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Role of Teachers in Transforming Indian Education: An NEP 2020 Perspective

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Abstract-- The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 marks a significant shift in India's educational philosophy, emphasizing holistic development, experiential learning, flexibility, and multidisciplinary education. Central to the successful implementation of NEP 2020 is the evolving role of teachers. Teachers are no longer perceived merely as transmitters of knowledge but as facilitators, mentors, innovators, curriculum designers, and lifelong learners. This research paper examines the role of teachers under NEP 2020, highlighting changes in pedagogical expectations, professional responsibilities, teacher education, assessment practices, use of technology, and continuous professional development. The paper also discusses challenges faced by teachers in adapting to these reforms and suggests strategies to empower teachers to become effective agents of change. By analyzing policy provisions, pedagogical shifts, and implementation realities, the study concludes that teachers are the cornerstone of NEP 2020 and that meaningful educational transformation depends on systematic teacher empowerment, training, and institutional support.

Keywords-- NEP 2020, Teacher Role, Pedagogy, Holistic Education, Teacher Professional Development, Indian Education System

I. INTRODUCTION

Importance of Education in playing a vital role in shaping the social, economic, and cultural fabric of a nation is evident from the fact that the history of education in India stretches back to several millennia. This education system was perceived to be an instrument of personal and social transformation in sync with the societal upliftment. The role of education back then was not limited to the acquisition of knowledge but realization and liberation of the self with Teacher at the helm of this system. Teachers were not just the facilitators of education, but they impacted learners academically, morally, emotionally as well as socially. Chanakya's mentoring played a pivotal role in shaping Chandragupta, who, from modest origins, later rose to be the founder-emperor of the Maurya empire. However, this system suffered a systemic destruction with the advent of Muslim rule which was later absolutely abolished by the British rulers under the pretext of the absence of standardisation in curriculum, pedagogy and evaluation.

The Britishers later introduced a secular Education system in India which aimed to create the society that was 'ethnically Indian but culturally European' (Momen, Mansoureh, & Kamaruzaman, 2024). Post-independence, India perpetuated the British-introduced education system because it allowed a functional but imperfect framework of Higher Education nationwide. It later adapted the system to cater to the national requirement while focussing on building capabilities in the areas of science, technology and industry. Over a period, it started manifesting systemic deficiencies as the pedagogical framework favoured rote learning over conceptual understanding, critical thinking and theoretical engagement. Socially, it triggered unemployment, brain drain and cultural debasement in the society apart from generating bureaucratic elitism, deepening social divide and marginalisation of traditional knowledge.

Taking into cognisance, the detrimental impact of the previous education policy, the government of India introduced the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, replacing the 34-year-old National Policy on Education (1986). NEP 2020 aims to transform India's education system to meet the needs of the 21st century while preserving Indian values and ethos.

A major highlight of NEP 2020 is the redefinition of the teacher's role. Teachers are envisioned as key drivers of educational reform, responsible for nurturing creativity, critical thinking, ethical values, and lifelong learning among students. The policy emphasizes teacher autonomy, accountability, continuous professional development, and improved working conditions. This paper explores the multifaceted role of teachers as envisaged by NEP 2020 and analyses how teachers contribute to achieving the policy's goals.

II. OVERVIEW OF NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY 2020

NEP 2020 is founded on principles of access, equity, quality, affordability, and accountability. It proposes structural reforms across all levels of education—from early childhood education to higher education. Some key features of NEP 2020 include (Government of India, 2020):



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Holistic Development and Unique Capabilities: The policy focuses on identifying and fostering the unique potential of every student by promoting development in both academic and non-academic spheres.

Foundational Literacy and Numeracy: A primary goal is ensuring all students achieve foundational literacy and numeracy by Grade 3.

Flexibility and Multidisciplinarity: Learners are given the flexibility to choose their own paths, with **no hard separations** between arts and sciences, or vocational and academic streams.

Conceptual Understanding over Rote Learning: The curriculum emphasizes **logical decision-making**, innovation, and critical thinking rather than memorization for exams.

Ethics and Values: Education aims to instill human and **Constitutional values** such as empathy, respect, equality, and a scientific temper.

Multilingualism and Life Skills: There is a strong focus on the power of language in teaching and promoting life skills like **communication, teamwork, and resilience**.

Assessment Reform: The system will shift toward **regular formative assessment** for learning, moving away from summative assessments that encourage a "coaching culture".

Equity, Inclusion, and Technology: The policy mandates full equity and inclusion as the cornerstone of decisions and promotes the **extensive use of technology** to remove language barriers and increase access for **Divyang students**.

Teacher Empowerment: Teachers are recognized as the heart of the learning process, requiring continuous professional development and positive working environments.

"Light but Tight" Regulation: A regulatory framework will be established to ensure integrity and transparency while encouraging **innovation and autonomy**.

Cultural Rootedness: The policy encourages a deep-rooted pride in **India's rich and diverse culture**, ancient knowledge systems, and traditions.

Public Service and Investment: Quality education is viewed as a **basic right** and a public service, necessitating substantial investment in the public education system

III. DISCUSSION

Teacher is being blamed publicly in India for poor education quality and low average student performance (Wiseman & Kumar, 2021). NEP 2020 envisages the teacher at the centre of these reforms in education system. It attempts to revive the glory of teacher. The policy aims to re-establish teachers as the most respected and essential members of society due to their role in shaping future citizens. The primary goal is to empower teachers by providing them with the necessary support to perform their jobs as effectively as possible. To attract the "best and brightest" to the profession, their livelihood, respect, dignity and autonomy must be ensured. Only then the teacher can be held accountable for quality control.

There is a tectonic shift in the system from being teacher-centred instruction to learner-centred education in NEP 2020. Teachers are being visualised as **facilitators** who guide students in discovering knowledge and not as the deliverers of information. With classrooms becoming more technology-driven, they are no longer centre of rote memorisation but interactive spaces encouraging students to ask questions, discuss their perspectives and collaborate for achieving shared goal. Consequently, the teacher must adapt diverse styles of imparting knowledge by promoting experiential and activity-based learning.

Teachers are also required to mentor students beyond classrooms. The teacher should build such relationship with students that it engenders an environment of trust and mutual respect. The teacher must endeavour to instil values such as empathy, responsibility, and integrity among students by extending emotional support in making personal and academic decisions.

NEP 2020 envisions to devise a system that is global in outlook but rooted in our Indian ethos. It is therefore, essential for teachers to contextualise global learning relevant to local requirement while sustaining students' interests. Therefore, the teacher must align learning outcomes with competency-based objectives. To sustain students' interest in education, the teacher is required to devise creative teaching techniques, pedagogical tools and assessment strategies which test their comprehension, logical reasoning and critical thinking. The teacher must innovate continuously to teaching effectiveness. Since the new policy emphasises on formative assessment, the teacher should design such assessment methods that evaluate students' conceptual understanding, application, and skills.



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Since NEP promotes multidisciplinary learning, the teacher must integrate concepts across disciplines to help students develop a holistic understanding. This enjoins the teacher to put to use experiential learning methods such as project-based learning, internships, fieldwork, and problem-solving activities. By doing this, the teacher facilitates the development of creativity and critical thinking among students.

This policy advocates formative and competency-based assessment instead of high-stakes examinations. Teachers are responsible for designing assessments that entails continuous and diagnostic evaluation, providing constructive feedback while encouraging self-assessment and peer assessment.

NEP 2020 emphasizes inclusion, equity, and access to education for all learners. Teachers play a crucial role in addressing diverse learning needs by adopting inclusive teaching strategies, addressing learning gaps and disabilities and supporting socio-economically disadvantaged students. Teachers must ensure that no learner is left behind.

NEP 2020 highlights the use of technology to enhance learning outcomes. Teachers are expected to effectively integrate digital tools in teaching and assessment. Teachers' technological role includes using digital platforms for blended learning, creating and curating e-content while leveraging on online assessment tools. However, teachers must also ensure ethical and balanced use of technology.

All said until now, becoming a teacher in India is not an easy task. This job embodies a horde of challenges. The teacher must engage in life-long learning. The teacher is expected to upgrade professional competencies by participating in workshops and training programmes. Every year the teacher is required to participate in training programmes that consists of few seminars, presentations, mandatory attendance culminating in awarding the certificate. However, such training programmes rarely takes up for its agenda the difficulties that teachers face in the classrooms. The agenda of such trainings is determined by the Education department and not based on classroom requirements. Moreover, these training programmes are largely online. Online training fulfils the mandatory requirement of conducting the training but in essence its effectiveness is debatable. Teachers largely indulge in other non-training activities by logging in online for the sake of attendance and certificate. Moreover, online training fails to provide that space and time where trainee teachers can interact with each other, share with each other their classroom experience and learn new strategies to enhance teaching effectiveness.

It would not be exaggeration to say that such training programmes are procedure-driven instead of being outcome-driven. Therefore, such training programmes prove inadequate in introducing teachers to new pedagogical tools and teaching strategies. One more thing about these training programmes is that they largely focus on the delivery of curriculum; they fail to make teachers adaptable to evolving educational needs by understanding their students' psyche.

Teachers often become victim of the institutional apathy. Many academic institutions do not relieve teachers to participate in training programmes. Under the pretext of ensuring better governance of the institution, the management often burdens teachers with administrative responsibilities leaving very little time and opportunity for them to indulge in self-development activities which in turn proves detrimental to strengthening their pedagogical effectiveness resulting into harming the academic growth of their students.

Lack of infrastructure in the institute displays the lack of institutional support in generating desired academic environment. It is often seen that teachers are willing to implement new strategies in the classroom, but they either lack required infrastructure or the institute is unwilling to adapt to the ever-evolving academic needs. The institutions exhibit strong resistance to change in the name of preserving traditions.

It is extremely essential to address challenges faced by teachers to realise NEP 2020 in essence. The lost glory of teachers can be regained only if high-quality professional development programmes are conducted offline. Their non-academic workload should be absolutely removed. A banker has the luxury to laze around when all financial transactions for the day have concluded; the lawyer can engage in professional networking after the court adjourns for the day; but then why is the teacher forced to undertake non-academic-admin work after the completion of his/her stipulated teaching work for the day. Innovation and excellence in teaching should be incentivised. Digital infrastructure and resources need to be upgraded time to time so that teacher make better use of it in their teaching strategies.

IV. CONCLUSION

As per NEP 2020, the teacher forms the bedrock of educational transformation in India. It has envisaged the teacher as a multi-dimensional personality who is at once a mentor, a facilitator, a curriculum designer, an innovator and a lifelong learner.



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It also underscores the need to empower teacher by giving them autonomy to chart the course of their professional growth. The success NEP 2020 rests on how the nation chooses to train, support and motivate its teachers.

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