

'TEACHERS' - THE KEY ROLE PLAYERS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY-2020

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ABSTRACT:

In the year 2020, India witnessed the new 'National Education Policy' (NEP) that replaced the one formulated in 1986 and last modified in 1992. NEP-2020 determines to bring transformational reforms to the school and higher education systems in the country, with the aim of making "India a global knowledge superpower."

For education to be powerful and the teachers need to be empowered first, the thought 'Acharya Devo Bhava', helped to conduct thoughtful discussions to enhance the role of the teacher and embed the 'vision of the teacher' as per the 21st century. The teachers are envisioned to educate and empower the country that is involved in the new curriculum to develop all aspects and capabilities of learners and make education more well-rounded, useful, and fulfilling for the learner.

While implementing the NEP at the ground level, it becomes imperative for the teaching fraternity to have strong coordination, cooperation, and the motivation to transform students' lives through skill and character building. Accordingly, NEP emphasises the teachers' contribution, their sacrifice, and their efforts to uphold the dignity, respect, and honour of this profession. Thus, teachers' role is to continuously need to re-skill and up-skill themselves, and NEP-2020 is formulated keeping this in mind.

Keywords: *NEP, transformational reforms, teachers, re-skill, up-skill.*

TRADITIONAL PEDAGOGIC APPROACHES AND NEP-2020:

The uniqueness of the 'Ancient Indian Education System' (AIES) rests upon the uniqueness of the traditional teaching and learning process based on the 'Gurukul System'. The AIES had a rich treasure trove of teaching methods and approaches like astrology, astronomy, archery, cooking, fencing, politics, theology, and therapeutics with the study of the Vedas and Upanishads. In ancient Indian traditions, teachers or ashram gurus used a variety of pedagogical techniques. When the students or learners come to the school or college, they don't know the functioning of the education institute or the behaviour of the teachers. It is the Vedas, Upanishads, and Epics that provide information about the ideal image of a teacher, his or her characteristics, and various teaching strategies with multidimensional techniques, which are known as 'Vidyas' or 'Chakras'.

Child-centred pedagogic approaches are not newly born, and most of the pedagogic approaches are based on teacher-pupil relationships. The Gurukul system taught students life skills through rigorous training and tough examinations. We know that every pupil cannot be *Arjuna*, but if we are successful in creating a single *Dronacharya*, then there will be no shortage of Arjuns (Bhupendra Singh & Patanjali Mishra, 2018). 'Swami Vivekananda' once said, "Education is not the amount of information that is put into your brain and run riot there, undigested all your life. We must have life-building, man-making, character-making, and the assimilation of ideas. We want education by which character is formed, strength of mind is increased, the intellect is expanded, and by which one can stand on one's own feet." He also stated, 'If education and knowledge are identical with authentic information, the libraries are the greatest sages of the world, and encyclopaedias are the greatest Rishis' (Thakur, D. & Thakur, D., 1996).

In the Ashrama system, there was no written curriculum for the future creation of the disciples. But 'Teachers' known as 'Guru', 'Swami', 'Acharya', etc. used new strategies to teach students to prepare for daily life. The ancient scriptures opine that there was a setup for practice-based teaching and learning. For instance, the strategy of 'Chakravyuh' was a new pedagogical strategy for the military tactic at the time. Today, the classroom is military ground, where a teacher has to use the latest and most suitable pedagogical strategies for easy and permanent learning. The problem of individual differences has always been present, but a true teacher never gets frustrated and never takes the road to disappointment. **Such issues of how best pedagogical techniques can be used in the modern educational system to create learner-centred education are discussed in the draft of 'National Education Policy (NEP)-2020'.** In the year 2020, India witnessed the new 'National Education Policy' that has been drafted by a committee headed by former ISRO Chief K. Kasturirangan and replaced the one formulated in 1986, last modified in 1992. The draft policy has undergone several deliberations since then, including the latest change on making it ready for an education system that is suited even to the current COVID-19 pandemic. NEP-2020 determines to bring transformational reforms to the school and higher education systems in the country with the aim of making "India a global knowledge superpower" while stepping towards the embellishment of "Shreshth Bharath".

A combination of conceptual, practical, personal, and social skills will be needed by the teachers to transform Bharat (India) and re-emerge as "Vishwa Guru". Former Minister of Education, Shri. Ramesh Pokhriyal opines that "teachers are the key to the implementation of NEP 2020". He has been fostering the spirit, 'Acharya Devo Bhava', for education to be powerful, and the teachers need to be empowered first. This thought helped to conduct thoughtful discussions to enhance the role of the teacher and embed the 'vision of the teacher' as per the 21st century. Though, sadly, until today, the role of the teacher was limited to clerical tasks and the transaction of the curriculum and further conducting prescribed examinations, through the NEP, there will be an evident transition wherein the transitional classrooms and the teaching-learning process will now place emphasis on conceptual development and not a transaction, experiential learning in real-world contexts, and an

enabler for developing essential ethos and values in the digital age. The teachers are envisioned to educate and empower the country, which involves around the new curriculum like basic arts, crafts, humanities, games, sports and fitness, languages, literature, culture, and values, in addition to science and mathematics, to develop all aspects and capabilities of learners and make education more well-rounded, useful, and fulfilling for the learner. This policy aims to build character and enable learners to be ethical, rational, compassionate, and caring, while at the same time preparing them for gainful, fulfilling employment. Teachers must understand and embrace the concepts of integrated and multidisciplinary approaches, as well as the importance of skill development. While implementing the NEP at the ground level, it becomes imperative for the teaching fraternity to have strong coordination, cooperation, and the motivation to transform students' lives through skill and character building.

TEACHER EMPOWERMENT:

Teachers' collective efforts are believed to have a direct influence on better student performance. This makes teachers' work critical both for institutions and inherently for society (Aydin Balyer et al., 2017). In this regard, the rising demands for student success have changed the role of administrators regarding teacher empowerment (Crum, Sherman, & Myran, 2009). For this reason, Bogler and Nir (2012) claim that empowering teachers and building a supportive environment at a school or college are believed to be viable solutions to problems related to educational effectiveness. Therefore, teacher empowerment draws a lot of attention in the field of teacher education.

Teacher empowerment means investing teachers with the right to participate in determining goals and policies and to exercise professional judgement about what and how to teach. Engaging teachers in the reform process requires them to have freedom and control over their own work. This makes them feel empowered, motivates them to work harder, and enhances their commitment to their learners (Bolin, 1989). Recognising the contribution teachers can make in reforming pedagogy to improve learning outcomes, the NEP-2020 gives teachers autonomy in selecting appropriate pedagogy and encourages them to also ensure their students' socio-emotional learning, which is a critical aspect of holistic development (Rashmi Chari, 2020).

TEACHERS' ROLE IN IMPLEMENTATION:

In the past decades, we have seen education policy recommendations, and a critical review of the earlier policies indicates that there are gaps in implementation and limited training for teachers and educators. However, NEP-2020 should not suffer a similar fate, leading to a delay in the development of human potential for the progress of the nation. It recommends restructuring the entire domain of India. It talks about foundational literacy, numeracy, and skill education to transform India to face 21st century challenges. And the success of any education policy rests upon the beliefs and efforts of the teaching fraternity (Sunil S., 2020).

The policy has accentuated re-establishing teachers at all levels and has also elaborated on the recruitment of good teachers in a transparent manner to give autonomy

while also instilling a sense of responsibility and accountability in every teacher (Biren Das, 2021). It becomes imperative for the teachers to have strong coordination, cooperation, and the motivation to transform students' lives through skill and character building (Suni Shrivastav, 2020). Accordingly, NEP emphasises the teachers' contribution, their sacrifice, and their efforts to uphold the dignity, respect, and honour of this profession.

TEACHER EDUCATION:

The new education policy strongly emphasises the criticality of teacher education, hailing the legacy of '*Acharya Devo Bhava*'. Teacher education is vital to creating a pool of teachers that will shape the next generation. The teachers will be facilitated with the qualities of reforming, transforming, and performing at the same time. Abreast of the needs of the 21st century, teacher preparation is an activity that will require not only multidisciplinary perspectives and knowledge but also the formation of dispositions and values and the development of practice under the best mentors. Thereby, an overhaul of teacher education is required; in adherence to this, the 4-year integrated stage-specific, subject-specific '*Bachelor of Education*' will be offered at multidisciplinary institutions.

Keeping the transformation going, there is an urge to the backbone of our education system, the teachers, that, in line with NEP and the needs and demands of the 21st century, it is essential that the digital resources are appropriately intertwined in the teaching-learning process with a focus on the process of knowledge creation. An amalgamation of conceptual, practical, personal, and social skills will be considered necessary by the teachers for transforming and re-emerging as '*Vishwa Guru*'. Consequently, there is a huge responsibility on teachers to reflect the NEP through the five (5) 'I's—*Indian, Internationalism, Impactful, Interactive, and Inclusive*—while beholding itself to the principles of *equity, quality, and access*. So teachers have to be involved in the transformational changes for students and make them adapt to the skills of the 21st century. However, in the first place, it is the teachers who have to update themselves with skill-based knowledge.

TEACHERS AND TECHNOLOGY:

NEP-2020 is aware of the digital divide and, at the same time, recognises the significance of leveraging the advantages of technology while acknowledging its potential risks and dangers. The formation of the '*National Education Technology Forum*' (NETF) is useful in promoting widespread use of technology in education.

The most important skill that a teacher today must possess is the ability to engage in self-reflection and learn by identification. **Knowledge of technology for teachers is a requirement and highly in demand.** The teachers must understand that the current cohort of students belongs to '*Generation Z*' and '*Generation Alpha*'. These two generations have grown up with unprecedented amounts of technology at their fingertips. They are digital natives, and they are comfortable using apps and coding as teachers flip pages. Consequently, going digital and understanding the perspective of the students who are '*Digital Natives*' is another essential skill that teachers and educators must inculcate. Technology must be used strategically to benefit students, promote independent and autonomous learning, and, in the

process, establish the assets of technology rather than always highlighting its negative impacts (Sanjhee Gianchandani, 2020).

Making the right use of technology is another essential part to inculcate. Another important aspect is building a positive digital footprint. Teachers must be in a position to mould how to appropriately use social media. Social media, which has upended everyone's lives in the past few years, has an alarmingly high impact on impressionable minds. *Kathy Cook*, the director of educational technology for the University of Phoenix, College of Education, reflects, '*Students are using these technologies in their personal lives, so it makes sense to leverage them for teaching and learning*'. Moreover, maintaining a well-fitting profile on social media can be a good way to impart the same to our students.

The NEP-2020 recommends that, to bridge the digital divide, educational programmes will be made available round the clock 24/7 in different languages to cater to the varying needs of the student population. A special focus on content in all Indian languages will be emphasised and required. As much as possible, digital content will need to reach teachers and students in their medium of instruction. The possibility of providing adequate access to '*Socially-Economically Disadvantaged Groups*' (SEDG) students and teachers through suitable digital devices, such as tablets with pre-loaded content, will be considered and developed. We need to have the talent and skill capabilities required for techno-entrepreneurship and tech-savvy teachers.

ATTRIBUTES NECESSARY FOR THE TEACHERS:

The main motto is to acquire and improve the art of teaching. As per NEP-2020, a model curriculum and syllabus for each course are being developed by a community of people with expertise. The NEP-2020 focuses on value-based education, which shall be possible through a teacher who understands his or her responsibility. They have to attend the orientation, refresher, faculty development programmes, short-term courses, workshops, seminars, and other communication programmes offered by the higher education ministry. Teachers need to be opportunistic to take advantage of various opportunities for '*up"-skilling*' and '*re-skilling*' academic and non-academic competitiveness and meet the highly dynamic nature of global higher education systems.

Research is yet another field that will contribute to the quality of education and also to society. So, teachers have to undertake and promote research in their concerned fields and across the subjects and nurture their *creativity, intellectual property rights (IPR), and patent culture*.

The institutions have to transform into world-class learning resource centres to cater to the informational needs of all classes of society, especially to encourage and support students from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds, and hence teacher contributions will be significantly important in this regard. The role of teachers in shaping the minds of the younger generation is very important. Hence, teachers must be passionate, motivated, well qualified, and well trained in content, pedagogy, and practice. Apart from this, a teacher has many roles to play in the new paradigm.

The first and foremost attribute that is required is to understand the significance of education in general and higher education in particular in an Indian and global context. The designing, developing, creating, and managing of content, its implementation, and evaluation of various programmes by the teachers are important steps in the educational sector. The teacher has to keep abreast of the latest developments and develop human resources with the latest developments in their specific field of specialisation. They also need to enhance the art of modern teaching-learning methodologies. They need to instill ethical and moral values and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all their human resources. The teachers must promote the use of ICT and multimedia technologies, including interactive multimedia, 3D animation, and virtual reality techniques, in the teaching-learning process (delivery style, content, presentation, etiquette, attitude, board work, class management, etc.).

Teachers need to perceive their roles in the total system and participate accordingly. Beyond self-building, the teachers also need to expand and promote programmes for other *universities, states, governments, and corporate sectors* for the development of networking among institutions, which plays a supportive and collaborative role in enhancing the quality of higher education.

TO SUM UP:

We are moving to an era where an individual will not be stuck in a single profession all their life. Society provided teachers with what they needed to effectively pass on their knowledge, skills, and ethics to students. Teachers truly shape the future of our children—and, hence, the future of our nation. It is because of this noble role that teachers in India are the most respected members of society.

As envisioned by the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, *Shri. Narendra Modi ji*, the *National Education Policy-2020 will set the foundation for 21st century India. It will empower teachers in India and list out various reforms for their recruitment, continuous professional development, service conditions, and so on.* This policy ensures Indians are more empowered and easily attracted to opportunities. NEP-2020 recognises and identifies teachers as the heart of the learning process and says that educators will require training in high-quality content as well as pedagogy. Such systemic reforms would help 'teaching' emerge as an attractive profession of choice for bright and talented young minds. NEP-2020 proposes several reforms to empower teachers and restore the high respect and status of this profession, hoping that it will eventually attract the best minds and talent to choose teaching as their profession (Rashmi Chari, 2020). Thus, teachers' role is to continuously need to re-skill and up-skill themselves, and NEP-2020 is formulated keeping this in mind. Furthermore, by 2030, teacher education will gradually be moved to multidisciplinary colleges and universities. The motivation and empowerment of teachers are required to ensure the best possible future for our children and our nation. The COVID-19 pandemic made us all realise that the new circumstances and realities require new initiatives. Teachers have to be ready with alternative modes of quality education whenever and wherever traditional and in-person modes of education are not possible.

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