



Harmonizing Vision and Reality: Empirical Study of the National Education Policy 2020

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ABSTRACT:

The research paper is based upon the empirical study which delves into the fundamental aspirations of education as put forth in the groundbreaking National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. Embarking on a transformative journey, the NEP 2020 strives to revolutionize the educational landscape, employing modern methodologies and innovative teaching methods. Employing a pragmatic approach, this study tries to understand the key tenets of the NEP 2020, encompassing the domains of universal access and equity, holistic development, quality education, interdisciplinary exploration, skills and employability, teacher empowerment, technology integration, inclusive practices, early childhood care, and cutting-edge research and innovation. Through an exhaustive examination of scholarly works, policy documents, and insightful interviews, this research investigates the efficacious implementation of these objectives and their resounding impact on the educational milieu. The research sample for this research paper is the first Undergraduate batch of NEP 2020 at the Department of Political Science and Public Administration, Dr. Harisingh Gour Central University, Sagar, Madhya Pradesh, India. The data is collected from the students who had opted for the introduced paper – Indian Freedom Struggle. The findings offer compelling perspectives, illuminating the triumphs and hurdles encountered in the pursuit of the NEP 2020's vision, thereby furnishing invaluable guidance to policymakers, educators, and scholars committed to shaping an enticing future for education in India.

Keywords: New Education Policy 2020, Empirical Study, Indigenous Knowledge.

Introduction:

India is the fastest growing nation and to actualize its potential, Education is the area which needs priority. The demographic dividend of the nation presents that the median age of the population of India is 28.2 years.¹ India will have 1.04 billion working age persons by 2030. Correspondingly, India's dependency ratio would be the lowest in its history by 2030 at 31.2%. India's young dependency ratio-the number of children below 15 years of age relative to total population is expected to overtake the old dependency ratio (ratio of population aged above 65 years relative to total population) by 2056.² Also, according to International Monetary Fund (IMF) and its World Economic Outlook report has consistently highlighted India as one of the fastest-growing major economies in the world.³ In its April 2021 report, the IMF projected India's GDP growth to rebound strongly at 12.5% in 2021, making it the fastest-growing major economy.

The World Bank's Global Economic Prospects report has also recognized India's rapid economic growth. In its January 2021 report, the World Bank projected India's GDP to grow by 5.4% in 2021, rebounding from a contraction in the previous year.⁴ According to Oxford Economics, a global forecasting and quantitative analysis firm, India is expected to be one of the world's fastest-growing economies over the next decade.⁵ Their analysis suggests that India's GDP growth could surpass that of major economies like the United States and China in the coming years. And according to the PricewaterhouseCoopers' (PwC) annual Global Economy Watch report, it has identified India as one of the fastest-growing economies.⁶ Their projections suggest that India could become the world's third-largest economy by 2030, surpassing major economies like Japan and Germany.

Therefore, it becomes very necessary for India to actualize its potential where education plays a vital role in shaping the future of India, its individuals and society. Recognizing the need for a comprehensive reform to align India's education system with the rapidly changing global landscape, the Government of India has introduced the New Education Policy (NEP) in 2020. This ambitious policy aims to transform the existing education system by addressing key challenges, fostering holistic development, and promoting a learner-centric approach.

The policy itself has been based upon a democratic and consultative methodology. First, there was a wide-ranging consultation that were taken. The formulation of the NEP 2020 involved extensive consultations with stakeholders, including academicians, policymakers, teachers, students, and civil society organizations. This inclusive process ensured that diverse perspectives were considered in shaping the policy.

Another feature of the methodology while formulation of the policy was its flexibility and multidisciplinary learning. It promotes a multidisciplinary approach, allowing students to choose subjects of their interest across various streams, fostering critical thinking and interdisciplinary skills.

Earlier the focus was given on adult education and the early childhood education was only focused for increasing the quantity of the students. The need of the time was to increase awareness among every section of the society to indulge into the mainstream education and to increase literacy. The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan of 2001 by Atal Bihari Vajpayee promoted inclusion of the last student in school.⁷ It focused on Universal access to education of age group of 6–14 years to have access to free and compulsory education. Also, it tried to bridge the gender and social gaps. It allowed us to have a quality improvement in enhancing infrastructure, providing adequate teaching-learning materials, and promoting innovative teaching methodologies. It also helped in capacity building of teachers and education administrators to enhance their skills and effectiveness in delivering quality education. This was successful because of the community participation. But it also was not that much ready infrastructure wise. The NEP 2020 recognizes the significance of early childhood education in laying a strong foundation for a child's development. It emphasizes the universalization of early childhood care and education (ECCE) for children aged 3–6 years, leading to improved cognitive, social, and emotional development.⁸

Another feature which is in the focus is the vocational education and skill development. The policy acknowledges the importance of vocational education and skill development in preparing students for the demands of the job market. According to the United Nations' World Population Prospects 2019 report, India is often referred to as the "youngest country" in the world. This report states that India has a large youth population, with a significant proportion of its population under the age of 25. The median age in India is relatively low compared to other countries, indicating a demographic advantage in terms of having a youthful workforce and potential for future economic growth. Yet only 2 percent of the workforce is skilled.⁹ To actualize this potential, India must aim to integrate vocational education into mainstream education, providing students with practical skills, entrepreneurship abilities, and experiential learning opportunities.

This also gives a chance for technology integration into education. The NEP 2020 recognizes the transformative potential of technology in education. It emphasizes the integration of technology, including online learning platforms, digital content, and artificial intelligence, to enhance accessibility, equity, and quality of education across all levels.

Another feature of the NEP 2020 is the emphasis on research and innovation.¹⁰ The policy places a strong emphasis on research and innovation by establishing a National Research Foundation (NRF) to foster a culture of research and encourage innovation in educational institutions. This initiative aims to promote cutting-edge research and nurture a vibrant research ecosystem in India.

Another feature that has been in the focus of NEP 2020 is the holistic development and well-being of the students.¹¹ This has been promoted by focusing on the physical fitness, sports, arts, and cultural activities. It emphasizes the integration of co-curricular activities and life skills education to enhance the overall well-being and personality development of learners. All this can only be achieved with increase in funding and better implementation techniques. The government has committed to increasing public investment in education to 6% of GDP to support the implementation of the NEP 2020.¹² This increased funding will help address infrastructural gaps, improve teacher training, and ensure the successful execution of policy reforms.

EMPIRICAL RESEARCH AND DATA COLLECTION:

The objective of the research for this paper is to understand the role of the teacher (Second Stakeholder) in his teaching methods. Also, to understand the students' ideas thoughts regarding the NEP as they are the first stakeholders of the policy. The questions are based upon the objectives of the NEP 2020 which are discussed earlier. The questions framed try to understand those objectives, which are also given below along with the responses and its analysis.

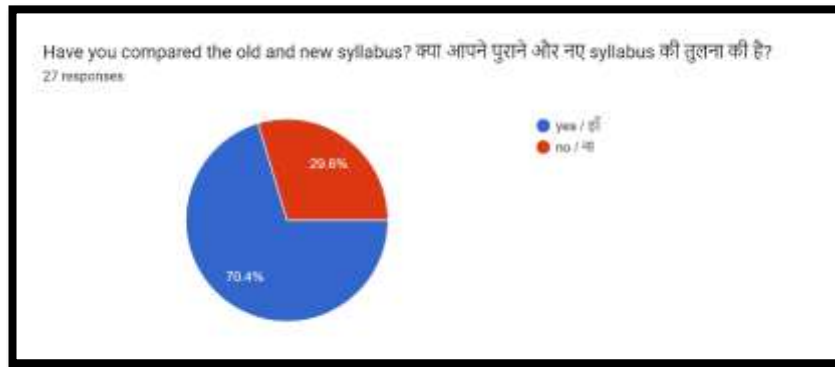
The research has been done by primary data collected from the new students of Bachelors of Arts who had opted Political Science as one of the subjects in their first semester. The students are from Department of Political Science and Public Administration, Dr. Harisingh Gour Central University, Sagar. The department and the university are one of the pioneers of innovations in syllabus and teaching methods. The paper which was introduced first time under NEP 2020 is 'Indian freedom Struggle'. The study has been carried out with filling up of questionnaire by the students. The class had total of 220 students from B.A. and B.A. B.Ed. programmes offered by the university. Out of which 27 which is around 12 percent of the total students have filled this questionnaire. These students are from the first batch of NEP 2020 who were selected from National Testing Agency (NTA) conducting CUET-UG exam. It allowed students across India to select various universities to study irrespective of their native place. This also allows them to get admission in better universities if native place doesn't have one. The respondents are students who had opted Political Science as their core subject with POL DSM 111 code and the title of the paper is 'Indian Freedom Struggle' which has five units. The syllabus has been upon the line of thought on NEP 2020 where Indigenous knowledge has been provided in first unit and other units have multi-disciplinary and historical approach to the study of political science. The responses that we got from filling up the questionnaire have an average age of 19 years and 2 months. Whereas, 55.6 percent are female and 44.4 percent are male.

The objective of the questions is subjective and therefore we have tried to convert the qualitative data into quantitative.

HYPOTHESIS, ANALYSIS AND OUTCOME:

1. Comparison of Old and New syllabus:

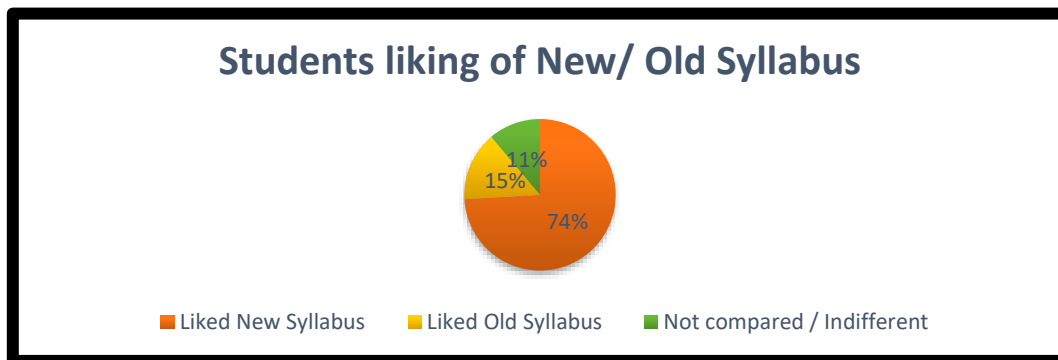
It is necessary to compare the old and new syllabus because it helps students first, to familiarize themselves with the new topics and expectations, enabling better preparedness. Second, to identify changes and any differences in the content, learning objectives, or assessment methods. This helps them understand the specific areas where they need to focus their efforts and adjust their study strategies accordingly. Third, to assess relevance and significance of the new curriculum in relation to their academic and career goals. It allows them to determine the potential impact on their future learning and development. Fourth, to help them in transition planning. It helps them to identify areas of overlap or continuity, as well as any new requirements, ensuring a smoother transition and minimizing any potential learning gaps. And lastly, it helps them in their personal growth and can foster a sense of self-awareness. It encourages them to reflect on their own learning journey, assess their strengths and weaknesses, and set goals for improvement based on the changes in the new syllabus.



When asked if they had compared the old and new syllabus (table 1), 70.4 percent of the respondents had compared the old and new syllabus whereas, 29.6 percent of the respondents had not.

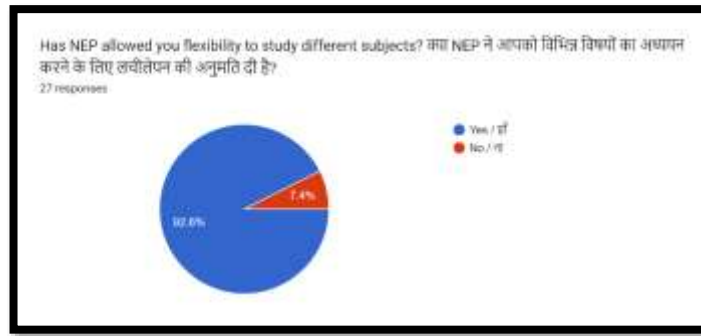
2. Liking of either of the syllabus:

(Table 2) Among the 27 students who has responded, 20 students (74%) liked the new syllabus, whereas 3 Students (11%) were not sure about their liking.



3. Universal Access and Equity:

One of the major objectives of NEP 2020 is to enable students and parents to have a universal access and equity in education. This also includes their flexibility in choosing different subjects at the same time to learn interdisciplinary. This has never been done before NEP 2020 where students could choose subjects from different streams. The question asked to analyze:



Has NEP allowed you flexibility to study different subjects? (Table 3) 92.6 percent of the respondents thinks that they have got the chance to choose within wide range of subjects, whereas 7.4 percent of the respondents are not able to choose other subjects. When asked, the reasons included that the timing of the classes were clashing.

4. Holistic Development:

Another objective of NEP 2020 is to focus on holistic development of the students. This approach is for the overall development of the student which means focusing on other curriculum activities like sports, competitions and encouraging them to participate in various programs provided by the university. Dr. Harisingh Gour University provides vast range of sports and other activities with having a large facility.

When asked: **Besides academics, are other activities encouraged for your overall development in your class?** Out of 27 respondents, only 3 respondents denied that there was any encouraging activity in the class whereas 24 respondents (88.88 percent) think that class has an encouraging environment where their hobbies, sports activities and other curriculum activities are discussed and encouraged.

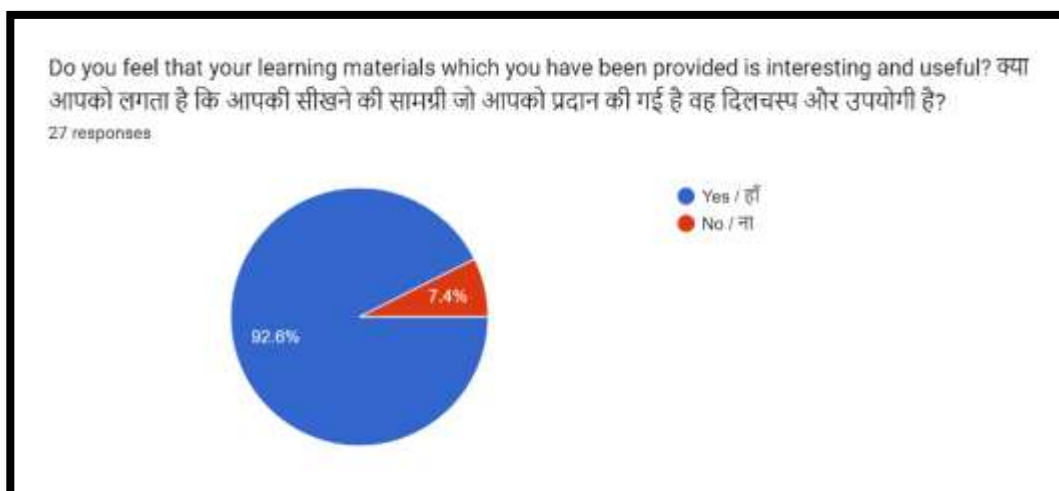
Another question to understand the holistic approach was asked: **Do you feel your teacher has supported your emotional well-being?** Out of 27 respondents, only one respondent has negatively responded whereas others, 26 respondents, admire with the teacher for his emotional caring and support of the new students.

5. Quality Education:

NEP 2020 focuses on the development of quality education. The quality of education depends upon the teaching techniques, teaching methodology and how study materials are provided to the student. This also depends on whether unto the last student is able to grasp the thoughts and ideas of the teacher in simple manner and apply it in his daily life.

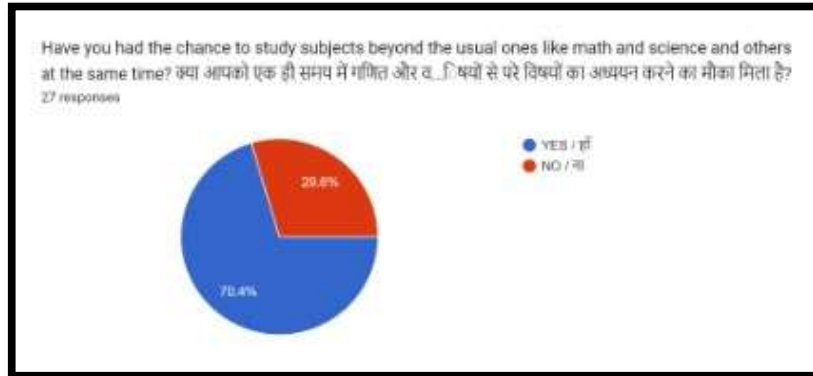
The open-ended question asked to understand this was: **Do you think, if there are any improvements in your class in teaching methods after the NEP 2020?** Out of the 27 respondents, all had compared the teaching with their previous teachers. Two respondents didn't see improvement in teaching whereas one respondent was not able to compare and others, 24 respondents liked the teaching techniques used in the class.

To understand further, another question was asked: **Do you feel that your learning materials which you have been provided are interesting and useful?** (Table 4) The question is related to the learning materials provided. 92.6 percent of the respondents have answered positively, whereas 7.4 percent of the respondents didn't find the provided material as interesting and useful.



6. Multidisciplinary Approach:

NEP 2020 also has its focus on multidisciplinary approach in teaching-learning. As discussed above, the students were asked **if they had a chance to study subjects beyond the usual ones like math and science and others at the same time? And have they observed multidisciplinary approach in your Class?** (table 5) Where 26 respondents in second question appreciated the teacher's multidisciplinary teaching methods. The examples they gave in an open-ended question included the teacher's usage of examples from Economics, Sociology and History to help them understand Political Science.

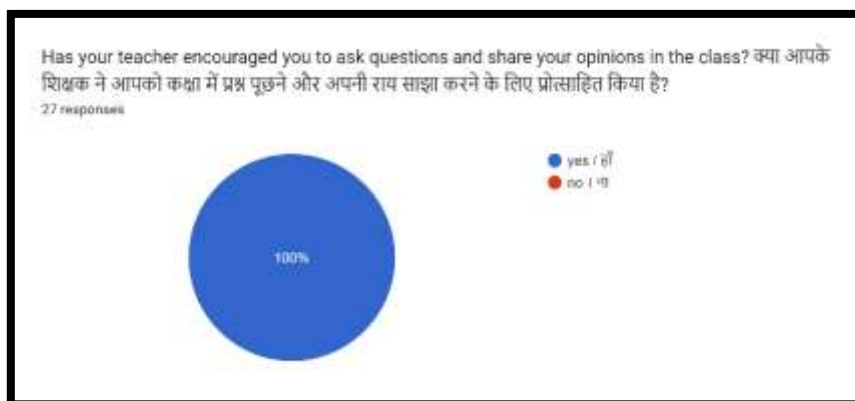


7. Skills and Employability:

As discussed earlier, India has a vast demographic dividend where it is necessary to actualize the potential within this young population. To do so, NEP 2020 has its focus on increasing skills within the students and make them employable. This will need a practical skill. The students were asked two open-ended questions. First, **Have you learned any new practical skills that you think will be helpful in the future?** Where 4 respondents have answered negatively, whereas, other 23 respondents have answer positively. The skills that they think they have learnt, which they have presented in the answer, includes: Managing daily schedules, oratory skill, writing skills, communication skills, public speaking skills. Another set of skills which are important in Political Science includes critical thinking, analytical thinking. Therefore, to understand this an open-ended question was asked: **Do you think NEP 2020 has helped you develop skills like critical thinking, analytical thinking, teamwork and problem-solving?** 7 respondents out of 27 think that they haven't learnt those skills whereas other 20 respondents are positive about those skills.

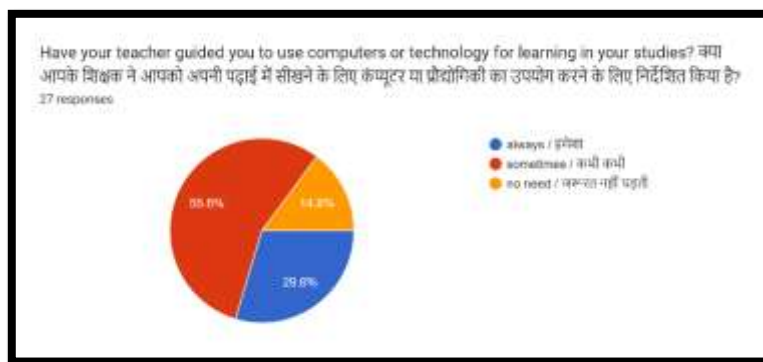
8. Teacher-student Empowerment:

NEP 2020 has also its focus on empowering teacher and students to actively participate in the class while asking questions and to develop greater understanding through this process. To analyse this, the closed question was asked: **Has your teacher encouraged you to ask questions and share your opinions in the class?** Where all the respondents have positively appreciated the class culture where questions were allowed. (Table 6)

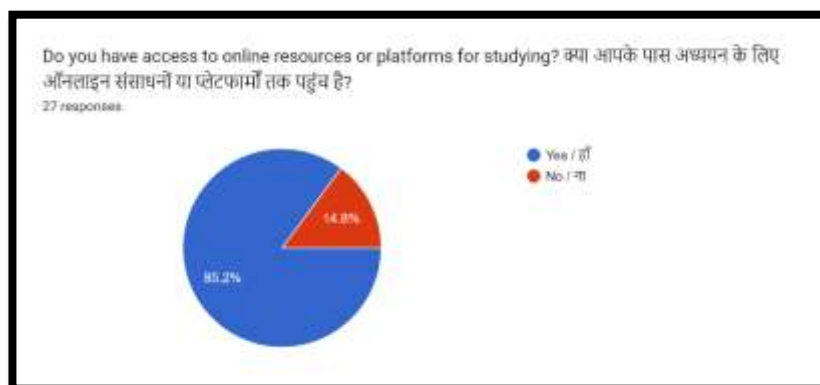


9. Technology Integration:

NEP 2020 has its focus on usage of technology in teaching and learning methods. Schools and Colleges are provided with the ICT-enabled classrooms. The department also has ICT enabled classroom. Along with this, teachers also provide students to use technology in their learning process. The focus is kept on ethical use of technology. To understand this, a closed question was asked: **Have your teacher guided you to use computers or technology for learning in your studies?** When asked, around 29 percent of the respondents have positively affirmed always regarding the teacher's help in usage of computers, whereas around 55 percent have denied it. Around 14 percent of the respondents have affirmed the help as 'sometimes'. (Table 7)



And another question was asked: **Do you have access to online resources or platforms for studying?** Around 15 percent of the respondents has no access to the online resources whereas around 85 percent of the respondents have positively used online resources for studying. (Table 8)



10. Research and Innovation:

NEP 2020 has research and innovation as its major objective. India is growing faster and to keep up with that pace, India needs to become *Atmanirbhar*. This is possible only if we have a research and Innovation culture in our education system. This needs to be started at a young age and therefore, NEP 2020 focuses on research from the beginning of UG programmes. To understand this, an open-ended question was asked: **Have you ever worked on any assignment where you had to research and find information on your own?** The university has developed a system of assignments in 'MID Exam II' where a student compulsorily has to make an assignment of his own. This develops his understanding and research mindset. All the respondents as programme have been made had to make their own assignments. But the topic which they worked on included focus on nationalism, understanding history from nationalist lenses, Understanding the IDEA OF BHARAT etc. Another way to understand the research environment in the class is by knowing if latest researches are discussed in the class or not.

When asked: **Have you noticed any latest researches and studies discussed in your class?** 6 respondents answered negatively, whereas 21 were satisfied with the discussion of history of researches that are done in ancient and medieval history by Indians and also in present times.

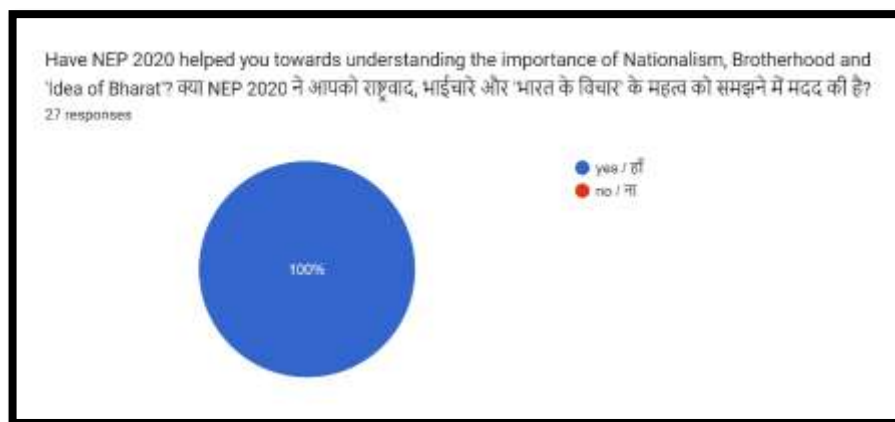
11. Indigenous knowledge:

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 in India recognizes the importance of indigenous knowledge and encourages its study in the education system. Here are a few key points regarding NEP 2020 and indigenous knowledge study. First, Promotion of Indigenous Knowledge. Second, focus on the Cultural Relevance and contextualized to the local environment and traditions. It encourages the study of indigenous knowledge systems, languages, and practices, fostering a sense of pride and identity among students. Third, Community Participation including indigenous communities, to incorporate their knowledge and wisdom into the teaching-learning process. Fourth, Integration across Subjects, including science, social sciences, arts, and languages. This integration helps students develop a holistic understanding of their heritage and encourages interdisciplinary learning. And fifth, Research and Documentation and preservation of indigenous knowledge systems. It helps students and scholars to study and document traditional practices, local wisdom, and indigenous innovations.

To Understand this, an open-ended question was asked: **Have NEP 2020 helped you to understand Indian Culture and about 'Indian-ness' and Indigenous Knowledge?** All 27 respondents were positive about their understanding about Indigenous knowledge which was in the syllabus. The explanation which they gave included that they came to know about the idea of Bharat, it's diverse culture, and other related topics.

Another political Science related question was added in the questionnaire: **Have NEP 2020 helped you towards understanding the importance of Nationalism, Brotherhood and 'Idea of Bharat'?** It is very important to understand that Political Science as a subject of humanities and social science

has certain way of studying which includes various perspectives in studying different sections of history. The important perspective to understand and follow should be based upon the 'Indian Perspective' and putting India first and her development as utmost priority. All the respondents are very affirmative towards NEP 2020 and this introduced new paper and methodology in creating an environment to inculcate nationalism, brotherhood and to understand 'the Idea of Bharat'. (Table 9)



Suggestions from Students:

The students were asked for their suggestions. Some suggested that higher education must be in English as a medium and there is a gap between English speaking and vernacular language students which is increasing. Also, suggestions came included- to give priority towards more on vocational education for humanities students and their employability should be made a priority. Another few suggestions were related to stricter implementation of the policy with teachers' recruitment.

Conclusion:

The empirical study on the objectives of the National Education Policy 2020 provides valuable insights into the potential impact of the policy on the education system. The findings suggest that the NEP 2020 has the potential to bring about transformative changes by promoting holistic development, flexibility, vocational education, and technology integration. However, successful implementation will require collaborative efforts from all stakeholders, ongoing evaluation, and a commitment to addressing challenges along the way. Also, the successful implementation of the NEP 2020 requires careful planning, effective execution, and sufficient resources. Addressing infrastructural gaps, ensuring quality teacher training, and securing adequate funding are crucial aspects that need to be considered to realize the policy's objectives. The NEP 2020 represents a significant step towards reimagining education in India and preparing students for the dynamic and evolving world they will enter and to build a national character.

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