



# Policy in Practice: Exploring Principal Leadership and Student Engagement in NEP 2020 Implementation

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## ARTICLE INFO ABSTRACT

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 envisions a transformative approach to education in India, emphasizing inclusivity, equity, and holistic development. This study investigates the implementation of NEP 2020 in the state of Nagaland, focusing on the experiences of tribal students and the perspectives of school principals. Employing a mixed-methods approach, data were collected from 1,642 students and 46 principals across six districts, using questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The findings reveal significant disparities in access to resources, vocational training, and digital literacy, particularly between private and government schools. While students demonstrated active participation in co-curricular activities, awareness of NEP 2020 and integration of skill-based education remain limited. Principals reported challenges related to resource management, teacher accountability, and policy alignment. The COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated these issues, exposing gaps in infrastructure and technological readiness. This study underscores the critical need for targeted interventions, including capacity building for educators, enhanced infrastructural support, and community engagement. Strategies such as integrating ICT tools, strengthening vocational education, and addressing equity gaps are essential to bridge the disconnect between policy and practice. By aligning NEP 2020's transformative vision with ground-level realities, the education system can evolve to better meet the diverse needs of students and foster a future-ready, equitable learning environment.

**Key words:** National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, inclusive education, equity, tribal students, school principals, holistic development, vocational training, digital literacy, resource disparities, policy implementation, education reform, skill-based education.

## Introduction

Education serves as the backbone of societal growth, shaping individual potential and fostering collective progress. In this dynamic landscape, the implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 marks a significant milestone in India's journey towards an inclusive, equitable, and quality-driven education system (MoE, 2020). NEP 2020 envisions a paradigm shift from traditional rote-based learning to a holistic, multidisciplinary approach that integrates experiential learning, critical thinking, and skill development (Wangchuk, 2023). It emphasizes transforming the educational framework to align with the demands of the 21st century, focusing on fostering innovation, creativity, and lifelong learning.

Education in tribal and rural settings often reflects a complex interplay of socio-economic, cultural, and infrastructural factors. For students, NEP-2020 aims to provide a learner-centric environment that integrates experiential learning, vocational training, and digital literacy (Suthar & Mehta, 2021). However, disparities in access to technology, quality teaching practices, and extracurricular opportunities often limit the realization of these goals (Thakur & Pathania, 2022). Understanding students' experiences under NEP-2020 provides critical insights into the systemic barriers affecting their academic performance, skill acquisition, and holistic

development. This study examines how these factors intersect with the educational outcomes envisaged by the policy, focusing on equity and inclusion.

Students and principals, as the primary stakeholders in education, play pivotal roles in translating the policy's vision into actionable outcomes. Students represent the direct beneficiaries of NEP 2020, as it aims to nurture their potential by promoting access to equitable resources, personalized learning approaches, and technological advancements (Hattie, 2009; OECD, 2021). On the other hand, principals act as institutional leaders, bridging policy directives with ground-level implementation. Their leadership is instrumental in adapting to the policy's transformative goals, managing resources, and addressing systemic challenges (Leithwood et al., 2020; Day et al., 2016).

The literature underscores the importance of adopting student-cantered pedagogies and fostering teacher and principal capacity to improve educational outcomes. Studies reveal that innovative teaching methods, co-curricular activities, and infrastructural enhancements contribute significantly to academic achievement and holistic growth (Fullan, 2020; ASER, 2022). However, persistent challenges such as resource disparities between urban and rural schools, insufficient teacher training, and limited community engagement hinder the realization of NEP 2020's objectives (MoE, 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic further complicated the education landscape, exposing vulnerabilities in online and blended learning systems (Dhawan, 2020). Students reported struggles with engagement, infrastructure, and equitable access, while principals highlighted logistical and financial constraints in adapting to technological integration. Despite these challenges, the pandemic also accelerated the adoption of digital tools, paving the way for innovative solutions in education delivery.

Bridging the gap between policy and practice is a recurring challenge in educational reforms. NEP-2020 envisions a cohesive system where all stakeholders, including policymakers, educators, and communities, work collaboratively to implement innovative teaching and learning strategies. The study highlights the importance of contextualizing policy directives, fostering local ownership, and integrating robust monitoring mechanisms to ensure effective outcomes (Fullan, 2020; Dhawan, 2020). In regions like Nagaland, this requires targeted interventions that address infrastructural constraints, promote skill-based education, and ensure inclusivity for marginalized communities.

This research paper seeks to explore the experiences and perspectives of students and principals in implementing NEP 2020, focusing on three core objectives:

1. To analyse student experiences and educational outcomes in the context of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, with a focus on its impact on holistic development, skill enhancement, and equitable access to quality education.

2. To examine principals' perspectives and leadership challenges in implementing NEP 2020, emphasizing their roles in navigating systemic changes, resource management, and fostering an inclusive and effective learning environment.

3. To identify strategies for bridging the gap between policy and practice under NEP 2020, aiming to ensure its transformative vision is effectively translated into actionable outcomes across diverse educational settings.

#### Methodology

#### **Research design:**

The study employed a descriptive research design incorporating both qualitative and quantitative methods to comprehensively examine the research objectives. Data were collected and analysed through a mixed-methods approach to provide a holistic understanding of the student experiences and principal perspectives under the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. Primary data were gathered using questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, while secondary data were sourced from academic journals, government reports, official documents, and other relevant publications.

#### **Population:**

The target population comprised tribal students from primary to senior secondary schools, as well as school principals, across the state of Nagaland, India. The research focused on understanding the perspectives of these key stakeholders in the context of the implementation of NEP 2020.

#### **Sample and sampling technique:**

A multi-stage sampling approach was employed to ensure a representative sample:

**District Selection:** Six districts—Kohima, Chumoukedima, Dimapur, Mokokchung, Tuensang, and Peren—were purposefully selected based on their literacy rates and developmental status.

**School Selection:** Stratified random sampling was utilized to select sample schools within these districts.

**Participants:** A total of 1,688 participants were included in the study, comprising 1,642 students and 46 school principals. This ensured diverse and representative input from the selected districts.

#### **Tools for Data Collection**

The following tools, developed by the researcher, were employed to gather data:

**Student Questionnaire:** A comprehensive set of 59 items, including both open-ended and close-ended questions, designed to capture students' experiences, challenges, and educational outcomes under NEP 2020.

Semi-Structured Interview for Principals: A detailed interview tool consisting of 81 items to explore principals' perspectives on leadership challenges, policy implementation, and strategies for bridging the gap between policy and practice.

### Analysis of Principals' Responses

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has set an ambitious vision for transforming the Indian education system, with school principals playing a pivotal role as the policy's primary implementers and leaders. The analysis of principals' responses provides a deep insight into the challenges, opportunities, and innovative practices undertaken by schools in Nagaland. It also reflects their readiness to adopt the systemic changes mandated by NEP 2020. This section elaborates on their perspectives, leadership challenges, and efforts to bridge policy and practice effectively.

### Orientation on NEP 2020

Only **21.74% of the principals reported receiving orientation on NEP 2020**, while **6.52% stated they had not**, and **71.74% did not respond**. This low participation in orientation programs is concerning, as effective leadership in implementing NEP 2020 depends on understanding its principles and guidelines. Training sessions, workshops, and seminars for principals are essential to enhance awareness and build capacity for implementing the reforms.

### Adoption of Multidisciplinary Approaches

About **28.26% of schools** had adopted a multidisciplinary approach in teaching and learning, while **30.43% were yet to introduce it**, and **41.30% of principals did not respond**. Schools that adopted multidisciplinary approaches reported activities such as integrating Vidya Panch in Class I, replacing untrained teachers with trained professionals, organizing skill development programs, and encouraging critical thinking among students.

This finding highlights the uneven implementation of NEP 2020's recommendations, especially in rural and resource-constrained areas. Schools that have embraced this approach demonstrated significant improvements in fostering creativity, collaboration, and critical thinking among students.

### Experiential Learning Opportunities

Experiential learning was provided by **39.13% of the schools**, while **13.04% lacked such provisions**, and **47.82% of principals did not respond**. Experiential learning aligns with NEP 2020's emphasis on practical and hands-on education. Examples included life-skill activities, real-life problem-solving tasks, and interactive classroom methodologies.

However, the limited adoption of experiential learning points to challenges such as a lack of teacher training, insufficient resources, and infrastructural constraints.

### In-Service Teacher Training

The majority of principals expressed the need to encourage untrained teachers to participate in in-service training programs aligned with NEP 2020. Some government schools emphasized that teacher training would proceed as per state directives. Barriers to teacher training included financial constraints, logistical issues during inter-district training, and shortages of teaching staff.

### Infrastructure and Resource Development

Principals reported significant progress in upgrading school infrastructure. Initiatives included:

1. Constructing new buildings and expanding existing facilities.
2. Establishing smart classrooms, libraries, and laboratories.
3. Incorporating ICT tools into the curriculum.
4. Introducing vocational and skill-based courses.
5. Organizing field trips and exposure visits for students.

However, many principals identified financial limitations, inadequate teacher-student ratios, and limited digital infrastructure as major roadblocks.

### Guidance and Counselling Facilities

Around **34.78% of schools** had guidance and counselling facilities, while **15.22% lacked such services**, and **50% did not respond**. Counselling services are integral to fostering students' emotional and academic well-being, especially during transitional periods under NEP 2020.

Schools that implemented guidance programs emphasized career counselling, stress management workshops, and mental health awareness campaigns.

### Skill Development and Vocational Training

Approximately **52.17% of schools** introduced skill development programs, while **6.52% had not**, and **41.30% did not respond**. Skill-building initiatives included:

- Robotics, Taekwondo, carpentry, and knitting classes.
- Vocational courses like retail, electronics, and hardware.
- Real-life skill-building activities such as embroidery, basket-making, and woodcraft.

These programs reflect NEP 2020's focus on integrating vocational education into mainstream curricula, preparing students for employability and entrepreneurship.

### Implementation of ECCE in Mainstream Education

About **23.91% of schools** reported readiness to integrate Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) into the mainstream, while **10.87% were not prepared**, and **65.22% of principals did not respond**. Preparations included training teachers at SCERT, creating child-friendly environments, and introducing play-based teaching methodologies.

Principals emphasized the importance of including ECCE as a foundation for holistic child development, aligning with NEP 2020's structure.

### Use of Technology in Education

NEP 2020 underscores the role of technology in transforming education. The analysis revealed:

1. Limited adoption of online and blended learning approaches, with many schools unprepared for such modes.
2. Only **39.13% of schools** provided internet access, primarily for staff, with minimal access for students.
3. Challenges included financial constraints, inadequate digital infrastructure, and a lack of trained ICT teachers.

Principals expressed concerns about the financial burden of adopting technology and the risk of its misuse by students. However, they recognized its potential to enhance teaching-learning processes.

### Evaluation and Learning During COVID-19

The pandemic underscored the importance of adapting to unforeseen challenges. Principals reported:

- Using mobile apps, WhatsApp, and Zoom for remote teaching.
- Conducting online assessments and minimizing syllabus coverage to accommodate learning gaps.

However, challenges such as poor network connectivity, limited access to devices, and students' lack of seriousness in online classes hindered learning outcomes. The experience highlighted the need for resilient systems capable of responding to emergencies.

### Challenges and Recommendations for NEP 2020 Implementation

Principals identified several challenges, including:

1. Financial constraints, particularly in underdeveloped areas.
2. Shortages of trained teachers and infrastructure.
3. Linguistic diversity in Nagaland, complicating mother-tongue-based education.
4. Limited awareness and orientation on NEP 2020 among stakeholders.

To address these challenges, principals suggested:

- Increased government funding for infrastructure and teacher training.
- Awareness campaigns to educate communities about NEP 2020.
- Gradual, phased implementation to ensure smooth transitions.
- Collaboration between stakeholders, including NGOs, government agencies, and private schools.

The analysis of principals' responses provides a nuanced understanding of the current state of NEP 2020 implementation in Nagaland. While many schools are making commendable efforts to align with the policy's vision, significant gaps remain in awareness, infrastructure, and teacher training. Addressing these challenges requires collaborative efforts from policymakers, educators, and communities to ensure equitable access to quality education and a successful transition to NEP 2020's transformative framework. Through sustained support and innovative strategies, schools in Nagaland can achieve the holistic and inclusive educational goals envisioned by the policy.

### Analysis of Student Responses

Students are the focal point of any educational system, and their experiences provide critical insights into the effectiveness of policies, infrastructure, and pedagogical practices. This analysis delves into the perspectives of students on a wide array of factors, including academic achievements, infrastructure, skill development, extracurricular activities, and their interaction with the school environment. It also explores the impact of the **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020**, particularly on the development of 21st-century skills, engagement with technology, and holistic growth.

The analysis offers a comprehensive understanding of student experiences, highlights key trends, identifies challenges, and proposes actionable solutions for improving educational outcomes.



### Demographic Overview

The survey of student responses reveals a balanced gender representation, with **45% male** and **55% female** respondents. Such distribution underscores the growing inclusivity of education. However, disparities in access to opportunities, as seen in extracurricular and vocational participation, need to be addressed to ensure equity.

Additionally, **78% of respondents attended private schools**, while **22% studied in government schools**. This reflects a preference for private education, often perceived as offering better infrastructure and resources. However, it also points to potential challenges in the public education system that warrant attention.

### Understanding of NEP 2020 and Orientation

A significant **59% of students** lacked awareness about NEP 2020, with only **38%** having some understanding of the policy. Additionally, just **16%** of students reported receiving orientation on NEP 2020, while **50%** were unaware if any orientation had occurred. These findings highlight a critical gap in disseminating policy objectives and implications among students.

To address this, schools should prioritize structured orientation programs, including seminars, workshops, and discussions about NEP 2020. Integrating NEP-related content into the curriculum and extracurricular activities can help bridge the knowledge gap and empower students to engage with the policy.

### Skill Development Opportunities

Skill development is a cornerstone of NEP 2020, yet only **38%** of students reported the presence of skill-based courses in their schools. While **56%** stated that they had been trained in some skills, **57%** revealed that no formal skill-based programs were running in their institutions.

This indicates an uneven implementation of skill development initiatives. Schools must introduce structured skill-based courses aligned with NEP 2020, such as digital literacy, entrepreneurship, and vocational training. Moreover, **35%** of students acknowledged the presence of specialized teachers for skill-based education, but an equal percentage were either unsure or confirmed their absence, signaling a need for dedicated teacher training programs.

### Vocational Education

Vocational education remains underdeveloped, with only **24%** of students reporting the availability of vocational courses in their schools. Additionally, **53%** of students were unaware of any such programs. Among those who confirmed vocational courses, activities included arts and crafts, IT, retail, tailoring, and self-defense.

Expanding vocational education offerings and raising awareness among students about available programs is essential. Schools should also ensure the inclusion of vocational subjects in the syllabus, as **59%** of students stated these were absent from their curriculum.

### Creative and Linguistic Development

Creative outlets like writing poems and stories were pursued by **32% of students**, while **67% expressed interest in arts and crafts**. These activities are vital for fostering creativity and emotional well-being. Schools must encourage such pursuits through structured programs and competitions.

Language learning varied, with **49% of students learning two languages** and **21% learning three or more languages**. NEP 2020's emphasis on multilingualism is reflected here, but schools should also focus on regional and indigenous languages to preserve cultural heritage.

### Teaching Aids and Technology Usage

Modern teaching methods were reported by **39% of students**, while **37% stated that traditional methods predominated**. Tools like social media, smart boards, and ICT resources were used sporadically but lacked consistent implementation. Only **37% of students had access to e-resources** like e-books or digital libraries, which are crucial for 21st-century education.

The presence of computer labs in **83% of schools** is a positive indicator, but the availability of only 1–20 computers in most labs limits their utility for larger classes. Schools must invest in upgrading ICT infrastructure and training teachers in digital pedagogies.

### Use of Innovative Teaching Methods

Despite the growing emphasis on technology in education, only **39%** of students reported that their teachers used modern teaching tools such as social media or 3D printing. Additionally, **53%** of students were unaware of 3D printing technology.

To enhance teaching effectiveness, schools must invest in teacher training and technological infrastructure. Incorporating audio-visual aids, interactive sessions, and hands-on activities can significantly improve student engagement and learning outcomes.

### Co-Curricular and Extracurricular Activities

Participation in co-curricular activities was found to be uneven, with **50%** of students reporting designated periods for such activities, while **42%** said none were allotted. Furthermore, **59%** of students stated their school organized competitions, and **73%** confirmed opportunities to participate in external events. However, participation in national-level programs remained low at **12%**, and only **2%** participated in international events.

To foster holistic development, schools should ensure regular co-curricular activities and encourage broader participation in state, national, and international competitions. Greater emphasis on arts, sports, and cultural events can create well-rounded students equipped with 21st-century skills.

### Sports and Physical Activities

Sports facilities were available in **76% of schools**, with **58% having dedicated sports teachers**. However, resource adequacy remained a concern, as only **37% of students found resources sufficient**, and **34% felt they were available only to some extent**.

Physical education must be prioritized as part of holistic learning, with emphasis on upgrading facilities and encouraging participation in sports at all levels.

### Teacher Regularity and Support

Teacher regularity was reported positively by **66%** of students, while **31%** mentioned that only some teachers were regular. Regarding substitutes, **39%** of students stated that teachers arranged substitutes when absent, but **24%** said no substitutes were provided.

Improving teacher accountability and ensuring the availability of substitutes can prevent disruptions in learning. Additionally, fostering stronger teacher-student relationships through interactive and participative teaching methods can enhance the overall educational experience.

### Access to Technology and Internet

Access to technology and internet facilities in schools was limited, with only **40%** of students reporting internet availability. Even fewer students (**20%**) had direct access to these facilities. Similarly, while **83%** of students reported the presence of computer labs, the number of functional computers varied, with many labs having fewer than 20 computers.

Expanding digital infrastructure and ensuring equitable access to technology are crucial for preparing students for the digital era. Integrating ICT tools into the curriculum and providing regular training can enhance digital literacy and bridge the technological divide.

### Library and Learning Resources

Libraries play a vital role in supporting education, yet only **63%** of students reported having access to library facilities. Among these, **48%** rated the condition of the library as good, but **30%** found it average, and **5%** described it as below average.

Improving library infrastructure and expanding resources can encourage reading habits and independent learning. Ensuring the availability of diverse books and digital learning materials is essential for meeting the varied needs of students.

### Challenges in Learning

Key challenges reported by students included poor infrastructure (**24%**), lack of teaching-learning materials (**20%**), and inadequate laboratory facilities (**18%**). Other significant barriers included family problems, vast syllabi, and a lack of engaging teaching methods.

Addressing these challenges requires a holistic approach, including infrastructure development, teacher training, and curriculum reforms. Schools must also focus on providing emotional and academic support to students to help them overcome external and internal barriers.

### Hostel Facilities

Only **30%** of students reported the availability of hostel facilities for girls, and **43%** for boys, highlighting a gender gap in infrastructure development. Establishing secure and well-equipped hostels can enhance educational access for students from remote or underserved areas.

### Inclusive Education for Differently-Abled Students

From the data, **18%** of students confirmed the presence of resource rooms for children with special needs, while **17%** reported the availability of specialized teachers. However, **55%** of students said there were no resource rooms, and **50%** noted the absence of trained teachers.

Inclusive education is a cornerstone of NEP 2020. Schools must prioritize setting up resource rooms and training teachers in special education practices to accommodate the diverse needs of students.

### Recommendations for Improvement according to students

Based on the findings, the following recommendations can enhance student learning and overall development:

- 1. Awareness Campaigns:** Increase awareness about NEP 2020 through structured programs and integrate its objectives into the curriculum.
- 2. Skill Development:** Expand vocational and skill-based education, ensuring the availability of specialized teachers and necessary resources.
- 3. Technological Integration:** Improve access to technology by providing internet facilities, digital learning tools, and well-equipped computer labs.
- 4. Co-Curricular Activities:** Ensure regular participation in co-curricular and extracurricular activities at all levels, including national and international competitions.
- 5. Nutrition and Health:** Strengthen the mid-day meal program to address nutritional needs and enhance student engagement.
- 6. Infrastructure Development:** Address gaps in infrastructure, including libraries, laboratories, and classrooms, to create a conducive learning environment.
- 7. Teacher Training:** Enhance teacher effectiveness through regular training programs focused on innovative teaching methods and student engagement.
- 8. Enhanced Facilities:** Modernized libraries, well-equipped laboratories, and smart classrooms.
- 9. Student Support:** Appointment of counselors and establishment of feedback mechanisms for continuous improvement.

The analysis of student responses highlights the progress made in areas like access to technology, extracurricular participation, and skill development. However, it also reveals persistent challenges, such as inequities in resource distribution, gaps in policy implementation, and infrastructural deficiencies. Addressing these issues requires a concerted effort from policymakers, educators, and communities to create an inclusive, equitable, and holistic education system that aligns with NEP 2020's vision. By prioritizing student well-being, academic excellence, and skill-building, the education system can prepare students for the demands of a rapidly evolving world.

### Discussion

The findings from the analyses of student and principal data, combined with insights from the literature, provide a nuanced understanding of the current state of education. These insights highlight systemic challenges, opportunities for improvement, and actionable strategies for fostering an equitable and effective learning environment.

#### Student Experiences and Educational Outcomes

The analysis of student data reveals critical disparities in access to resources, opportunities, and overall learning experiences. Private school students, constituting 78% of the sample, reported better access to extracurricular activities, skill-based courses, and innovative teaching aids compared to their counterparts in government schools. These findings are consistent with the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER, 2022), which emphasizes that resource inequalities exacerbate educational disparities, particularly in rural and government school settings.

A particularly alarming trend is the lack of awareness about the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 among students, with only 38% reporting familiarity with its provisions. The NEP 2020 aims to revolutionize education by emphasizing skill development, digital literacy, and 21st-century competencies (Government of India, 2020). However, the limited awareness underscores a gap between policy formulation and its communication to key stakeholders, such as students and teachers. Furthermore, only 16% of students reported receiving orientation on the NEP, highlighting missed opportunities for its effective implementation. The data also reveals limited integration of modern teaching methods and digital tools. For instance, 57% of students lacked access to e-resources, and 64% reported an absence of smart boards in their classrooms. These gaps hinder students from developing digital literacy, which is increasingly essential in today's technology-driven world (Fullan, 2020). Despite these challenges, the data shows encouraging trends in student participation in co-curricular activities, with 73% reporting opportunities to engage in competitions outside school. This aligns with Hattie's (2009) emphasis on extracurricular involvement as a vital component of holistic development.

Vocational education and skill-based courses, highlighted as a priority by the NEP 2020, were found to be present in only 38% of schools. This limited availability restricts students' ability to acquire practical, employable skills. Moreover, the lack of specialized teachers for skill-based education—reported by 30% of students—further impedes the effectiveness of such programs. These findings reflect the need for targeted interventions to integrate vocational training into the curriculum and enhance teacher training.

#### Principal Perspectives and Leadership Challenges

The analysis of principal data highlights significant challenges in school leadership, resource management, and policy implementation. Principals identified resource constraints as a primary barrier to adopting

innovative practices. Insufficient funding for infrastructure, digital tools, and teaching-learning aids was a recurring theme. These challenges align with Day et al. (2016), who stress the pivotal role of leadership in optimizing resources and driving policy execution.

Teacher accountability emerged as another pressing issue. Irregular teacher attendance and the lack of professional development programs were common concerns. This finding underscores the need for comprehensive teacher training initiatives, to enhance pedagogical skills and ensure accountability (Rana et al., 2020). Furthermore, principals reported difficulties in aligning their schools with the goals of the NEP 2020, citing a lack of clear guidelines and resources to support its implementation.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated these challenges, as both students and principals reported difficulties transitioning to and from online learning. Students struggled with engagement and concentration, while principals faced logistical and infrastructural hurdles in facilitating online education. These challenges mirror global findings on the pandemic's impact on education, as highlighted by Dhawan (2020).

### **Bridging the Gap Between Policy and Practice**

The juxtaposition of student and principal data underscores a disconnect between educational policies and their implementation at the ground level. While the NEP 2020 sets ambitious goals for skill development and digital integration, the lack of awareness and resources hampers its realization. Addressing this gap requires a coordinated effort to ensure that stakeholders, including students, teachers, and principals, are adequately informed and equipped to align with policy objectives.

Innovative practices, such as the integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), can play a transformative role in enhancing education. Digital tools, including e-resources and smart boards, can bridge learning gaps and foster engagement. However, equitable access to these tools is essential to avoid exacerbating existing disparities (OECD, 2021). Schools in rural and underprivileged areas must receive targeted support to ensure that all students benefit from technological advancements.

The findings highlight a significant gap between the policy's ambitious goals and the ground realities of implementation. Bridging this gap requires a multipronged approach:

- 1. Strengthening Infrastructure:** Schools, especially in rural and under-resourced areas, require enhanced facilities to support holistic education.
- 2. Capacity Building:** Regular and context-specific training programs for teachers and administrators are essential to align their practices with NEP 2020 objectives.
- 3. Inclusive Practices:** Tailored interventions to support children with special needs and address socioeconomic disparities must be prioritized.
- 4. Community Engagement:** Sensitizing parents, communities, and other stakeholders about the benefits and objectives of NEP 2020 is critical for fostering collective ownership.
- 5. Leveraging Technology:** Democratizing access to digital tools and resources can help bridge the divide between urban and rural education systems while enhancing teaching and learning outcomes.

### **Implications for Future Interventions**

The findings highlight several actionable strategies for improving educational outcomes:

- 1. Enhancing Teacher Training:** Comprehensive professional development programs should focus on digital literacy, pedagogical innovation, and accountability. These programs can empower teachers to effectively implement modern teaching practices and align with the goals of the NEP 2020 (Leithwood et al., 2020).
- 2. Promoting Skill-Based Education:** Schools must prioritize the integration of vocational courses and employability skills into the curriculum. Appointing specialized teachers and providing resources for skill-based training can significantly enhance student readiness for the workforce.
- 3. Improving Infrastructure:** Addressing infrastructural gaps, such as inadequate classrooms, libraries, and laboratories, is essential for creating a conducive learning environment. Investment in these areas can directly impact student engagement and academic outcomes (ASER, 2022).
- 4. Leveraging Technology:** Schools should adopt ICT tools to modernize teaching methods and enhance student learning. Equipping classrooms with smart boards and providing access to e-resources can foster digital literacy and engagement.
- 5. Strengthening Policy Awareness:** Organizing workshops and orientation programs on the NEP 2020 can ensure that students, teachers, and principals are well-informed about its objectives and implementation strategies. This can facilitate a shared vision for education reform.
- 6. Addressing Equity Gaps:** Policymakers must focus on reducing disparities between government and private schools by allocating resources equitably and implementing targeted interventions in underprivileged regions.

### **7. Conclusion:**

- 8.** The success of NEP 2020 lies in adopting a phased, inclusive, and collaborative implementation strategy. Policymakers and educational leaders must work hand-in-hand to ensure that resources are equitably distributed, innovative teaching methodologies are embraced, and schools are equipped to cater to the



diverse needs of students. Encouraging schools to foster creativity, critical thinking, and real-world problem-solving skills will prepare students for the complexities of the modern world.

9. Furthermore, systemic reforms that address existing gaps—such as infrastructure deficiencies, inequitable access to resources, and insufficient teacher training—must be prioritized. By aligning policy goals with practical realities, the education system can evolve into a transformative force, empowering students with the knowledge, skills, and values needed for a sustainable and equitable future.

10. In conclusion, NEP 2020 presents an unprecedented opportunity to redefine the Indian education system. The collective effort of all stakeholders—students, teachers, principals, policymakers, and the community—is essential to overcome the challenges and realize the policy's transformative vision. With sustained commitment, innovation, and collaboration, the aspirations of NEP 2020 can pave the way for a more inclusive, holistic, and future-ready education system.

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