# Teacher Education In India Viewed Through The Lens of National Education Policy – 2020

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# Abstract

The current National Educational Policy was announced, passed by the Union Cabinet and implemented in 2020 after almost a year long debate on its draft, which was made public in 2019. The policy is revolutionary in outlook as it claims to bring great changes and breaks the stagnation by transforming school education system from 10+2 to 5+3+3+4 with the addition of three years of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), integrated teacher education programmes, establishment of PARAKH, NTA, Higher Education Commission and many more new initiatives. School education is the foundation of the robust education system of the country and teacher education is the heart and soul, which prepare and pump teachers into the school education system. This paper reflects the perspectives of in-service teacher educators teaching in various teacher education colleges in Delhi with regard to the provisions and reinvention of teacher education as envisaged by the NEP 2020. A total of 30 teacher educators teaching in Delhi-based teacher education institutions were approached purposively. An open-ended questionnaire was administered using google form followed by an online interview with all the respondents to have cross questions and seeking clarity on their responses to the questionnaire. This paper presents the details of the study and its findings, which is encouraging but challenging and full of apprehensions as well. Key Words: National Education Policy-2020, Teacher Education, Integrated Teacher Education Programme, Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), Elementary level, Secondary level, National Curriculum Framework

# Background

The National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020), passed by the Union Cabinet on 29 July 2020, sets out the vision for India's new education system. The policy aims to transform India's educational scenario. NEP 2020 introduces a number of changes to India's existing education system. It aims to increase state spending on education

from 3 per cent to 6 per cent of GDP. NEP 2020 prioritises many policy changes when it comes to teachers and teacher education. To become a teacher, a four-year Bachelor of Education will be a minimum requirement by 2030. The teacher recruitment process will also be strengthened and made more transparent. The National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) has started working on the new National Curriculum

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Framework for Teacher Education (NCFTE) and the National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST). Similarly, NCERT has initiated the process of developing a new National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCFSE) in the light of NEP 2020. The policy aims to ensure that all learners at all levels of school education are taught by motivated, highly qualified, professionally trained, and well-equipped teachers. With all those fancy points, a lot of people have shown their apprehensions about the implementation of the policy at ground level. In view of the mixed reactions towards the policy, this small research was planned, which focussed to observe the reactions of the respondents towards some chosen areas covered by NEP 2020.

# **Objectives**

This study was conducted to find out the perspectives of in-service teacher educators regarding teacher preparation programme in specific and school education in general with the following objectives:

- 1. To study the perception of teacher educators about NEP 2020.
- 2. To study the teacher preparation programme envisaged by NEP 2020 for ECCE.
- 3. To study the teacher preparation programme envisaged by NEP 2020 for elementary schools.
- 4. To study the teacher preparation programme envisaged by NEP 2020 for secondary level.

# Design of the study

The researcher used the phenomenological research approach for this study. Phenomenology is the study of peoples' perception of the world as opposed to trying to learn what really is in the world (Willis, J. 2007). The focus is thus on understanding from the perspective of the people being studied. The purpose is to identify the phenomenon through how it is perceived by the participants in the situation. It means,

gathering information and perceptions and representing it from the view of the research participants. Phenomenological approach is based on the paradigm of personal knowledge and subjectivity and emphasises the importance of personal outlook and interpretation. It seeks to describe rather than explain and to start from a perspective free from hypothesis or preconceptions. Existing literature (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009; Marshall & Rossman 2010) coincides in that the phenomenological approach addresses the phenomenon profoundly, providing a space of opening for the informants to express their experiences in detail, approaching reality as faithfully as possible. The detailed descriptions or elucidations brought by the participants in the profound-phenomenological approach should be as representative of experienced reality as possible. The main focus of the phenomenological approach is the description of the meanings of phenomena (Rubin and Rubin 2012). This study was conducted as an attempt to know the opinions of the teacher educators regarding NEP 2020. As a whole, the study followed the design of a descriptive survey and is qualitative in nature.

# Population, sample and sampling technique

The population for the present study is the teacher educators of Delhi-based teacher education institutes, teaching students of various courses like B.Ed., M.Ed., B.El.Ed, D.El.Ed., etc.

The researcher used the purposive or deliberate sampling method. Purposeful sampling is widely used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases related to the phenomenon of interest. A purposive sample is a non-probability sample that is selected based on the characteristics of a population and the objective of the study. The sample size for the present study was 30 teacher educators chosen purposively from various teacher education institutes situated in Delhi.

# Data collection and analysis

The researcher administered an open-ended questionnaire to 30 teacher educators/ student teachers across Delhi using Google form. After the collection of responses on the questionnaire, semi-structured interviews were conducted online to verify the responses and to get to know the things that couldn't be shared by the respondents in reply to the questionnaire.

# **Major findings**

# **Objective 1: Perception of teacher** educators about NEP 2020

In response to the first question of the questionnaire regarding the participants' opinion about the NEP 2020, there were varied opinions. They are being presented and discussed below.

#### **Popular responses**

This is a landmark policy in the entire education history.'

'The new education policy promises to be more flexible and student friendly. The focus apparently has shifted to vocation more than rote learning.'

'NEP 2020 is a shift towards progressive education and it aims for universalisation of education from pre-school to secondary level.'

'A comprehensive document in which there is due emphasis on ECCE, foundational literacy and access to education at all levels.'

#### **Interpretation and discussion**

Looking and analysing the above responses qualitatively, it can be interpreted that NEP 2020 is said to be a good policy and considered as a visionary policy by many. Respondents have talked about the aspects of the NEP 2020 that make this policy better than the previous ones. The positive aspects include that this policy focusses more on the vocational part rather than theory. Other than that, it has talked about lessening the burden of the students as subjects and that learning has to be more playful and interactive rather than rote memorisation. This policy has shifted away from rote memorisation to learning by doing. Also, this policy aims at the universalisation of education from preschool to secondary level, which makes it stand out as compared to other policies as universalising the education means that it ensures education for all, independent of the level or background of the learner. This policy provides more flexibility in the education system and it is more student friendly. In a nutshell, this policy is visionary and aims to be more flexible and has components required for the better development of the learners and enhanced education that is more experiential and not rote memorised. NEP 2020 focusses on the holistic development of the learner. These points can be seen reflected by the popular responses received from the participants too.

#### **Popular responses**

'The policy seems to be a move towards privatisation especially in the case of higher education. A lot of schemes are mentioned, it needs to be seen what will be the enablers in implementing them.'

'An ambitious, promoting and a neo liberal policy in education.'

'Education seems to be more linked with the economics of the country.'

# Interpretation and discussion

Looking and analysing the above responses, we can see that some teacher educators are of the opinion that the NEP 2020 aims at the economy hence it is more linked with the economics of the country. If we say in simple words, the NEP 2020 leads to the privatisation of education, especially in the case of higher education. There are many schemes, policies, ideas that are mentioned in the policy as a whole, but it depends upon the implementation of the policy. The respondents have talked about privatisation, it is being said that the NEP 2020 promotes privatisation in lieu of making the education and the education system better, but there is also a concern about the mode of implementation. It shows that people are concerned about the issues of privatisation and economic issues related to education.

# **Popular responses**

'It's a very good policy on paper. Hoping for it to be implemented accordingly.'

'I think the idea is quite nice, however what matters the most is its implication.'

'Good reforms in the teacher education field.'

### Interpretation and discussion

Some of the respondents have thought of this policy as a visionary one, but they have also felt that the real effectiveness of the policy has to be established. This will be possible only after its wider implementation, though it looks very visionary on paper, it is still to be seen how it will bring major reforms in the education system. It is said that it will be revolutionary in the field of teacher education as well. Reforming teacher education would ultimately lead to the betterment of the entire education system. Though, it is still to be seen how it will be implemented and what changes we will see in education through this revolutionary policy. The responses show how people are concerned about the policy implementation.

# Changes in teacher education after NEP 2020

The next question in the questionnaire seeks the changes NEP 2020 will bring in the field of teacher education. The most frequent responses were:

## **Popular responses**

'There will be more focus on teacher education now. Substandard teacher education institutes will no longer exist.'

'If this policy gets implemented rightly, it may bring a huge change in terms of our current outcomes of learning. The government claims to work on teacher education more and have also introduced a variety of courses mandatory for teachers. Teachers may become more aware about the purpose of assessments, including hands-on activities and experiences in their classrooms.'

# Interpretation and discussion

The respondents have considered that the field of teacher education will get better after the implementation of NEP 2020. The policy has focussed on the betterment of the teachers in terms of quality of teachers as they will become more competent in the subject matter. The practical work will increase even at the Ph.D. level. Also, student-teachers will have to be involved in field work. The standard of teachers will get better and the substandard teaching institutes won't have any place in the teacher education process. These moves will be revolutionary in terms of making the teacher education process up to the mark.

#### **Popular responses**

'Focussed teachers will be prepared in a four-year integrated teacher education programme.'

'It will be a combination of theory and practicum subjects. Focus will be more on activity-based learning wherein studentteachers will understand the importance of holistic development and integrated learning. Not only will education in a particular subject matter, but its pedagogy will be given equal importance. Since the course will be of four years, it'll give the student-teacher ample time and opportunity to understand child psychology, which will benefit them while engaging with students.'

'A four-year B.Ed. degree will somehow enhance the quality of teachers.'

'Role of teachers will change because they will be doing four years integrated B.Ed. where they will be given proper training to become a facilitator. Teaching will become the first choice instead of the last option.' Looking and analysing the above responses, we get to know that respondents have talked about the NEP 2020 in terms of its move towards implementing the four-year integrated teacher education programmes. The respondents have talked about this four-year integrated programme many times and considered this as a revolutionary step in the betterment of teacher education in India. This will save time as well as make the teachers more competent and help them to learn better and then implement better as it will be integrated and will have theory as well as practical components. Increasing the time of the course by four years, will be an opportunity for the student-teachers to learn better and also to understand each and every component involved in the teachinglearning process hence making them competent teachers. This will also help the entire education system to have competent teachers as only the people who are genuinely interested in teaching will enrol in the course and get trained and not the people who get enrolled for the sake of getting admission and doing something and those who consider teaching as the last option. The students would not be spending four years in such a hectic course, which won't actually be of use or interest to them. Instead only those who are fond of teaching and who want to serve the nation by imparting education will get enrolled and become teachers. This will prove to be a boon for the children, because teachers are the pillars of the education system. The students get their education the way it is given by the teachers and if the teachers are not competent enough, it makes the children suffer and the entire education system as a result. The implementation of the four year teacher education courses will only attract students who have teaching as their first choice for a career.

# Skill-based education and use of educational technology

Questions related to NEP 2020 have included components like use of educational

technology, learner-centred classroom and collaborative learning. This is not only ensured by the curriculum of teacher education programmes, but also by the recruitment process as well. The policy advocates experiential learning, which makes education interesting and more meaningful. Skills are enhanced only by experiential learning and that's why the components of skill-based education are included in the teacher education programmes. NEP 2020 talks about the increased use of technology in education, be it school education, higher education or teacher education. Use of technology can be increased efficiently only when teachers are capable of using it in a way that helps in enhancing the learning experience in the classroom. ICT has been introduced as a subject in teacher education programmes to deal with the issue and it is already prevalent in the programmes running right now, but implementation of NEP 2020 will only make it better and help us all to be able to stand in this competitive world as a global citizen.

Some pertinent questions have also been raised by the respondents, which are required to be answered or to be taken care of by the policy makers, implementers and our education system. Look at the following response:

#### **Popular responses**

"Along with the other points that have been mentioned, add one more very important aspect which is the use of ICT in education. Using technology in education has great advantages as it assists the teachinglearning process. For that also, a teacher has to be educated in the sense of how to use technology effectively. For this, do we have enough funds? At senior secondary levels, NEP 2020 has recommended that there would be vocational subjects as well but where will we get resources from?'

"We already have programmes that include components like experiential learning, collaborative learning and learnercentred approach. Then what is the need for introducing more courses? Instead, make the existing courses better in terms of resources, curriculum and upgrade them with inclusion of new concepts".

#### Interpretation and discussion

The responses received from the participants regarding the use of educational technology and ICT in education show that they understand that in the present scenario ICT is inseparable from the education system. But the gap between the haves and have nots is very big in our country, so while implementing any technology it is always needed to bridge the gap so that resource crunch may never hamper the urge to get educated. Few respondents are even concerned about the ways of imparting collaborative learning means and methods. They wish the authorities to be very sensitive about the feasibility of these methods for all at the time of implementation.

**Objective 2:** To study the teacher preparation programme envisaged by NEP 2020 for ECCE

The open-ended questionnaire followed by an interview with the respondents fetched the following important and most frequent responses.

#### **Popular responses**

'If the policy is implemented in an effective way, we can see positive results in the coming years.'

'Nursery Education/NTT will play an important role for ECCE.'

'Teachers will be provided proper training and will be treated at par with teachers at other levels unlike anganwadi workers who are mostly working unofficially in poor conditions.'

'A lot of focus is not given to early education but NEP 2020 recognises the primacy of early education.'

'Currently, the quality of the teachers engaged at ECCE levels are not that good because there are programmes like NTT and they are offered by many private institutes. There's nobody to monitor or supervise what they teach, how they get training and they are engaged with small children, which is not good. Small children are like moulding mud, they get moulded however they are shaped by the pot maker. We feel that NEP 2020 will bring about a change in the condition of the teacher education programmes as it has recommended a four -year B.Ed. programme for all the teachers.'

'Teachers who work in anganwadis work in miserable conditions as they don't have funds, they don't get enough salary and in return, they work in the same manner, which is not being serious towards their duties. After the implementation of NEP 2020, this situation will be better hopefully.'

#### Interpretation and discussion

Looking and analysing the responses above, we get to know that the respondents are concerned about teacher education for ECCE level and they believe that this will make the education process better. Earlier, more value was given to the elementary and secondary level teacher training as compared to ECCE. We can see how the *anganwadi* workers work in miserable conditions and the nursery teachers are usually recruited without any experience and proper formal training. They are provided teaching opportunities even if they have done a six months crash course from any institution, they get to work in schools without any experience or field work. What can we expect from teachers like these? Are they really going to do justice with the new learners? The answer is no. In many schools, there are first generation learners in nursery classes and if untrained teachers will teach them, would the children be able to learn up to the level they need and deserve? After the proper implementation of NEP 2020, this problem will be solved as only well qualified and experienced teachers will be recruited even at the ECCE level. This policy understands the value of quality education irrespective of the level, whether it is ECCE, elementary or secondary level. If learners get quality education from the very beginning of the process of learning, it will be very

beneficial for them in the coming years. Some of the respondents also said that the picture will be cleared after the implementation of the policy whether changes can be seen on the field or not, but we must have a positive outlook. Also the emphasis on the upliftment of *anganwadi* and *balvatika* workers is also discussed by some of the respondents, which shows the awareness and sensitivity of the people for every one providing services in the field of education. The broader categorisation of these concerns is as follows:

- (i) Well-qualified teachers: After the proper implementation of NEP 2020, well-qualified and trained teachers will be made part of the system from the very beginning as teachers won't be recruited without a valid certificate or diploma in ECCE. Those who are already in service will also be trained for better output.
- (ii) Child-centred pedagogy: NEP 2020 favours making the entire education system child-centred, be it the classroom atmosphere, language of instruction, pedagogies, etc. A lot of importance is given to the students of ECCE level because this is the foundation of the learner. It has to be sound enough to make learners good enough to withstand future situations and higher levels of education.
- (iii) Need of regular monitoring, supervision and inspection: Some of the respondents advocated to have in place a regular monitoring, supervision and inspection for having better results and to achieve the set learning outcomes at all levels of education. Without constant supervision and inspection, and also objective, unbiased and corruption-free, it seems impossible to reach the desired goal of education for our generations.

**Objective 3:** To study the teacher preparation programme envisaged by NEP 2020 for the elementary level

To achieve this objective the open-ended questionnaire followed by an interview with the respondents were used. These fetched the following important and most frequent responses with regard to teacher preparation for elementary education.

#### **Popular responses**

'It would become more child-centred. Teacher education programmes will allow specialisation in the education of gifted children.'

'More indigenous languages will be promoted to create a sense of nationalistic identity. Mandatory Hindi or mother tongue at this level can create challenges for students who will be required to shift to English as the medium at a higher level'

'Not all the existing teacher education programmes educate teachers to cater to language and cultural diversity. Since it is an aim of NEP, teacher education needs to focus on it.'

'One of the most important and talked about components of NEP2020 is multilingualism and how it glorifies the concept of multilingualism in Indian classrooms. It has recommended to provide education to learners in their home language at least till Class 5 and if possible then up to Class 8 but English is a language, which is universal and required at each stage all over the world and if children do not get exposure to English at their primary levels/ stages of learning then how will they be able to cope up with the situation? Does NEP 2020 have any monitoring committee for that? How does it ensure that children who have learnt in their home language will be able to stand out in the world without knowing English?

'We can see that the scientific attitude of children is being talked about in NEP 2020; that implementation of this policy will make learners more logical and rational than just being a product of rote memorisation. The coming years will be full of logical opportunities and this policy will help children stand out globally. For this, NEP has also focussed on the teacher education component because to make the learners learn, first the teacher has to be educated. NEP 2020 caters to that understanding and talks about adding this component in the curriculum of teacher education programmes.'

#### **Interpretation and discussion**

Analysis of the responses revealed that respondents agree that NEP 2020 focusses more on child-centred education. It focusses on discovery and activity-based learning. Teacher education for elementary level is more dedicated towards experiential learning as suggested by many progressive philosophers and educators. Ideas like child-centred education, discovery learning, activity-based learning and experiential learning, look very promising on paper, but need to be put into practice. It also caters to multilingual teachers and context specific approaches in teaching-learning and training. Much importance is given to the context of the learners in the classroom. Though some respondents are also of the opinion that courses/programmes like B.El.Ed already existed, which had all the recommendations given by the NEP 2020, including the progressive pedagogy and provision of the best training to the teachers in terms of being child-centred and activitybased; they are just going to be upgraded. Hence, there won't be much change after its implementation but some new aspects have definitely been added in the policy, which are going to make education and the education system better.

A very important hunch related to English language teaching is kept by a few respondents that mother tongue education once implemented may hamper the English language proficiency of the students and lessen their future prospects. This concern is to be addressed very sincerely so a conducive environment for all languages can be established.

Analysis of the response regarding the scientific attitude revealed that people are concerned about the inculcation of scientific attitude in the students, which is why they are talking about the concern of NEP 2020 about the importance of developing scientific attitude in children.

**Objective 4:** To study the teacher preparation programme envisaged by NEP 2020 for secondary level

On questions pertaining to the teacher education programme for secondary level as envisaged by NEP 2020, which happens to be the fourth objective of this study, the following popular responses were obtained.

# **Popular responses**

'Teacher education will include grounding in sociology, history, science, psychology, early childhood education, foundational literacy and numeracy, knowledge of India and its values/ethos/art/traditions, and more.'

'There will be multidisciplinary study, greater critical thinking and flexibility in choices of subjects.'

*NEP 2020 will be a life changing policy for* the secondary and senior secondary levels as it makes education more holistic and vocational. The focus of the study is more skill oriented than theoretical. In the current scenario, students have to choose a stream where there are a particular set of subjects and students have no choice but to study them. After the implementation of NEP 2020, students will have a wide variety of subjects where they will have the autonomy to choose the subjects that they want to study and being the subject of interest, students will be able to learn according to their pace and their levels. Also, it will make learners more confident and increase their competence as well because they won't be pressurised or disinterested. For that, teacher education will also have to work accordingly and the curriculum and recruitment process has to be taken care of to implement the recommendations of the policy properly to achieve the objectives of the NEP.'

### **Interpretation and discussion**

The statements of the respondents reflect that this policy is being considered beneficial and fruitful in terms of teacher education for the secondary level. The shift has been there from a fixed and strict pattern of the subjects and what the children want to learn, to more flexible and towards vocational learning. The teacher education part will include subjects like sociology, history, geography, art and culture. They will praise the ethos/morals/ learnings of Indian culture and hence inculcate them into the students as well. For learners to be more confident about choosing a particular subject or stream, it is of utmost importance that the teachers be available as a support system. For the teachers, there has to be a strong teacher education from the best teacher education institutes and programmes in order to provide the best education. The NEP 2020 provides the opportunity to have a multidisciplinary approach. For that appropriate teacher education is important and hence, it is given a lot of attention. The teachers will also be made competent to promote critical, logical and rational thinking among the students. Making FYITEP (Four Year Integrated Teacher Education Programme) compulsory by 2030, will attract only the interested and dedicated people, who have teaching as their first career choice, towards the teaching profession.

According to the responses received during the research, it can be seen that many of the respondents were of the opinion that only talking is not enough. Most of them believed that only implementation of the policy will help us know better about the original condition of the teacher education and teacher education programmes. It is not appropriate to say anything right now without any concrete evidence. Some respondents were of the opinion that we already have existing teacher education programmes and they can be enhanced instead of introducing new programmes or policies.

# Conclusion

Most of the teacher educators believe that NEP 2020 is a revolutionary policy and it will be a step towards changing the whole scenario of education. The concerns, which almost all the stakeholders have shown about the policy is regarding its implementation. No doubt the policy document is appreciated, but all are worried about the acceptance in the actual system. The very fact that the policy involves a child-centred approach towards education is a welcome point. It has also mentioned about the universalisation of education and the more the access to the education increases, the more will be the success rate. The research got varied responses from the respondents. While most of them believed that it is a visionary and revolutionary policy, few were of the opinion that it will deteriorate the quality of education and will lead to privatisation of education. This policy will make education costlier and hence would lead to the fact that education can only be accessed by the elite. It is contradictory that on one hand, the policy is talking about the universalisation of education and on the other hand, it talks about the privatisation of education. Although privatisation will be more prominent in higher education, this fact is arguable. In a nutshell, we will find that there are many hopes attached with this policy and its implementation. As far as the general views about teacher education are concerned, most of the teacher educators are positive about the approach that the NEP 2020 is bringing forward and they feel that it will cater to the issue of quality of teacher education in the coming years. If the policy gets implemented properly then it will bring huge changes in the process of teacher education. The policy has talked about raising the standard of the teacher eligibility tests in terms of both content and pedagogy and now substandard institutes will no longer exist. Also, the qualifications required to become a teacher have been set and the future teachers have to be in possession of those degrees or certificates to meet the essential requirements. The recruitment process is also going to be polished, and interview and classroom demonstration will be a compulsory part of the recruitment process, which will help in getting the best brains and most competent teachers in the system. The curriculum will also be revised and the provision of a four -year integrated B.Ed. programme has been recommended, implemented which if properly will provide the best teachers who can make

teaching-learning a great experience for the other stakeholders of education. Overall the responses reflected lots of hope in terms of proper and successful implementation of the policy. Notably almost everyone had words of praise for the policy along with a hope for its proper implementation to bring reformative changes in our education system.

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