the groups and among the characteristics as well. With skill, foundational literacy and regional language related aspects being well known among our teachers, there was an alarmingly low level of awareness about some significant aspects like National Professional Standards, learning through art, behavioural education and provisions for specially abled children. Efforts will have to be made for a better understanding about these aspects in our teaching fraternity. Another prominent finding was the comparatively low level of awareness in our primary school teachers. Their awareness was found to be limited to the older concepts related to their day-to-day teaching like play way method, foundational literacy etc. An indifference was noted in

primary school teachers regarding the newer additions of NEP 2020 that earlier pertained to only higher education and now have been inculcated in early education as well.

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