



IMPACT OF THE NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY 2020 OF INDIA ON THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE AT THE SCHOOL LEVEL

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Abstract:

The school system of a nation must have an education plan oriented towards the future thriving on the holistic development of the students. A crucial component of the learners' developmental process is the development of their English language skills. A substantial part of educational policymaking should revolve around modernising and reinventing the current English language learning system. Based on suggestions from an expert group led by Dr. Kasturirangan, the Indian government recently released its National Education Policy on 29th July, 2020. This paper aims to investigate the position of the English language in this education policy at the school level. One of the objectives of this paper is to know and critically assess the recommendations of this education policy for English language at the school level. It also attempts to provide some insight on the challenges associated with the implementation of those recommendations with the purpose of suggesting a few solutions to those challenges. The fundamental goal of this research is to contribute to the development of English language education for Indian school students.

Keywords: National Education Policy, English language, School level, English learning

INTRODUCTION:

National Education Policy 2020, the first education policy of twenty-first century, is a revolutionary stance in Indian educational platform. This education policy consisting of sixty-six pages, which the government unveiled on the 29th of July in 2020, is outstanding since it encompasses each facet of education. It has replaced National Policy on Education 1986 in terms of childhood care, curriculum and pedagogy, learning environment, adequate resourcing, inclusive education, vocational education, teacher education and academic research. National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 aims to ensure an advanced quality education for all in India by 2040. It is made to bridge the gap between the recent learning outcome and the expected requirement and to present India as a powerhouse of global knowledge.

Since English is a language of opportunity, growth and progress, it has a significant effect in India. By learning English Indians can connect to people around the world and interact with them. This promotes cross-cultural contact and the removal of cultural barriers. One can use the internet and the media with knowledge of English. A solid command of English boosts one's self-worth and confidence. However, linguists divided the period of English's introduction in India into three phases: the effort to spread the language by Christian missionaries, Indians' desire to learn English as a second language and Indian educational policy that opposed anglicists and orientalist (Kachru,

1990). In Macaulay's Minute dated 1835, he suggested teaching English to pupils in order to produce prospective British clerks. The decision to include English as a school subject in India after independence put the policymakers in a dilemma. Several states in India have created their own educational regulations regarding the teaching of English as a school subject for study.

English education at school level has always been an important part of all education policies in India after independence. National Policy on Education 1968, the first education policy in the post-independent India, thrives on three-language formula which includes learning of English at school level (NPE, 1968). National Policy on Education 1986 continued the recommendations of National Policy on Education 1968 about three-language formula and English education (NPE, 1986). But NEP 2020 brings a noteworthy change in English learning at school level. It assures to encourage the students to think and speak both in their mother tongue and in English (NEP, 2020). Therefore, this study aims to determine the position of English in NEP 2020 at school level by critically assessing NEP 2020 recommendations.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

Kour (2022) critically assess the relation between NEP 2020 and language learning in India. He discussed the importance and position of language in curriculum and pedagogy in context of NEP 2020. A general view on English learning in NEP 2020 is highlighted in Singh's discussion and as per the author's findings, translated materials from several foreign language including English will trigger students' interest in learning (Singh, 2020). According to Varghese & Devi (2022), language should be considered as a medium to achieve the objective of learning and it should promote multilingualism along with national unity. The most effective strategy for learning English is technological advancement, which involves computer use, e-learning materials, technical support for student activities, and ICT integration (Laxmankumar, 2022). Further, the researcher was unable to locate any extensive study on the importance of English in NEP 2020 at the school level in West Bengal, India. Therefore, by concentrating on the role of English in NEP 2020 at the school level, this study seeks to address this research gap.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

The main objectives of this research are mentioned below:

1. To highlight the position of English in school education in India in the context of NEP 2020
2. To point out important recommendations of NEP 2020 for English language
3. To critically examine NEP 2020 recommendations
4. To look into several challenges to implement the recommendations of NEP 2020 for English language
5. To suggest some strategies to materialise those recommendations

METHODOLOGY:

This study is based on the content-analysis of mainly the document of NEP 2020 by Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India. Other important documents that aid to analyse the role of English in school curriculum according to NEP 2020 are National Policy on Education 1968 and National Policy on Education 1986 along with Programme of Action 1992 by Government of India. All of these documents serve as the source of primary data.

POSITION OF ENGLISH IN NEP 2020 AT THE SCHOOL LEVEL:

According to NEP 2020 guidelines, English remains the official language of India. NEP 2020 highlights English to be taught to enable students for understanding international culture and world heritage at the secondary level of education. It promotes a constructivist perspective to learn English. As a result, the learners will be competent to interact and to formulate their ideas in English. The progress of English learning is facilitated by school students' participation in activity-based learning that focuses on learning-by-doing.

IMPORTANT RECOMMENDATIONS OF NEP 2020 FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE:

The researcher pointed out multiple significant recommendations given by NEP 2020 for English language learning and teaching:

- English will be taught to make the pupils able to know about world culture and global heritage at secondary level in school.
- NEP 2020 encourages constructivist outlook in learning English language. Consequently, the students will be prepared to think and speak in English.
- Holistic development of the learner which includes learning English language in a multidimensional way is anticipated.
- Financial support to the schools will be provided to introduce and to improve English, Hindi, regional languages, Social Science, Science, and Mathematics in the curriculum.
- The teaching of English language has to be enhanced as well, with a greater priority placed on interaction and conversational skills.
- Grammar, literature and vocabulary of English language must be exalted.
- NEP 2020 gives importance on multilingualism along with English language.
- Multidisciplinary perspective is adopted. Equal importance is imposed on Science, Mathematics, Language, Art, Sports and Social Science.
- Online education will be emphasised to offer a support system to the learners for potential pandemic situations. Since English is most often the medium of instruction for online education, therefore it is given priority to be promoted in practical and necessary contexts.
- Enquiry-based and project-based learning are intensified in the domain of English language activity.

CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF NEP 2020 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE:

Although NEP 2020 has made enormous efforts to redefine English language education in a multifaceted manner, a brief examination of NEP 2020 proposals on English language reveals the document's unexplored areas in the context of English education in the school system.

- NEP 2020 should give more emphasis on academic resources for English language learning.
- NEP 2020 considers Indian education a homogenous monolith. Indian education system needs an accommodative, adaptive and flexible language policy which is not promoted by NEP 2020.
- A flaw of NEP 2020 is its shortage of reflection on the correlation of new lessons with the knowledge gained from previous experiences in case of English language.
- A key component of this education policy is based on digital learning, although the Indian education system lacks e-learning materials for school students on online platform that can boost-up their knowledge of English.

CHALLENGES TO IMPLEMENT THE RECOMMENDATIONS:

A minute study of NEP 2020 by the researcher has identified a few difficulties at the time of putting NEP 2020 suggestions into practice with respect to English language education at the school level:

- Appropriate learning atmosphere for aiding students to learn an unfamiliar foreign language like English does not exist in the majority numbers of school in India.
- There are inadequate teaching aids to make English interesting to the school students.
- Making Indian students to think in English is a herculean task.
- The schools have an inappropriate environment for e-learning and inadequate technical tools to engage the learners in linguistic activity.

- Weak English learning growth is significantly influenced by students' anxiety of learning the language because it is a foreign language and appears difficult.
- The learners possess inferior vocabulary expertise and poor retention power in English.
- The concepts covered by English curriculum in the school level are not taught in a basic to complicated order.
- The learners are not given sufficient time and attention in the overcrowded English classroom.

STRATEGIES TO MATERIALISE THE RECOMMENDATIONS:

The researcher outlines several strategies to execute the recommendations for English after an in-depth investigation:

- A suitable learning environment for English equipped with a language laboratory and sufficient audio-visual teaching aids would assist students in learning the language effectively.
- The teachers may encourage students to think in English by explaining the meaning of unfamiliar English vocabulary in simple English, engaging students to participate in English conversations and enabling students to express everyday activities, goals and memorable events in their lives in English.
- The schools require a satisfactory e-learning framework, technical equipments and sufficient teachers with technical skill to promote e-learning proficiency in English language.
- English lesson should be presented by the teachers in a lucid, joyful and motivating way so that the students may enjoy learning it without anxiety that it would be difficult. The load of English learning content should be minimised in order to decrease the burden on the students.
- Proper utilisation of English dictionary, playing word game, practicing use of novel words in English dialogue can strengthen the students' weak vocabulary. Word-recall game and crosswords would be beneficial especially for the students who have weak memory.
- The sequence of the contents covered by the English curriculum at the school level should be taught from simple to complex.
- For the sake of the students the school should provide large and airy English classrooms in order to eliminate the issue of overcrowding in English classes. Meanwhile, more English teachers are needed to provide the students the time and attention they need in the classroom. For their children's English learning to advance, parents also should provide them with suitable attention and supervision.

CONCLUSION:

The researcher aims to draw a scenario of English education at school level in the light of NEP 2020. The major objectives of this paper are to determine the position of English language in NEP 2020 at the school level, to draw attention to the most significant NEP 2020 recommendations for English language, to critically evaluate those recommendations, to look after various obstacles in implementing the recommendations and to propose some strategies to materialise those recommendations. What Indian education needs at this time is a policy that deals with the current moment first and then the far-flung future promising an alternative superior system. And English, being the gateway of global community, may ensure the future advancement of Indian education. NEP 2020 recognises English as the medium of global heritage and prescribed English education at school level to gain knowledge about world culture. If the policy is successfully carried out, India is poised to bring about a noteworthy transformation in life of the school students, perfectly skilled in English language.

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