

Exploring Students' Perspectives on NEP 2020: A Comparative Study Across Selected School and Higher Education Levels

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Abstract:

A country's education system holds significant importance in the country's social and economic development. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 aims to address critical educational issues and re-orient the system to becoming in-sync with current world trends. NEP 2020 makes significant curriculum reforms from conventional knowledge-based learning and teaching systems, favoring experiential learning systems. It allows learners to choose what they want to study without being bound by school curriculum timetables. Another important concept under the NEP 2020 is redesigning the schooling system: where students are prepared to get skills and knowledge suitable for the current society. In addition, the policy brings a huge shift by guaranteeing provision of education in regional languages to allow the students to realize their education in the local dialect, and at the same time, be closer to the Indian tradition and ethos. This aspect significantly develops a generation at par with world-class standards without losing cultural identity. Significant components of NEP 2020 include another key area called the Use of Technology in Education. Introducing courses for students in their regional languages has been an interesting facet of the NEP 2020. This paper focuses on the achievement of NEP 2020 on access, curriculum changes, and trainer preparedness, highlighting the possibility of producing a better digital, skilled, and rounded workforce for the 21st century by examining the understanding and perception of the student community across selected states.

Keywords: NEP 2020, Education system, Curriculum Reform, Faculty Development, Technology, Regional Language

1. Introduction

Education serves as a key indicator of a nation's development, with policies shaping the sector having far-reaching implications for its social and economic progress. Over the decades, India has undergone significant reforms in its education system. Until 2020 the prevalent education system depended on the Policy from the bygone era, formed in 1986. After 4 decades the policy was replaced with the National Education Policy 2020. In this paper, we will try to assess the changes brought about by the advent of NEP 2020. This new policy brought in a lot of new revolutionary changes in the educational system. From being a broad curriculum, it allowed students to choose their subjects as per their convenience and interests. It reworked the schooling system and divided it into stages which were more focused on holistic development for the students. The NEP 2020 marks a significant shift in India's educational philosophy, as it emphasizes innovation and practical learning over the rote learning standards set previously. A central emphasis of the new curriculum is to change over from theory-based learning to an experiential learning and the acquisition of real-world skills. By doing so the policy not only prepares students for higher education but also prepares them for the modern job market where practical knowledge and adaptability are essential. One of the unique changes brought about by this policy is the introduction of the regional languages into the education system, where students may choose to pursue the courses of their choice in their respective regional languages. Moreover, the new policy promotes Indian traditions and knowledge systems which aims to create globally competitive yet culturally rooted individuals. In stark contrast to the earlier policy, this policy heavily integrates Technology into the curriculum and the entire educational system, it incorporates credit transfer system and a technology forum in an attempt to bridge educational disparities. This paper also delves into teacher training and development undertaken by

institutions to promote structured continuous professional development for their teachers. This has been aimed to enhance the quality of teaching and learning at all the institutions. This paper will explore the areas of change undertaken by the NEP 2020 in the areas of accessibility, curriculum reform, teacher development while aiming to prepare a technologically adept and holistic workforce for the future.

Objectives

- To examine the awareness and understanding of NEP 2020 among the students at School and University level.
- To compare school and college student's perceptions of the key reforms introduced under NEP 2020.

Methodology

This study is based on primary data collected across five selected states from schools and colleges using structured questionnaires to explore their understanding and perception of NEP 2020. The responses were further analysed using descriptive statistical technique and represented using graphical method.

2. Literature Review

Kumar, A., & et al (2020) assessed how the National Education Policy 2020 seeks to bring reform in the Indian education system and meet the needs of 21st-century challenges. It was drafted and finally finalized on 29th July, 2020, and is focusing on upsurge the gross enrolment ratio at all levels of education by the year 2030. Talking about secondary data, this preliminary study aims at determining how NEP 2020 can shape the landscape of Indian higher education and in turn as a performance hub in the world scenario. If carried out successfully, this policy on the whole with its governance approach could give India an edge in education. Kurien, A. & et al. (2020) assessed the impact of New Education Policy 2020 on Higher Education: Announced abruptly in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, ushered in radical reforms to India's education system. The study examines the impact of NEP 2020 on higher education concerning its core constituents and their implications for the system that existed. This change brought through by the policy has been the window for new insight, which many educationists could not see coming. Farswan, D.S & et al (2020) explored that a teacher's education is mainly essential for knowledge, skills, and positive thinking in learners. It guides students according to their abilities and interests. This article describes the policies and measures of NEP 2020 on teacher education in India to prepare educators for future needs by addressing expectations and challenges and reforms in that area. Modi, R.K. & et al (2022) explored how parents view the changes introduced by the NEP in contrast to the traditional education framework they experienced. Jain, S. & et al (2023) highlighted the modifications in higher education policies under the NEP and analyzes its potential advantages over traditional university systems. Singh, H. & et al (2020) evaluated the NEP's dedication to educational equity and how it differs from traditional policies that often reinforced disparities. Chaurasia, P. (2020) explored as the New Education Policy 2020 was introduced after a span of three decades, it aims at making education accessible to all the students across every corner of India by the year 2040.

There have been several studies on the NEP 2020, however, it is important to measure the understanding of the students from school and colleges about the policy as they are the main stakeholders who will be impacted by the same. While the existing studies on the reforms focus on the immediate reforms, stakeholder perceptions, and aspects such as integration of technology and equity, a comprehensive analysis on how these changes affect student performance and system effectiveness over time is needed.

3. Data Analysis and Findings

3.1 A comparative analysis of the school students and college students

3.1.1 Level of Education

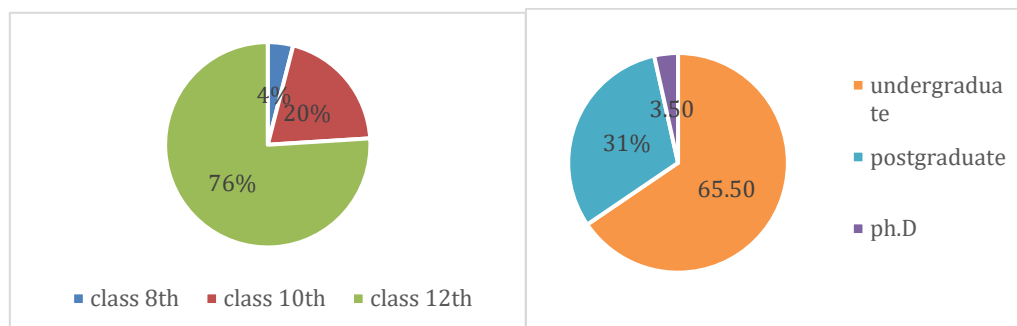


Fig 1: Highest Level of Education of Respondents

Figure 1 shows respondents from school are from class 12 (76%), followed by class 10 (20%) and class 8 (4%). Respondents from college, (65.5%) hold a postgraduate degree, followed by 31% with an undergraduate degree, and a small percentage (3.4%) have a Ph.D.

3.1.2 School and College Affiliation

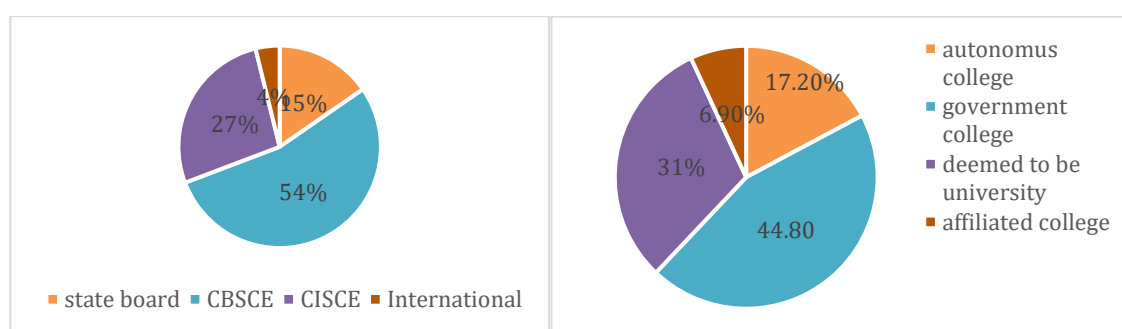


Figure 2: Affiliation of the respondents

Figure 2 shows the school affiliation board of the 25 respondents. The majority of the respondents are from CBSE (56%) and ISCE (28%). The remaining respondents teach State Board (16%) and International (4%) whereas (44.8%) are in autonomous colleges, followed by those in government colleges (31%) and affiliated colleges (17.2%). A smaller percentage (6%) are studying at Deemed-to-be Universities.

3.1.3 State of the respondents

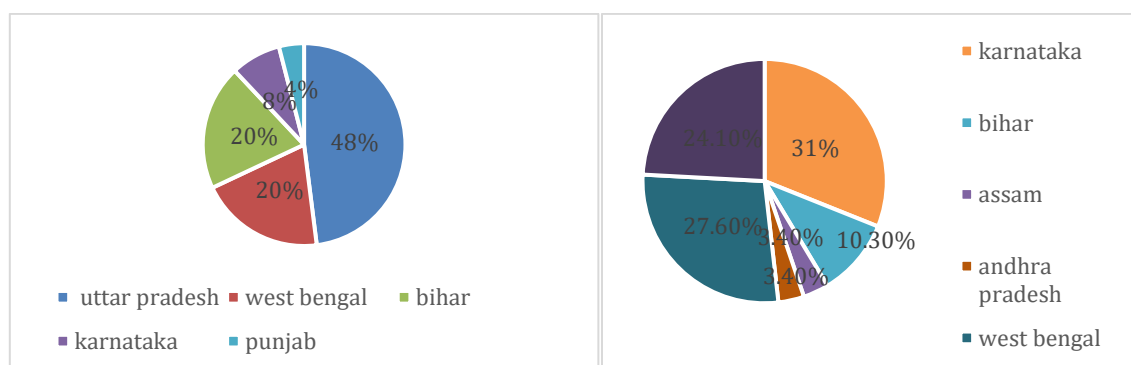


Figure 3: State of the respondents

Figure 3 depicts the states where the educational institutions of the respondents are located. Respondents from school (48%) are in Uttar Pradesh, while (20%) are in West Bengal & Bihar, (8%) are in Karnataka and (4%) are in Punjab. Respondents from college (31%) are in Karnataka, followed by West Bengal (27.6%) and Uttar Pradesh (24.1%). Smaller percentages are in Bihar (10.3%), Assam (3.4%), and Andhra Pradesh (3.4%).

3.1.4 Emphasis on Early Childhood Education

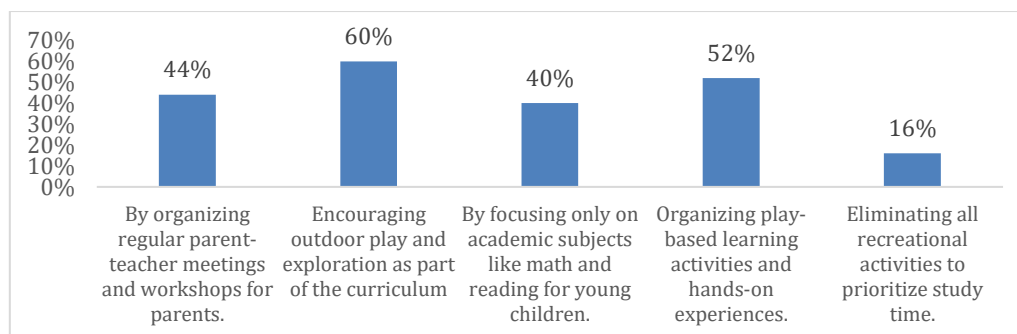


Figure 4: Application of ideas for improving Early Childhood Education

Figure 4 implies 60% of respondents emphasized on encouraging outdoor play and exploration as a part of the curriculum, 52% chose the importance of organizing play-based learning activities and hands-on experience. Furthermore, 44% of respondents emphasized the value of frequent parent-teacher meetings and workshops. On the other hand, 40% admitted to maintaining a concentration on academic topics like math's and reading, and 16% suggested eliminating all recreational activities to prioritize study time.

3.1.5 Curriculum and Pedagogy

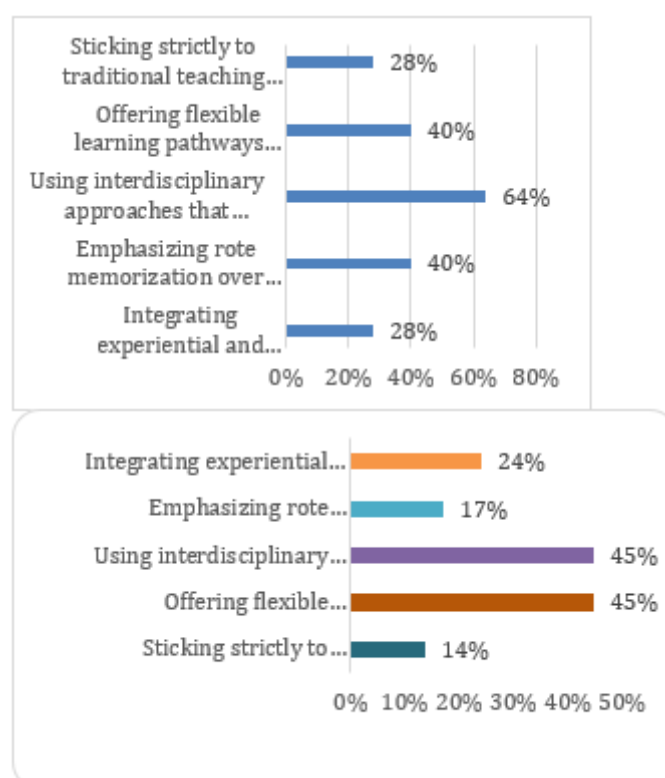


Figure 5: Change in Curriculum and Pedagogy

Figure 5 shows the application of curricular and pedagogy reforms under NEP 2020, the data shows a range of answers. A significant 64% of respondents from schools and 45% respondents from colleges are receiving interdisciplinary approaches that connect different subjects. While 40% from school and 45 % from colleges

receives offering flexible learning pathways tailored to students and other 40% from school and 17% from colleges chose emphasizing rote memorization over critical thinking and creativity. 28% from school and 24% from colleges highlighted the integration of project-based learning into the curriculum and other 28% from schools and 14% from colleges preferred sticking strictly to the traditional teaching methods without any innovation.

3.1.6 Regional Language

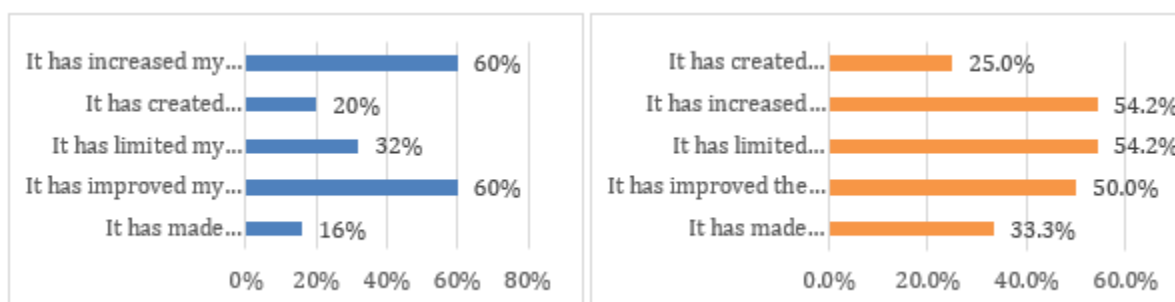


Fig 6: Benefits of subject delivery using Regional Language

Figure 6 shows that 60% (school) and 50% (college) of the respondents believes implementing language policy has improved understanding of concepts. However, 32% (school) and 54.2% (college) students criticized it for limited global exposure, remaining 20% (school) and 25% (college) students finding it challenging in transitioning to other languages.

3.1.7 Effective teaching and classroom management

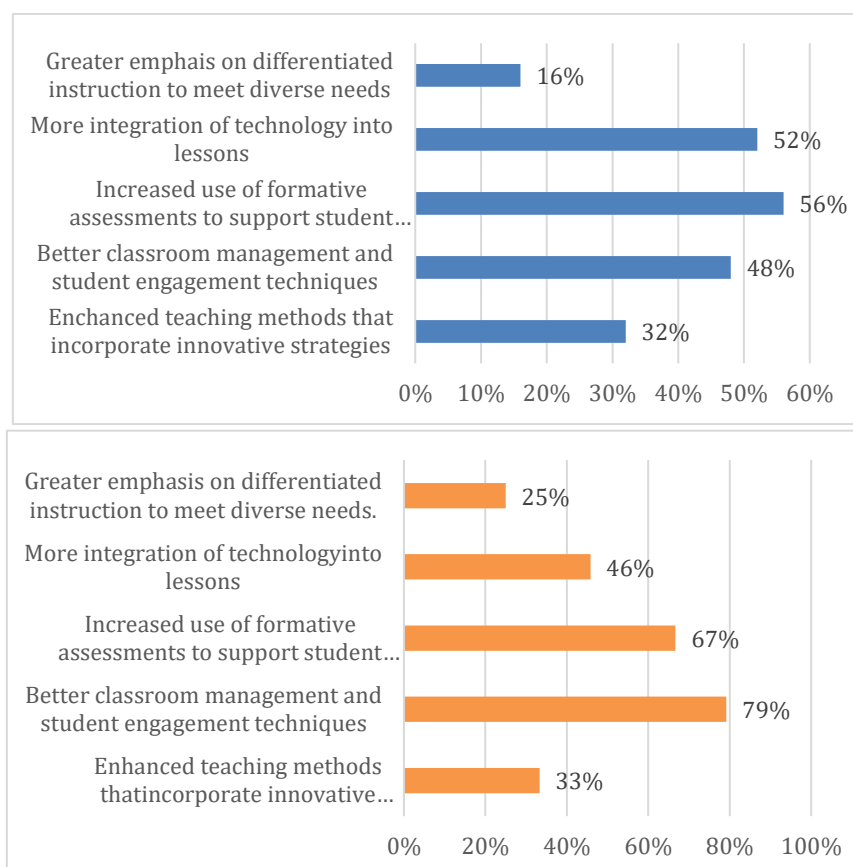


Figure 7: Effective teaching and classroom management

Figure 7 highlights improvements in teaching practices due to recent training initiatives. A significant 56% (school) and 67% (college) respondents observed an increased use of formative assessments to support learning, while 52% (school) and 46% (college) students noticed more integration of technology into lessons. Better classroom management and student engagement techniques were reported by 48% (school) and 79% (college) students and 32% (school) and 33% (college) respondent area experiencing enhanced teaching methods incorporating innovative strategies.

3.1.8 National Assessment Centre

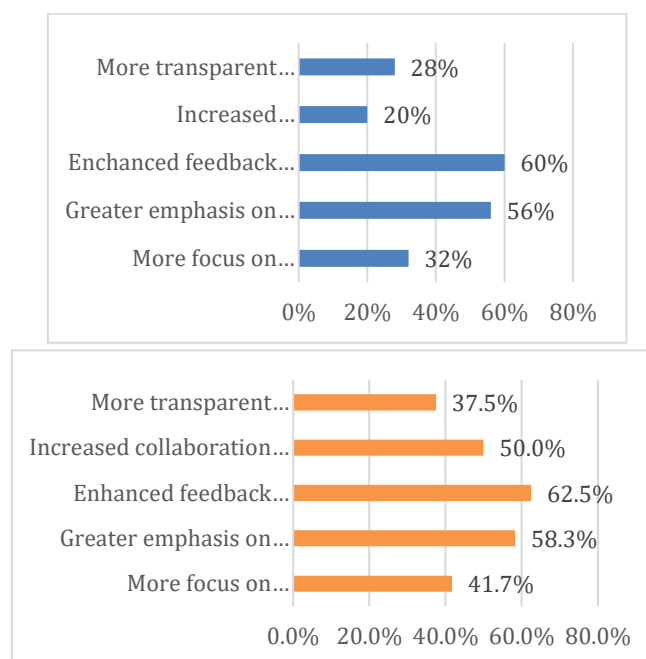


Figure 8: Effectiveness of National Assessment Centre

Figure 8 depicts that the introduction of the National Assessment Centre has led to several positive changes in school assessment methods. Mostly, 60% (school) and 62.5% (college) respondents observed enhanced feedback mechanisms that help students understand their strengths and areas for improvement. Additionally, 56% (school) and 58.3% (college) respondents reported a greater emphasis on skill development and critical thinking in assessments, while 32% (school) 41.7% (college) respondents noticed a focus on comprehensive and holistic evaluation rather than just exams. Increased collaboration and peer assessment opportunities (20% and 50%) and more transparent criteria for assessing student performance (28% and 37.5%) have also contributed to a more transparent and enriching learning experience.

3.1.9 Focus on Inclusivity

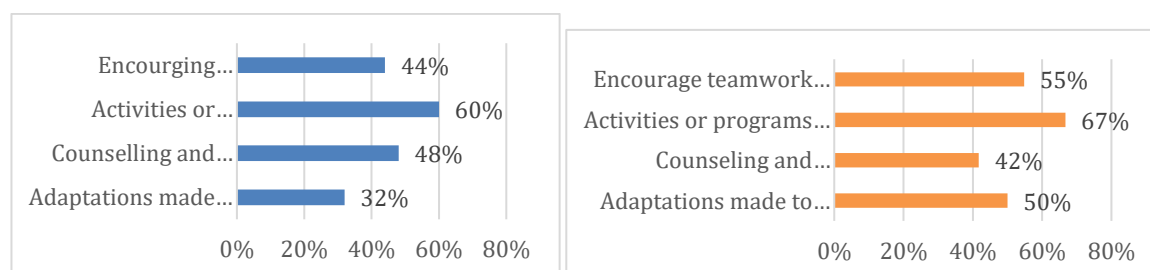


Figure 9: Initiatives to Promote Inclusivity

Figure 9 highlights several effective initiatives promoting inclusivity in schools. A significant 60% (school) and 67% (college) participants participated in activities or programs that celebrate cultural diversity and foster understanding, while 48% (school) and 42% (college) recognized the availability of counseling and tutoring for

all students. Additionally, 44% (school) and 55% (college) mentioned encouraging teamwork among diverse groups, and 32% (school) and 50% (college) pointed to adaptations made to curriculum materials to accommodate diverse learning needs.

3.1.10 Credit System and Academic Bank of Credits (ABC)

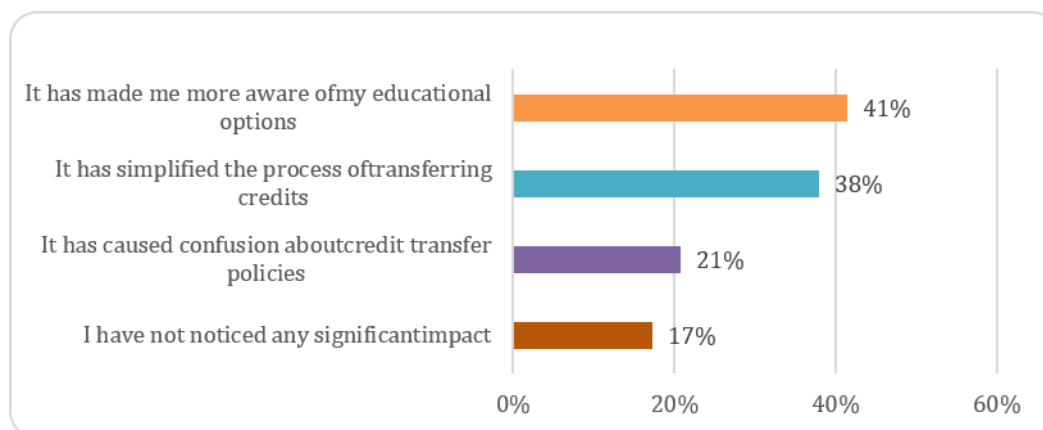


Figure 10: Impact of Academic Bank of Credits

Figure 10 depicts that students viewed the Academic Bank of Credits positively, as it increased their flexibility in course selection and made them more informed about their educational options (41%). 38% response towards its simplified credit transfer process, however, 21% students reported confusion about credit transfer policies and 17% reported no significant changes in their institute.

4. Issues and Challenges

The process of integrating the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has got a number of positive effects and implications in distinct levels of education. New segregation of the classes has generally been welcomed in the school level though there are some students who may not even be aware of this new change or are not affected by it.

Outcomes of the reform in early childhood education include facilitating children's outdoor play and learning through play but competition between academics and play. Most existent curricula and pedagogy improvements are positive, but their adoption is uneven; there are schools within which rote learning remains preferred to critical skills and cross-disciplinary integration.

Regional languages that are practiced due to implementation of the new language policy have enhanced lessons to be understood by students but the problem that is evident is lack of resources and use of more than one language.

Formative assessment, and other newer forms of assessment like project-based forms of assessments have however elicited a mixed response, a signal to the fact that more needs to be done in the implementation of the reforms. Incorporation of technology in classrooms has been one way of improving teaching methodologies, however there is proof that reveals a number of students are disadvantaged through lack of access to or poor access to the necessary technology and infrastructure.

Teacher training programs have enhanced giving quality instructions but more focused and regular attendance is needed to cover all teachers.

The National Assessment Centre has brought positive changes on assessment with the students' satisfaction level being low which indicates some areas that need to be changed. As it regards inclusiveness actions in schools, the reception is mainly positive but the data shows that schools are still not adequately sensitive for all students. There has been a positive experience in most many school complexes in the sharing of resources but more can be done in as much as in making available better learning materials.

For college students, it has been lauded that they offer holistic and multidisciplinary education in that flexibility concerning the subjects has been a cause of concern. The general sentiment is that the Academic Bank of credits has endowed the students with the ability to choose courses and transfer credits but the general process of this transfer has not been well understood by the learners.

Although the flexible curriculum has been helpful for many students it has not had the same effect on memory. About language policy changes most have been proactive but there are challenges in shifting from the regional to other languages.

The use of technology through the National Educational Technology Forum has enhanced both the engagement of the students and teaching learning activities, though some of the students find it has produced more reliance on technology.

5. Suggestions and Recommendations

In order to move towards the enhancement of NEP 2020 and to address the above-mentioned challenges, several suggestions and recommendations could be provided for each education level. In the school context, information dissemination should be conducted so that the whole school understands the changes on class segregation and the importance of the change. More practices should follow the balanced model more so in the early childcare education since this is a period when children should also be learning through play.

Continued dissemination of interdisciplinary and project-based learning should be achieved in schools, with teachers performing theater exercises in workshops throughout learning seasons to make them employ critical thinking in planning teaching methodologies.

Additional recommendation regarding the language policy is that schools should be equipped with means and resources for students who transfer from regional to other languages and that they should have access to bilateral educational materials.

In case of assessment reforms, there should be a form of evaluation of the current methods as well as an elaboration of new methods with massive feedback from the students and the teachers to enable the creation of assessment methods that would accommodate the various learning abilities of the learners.

Technology should be made more equitable in classrooms and should really improve the infrastructure and offer digital literacies all across the teaching staff and students as well. Teacher training also needs to be given to all teachers to ensure that all instructors are given an opportunity to benefit from new methods of teaching methods and the use of technology.

Also, the National Assessment Centre should retain the feedback process as a way of improving the assessment process and adapt it to the learners. There is a need for narrow and protected emphasis on cultural diversity as well as appropriate concern for the individual disadvantaged students for the development of a positive context for all. I think that programs for sharing resources should be enhanced to get the best learning resources with a clear system for distributing the resources to the students.

More definitive guidance on course selection, subject combination and overall program orientation is crucial for college students in order to eliminate uncertainty when recording interdisciplinary courses. The credit transfer policies of the Academic Bank of Credits (ABC) should be easily understandable and easily accessible to students and faculty through guides and procedures. There must also be provided the academic advisors and, or tutors to help the students to astutely and efficiently manage trans-disciplinary learning paths.

Last, for faculty development, it must be stated that having sustained assistance and training should be made available to assist faculty in delivering interdisciplinary education as well as maintaining the right balance of both thinking and problem solving skills strategies. There is a need to standardize the mobility of credits under ABC and ensure that staff is well informed to assist the learners. Faculty should also continually assess students' feedback on assessments and modify them accordingly; Use a combination of formative and sum total assessments to cater for the variety of the students.

7. Conclusion

The evaluation of the results demonstrates that NEP 2020 has predominantly positive effects on students and teachers at both school and college levels. However, some aspects are still in the process of fine-tuning. New class segregations, concepts such as experiential learning, the new emphasis on skills are welcomed by students especially those in school. They also prefer more flexibility that interdisciplinary practice offers, however it is not devoid of some difficulties in combining academic approach and play activities. Generally, a positive effect was noted for absolutely all components of young children's learning: Such as early childhood education has found the use of outdoor learning resources constructive, in addition to assessment reforms and computer integration which both received more than positive satisfaction ratings.

In the case of NEP 2020, the college students have gained a centralized education system, a flexible credit system which improved their learning methods, although it is experiencing some problems with the flexibility of subject choices. However, the intensification of cultural diversity, internationalization and vocational education have promoted culture diversity and internationalization has improved the equality for all students. Teacher training programmes have enhanced classroom behavior and teaching-learning strategies but need to involve larger dissemination to ensure that all the teachers are ready for NEP 2020.

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