

Impact of National Education Policy-2020 at the preparatory stage

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Abstract

The implementation of the National Education Policy-2020 at the preparatory stage (Grades 3–5) has brought a positive shift in teaching and learning practices. The focus has moved from rote learning to conceptual understanding, experiential learning, and the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills. The introduction of activity-based and integrated learning methods has made classrooms more engaging and child-friendly. Moreover, the emphasis on foundational literacy and numeracy has strengthened students' academic base. However, the impact varies across schools due to differences in infrastructure, teacher preparedness, and resource availability, making consistent implementation a continuing challenge.

Key Words- Impact, National Education Policy-2020 and Preparatory Stage

Introduction

The preparatory stage under national education policy-2020 encompasses Grades 3 to 5 (ages 8–11) and serves as a crucial bridge between the play-based foundational stage and more formal, subject-focused learning. National education policy-2020 emphasizes a holistic, activity-based, and competency-driven approach at this stage, aiming to strengthen foundational literacy and numeracy while gradually introducing formal subjects. The policy's impact on the preparatory stage can be observed in several key areas:

1. Strengthening Foundational Literacy and Numeracy

National education policy-2020 reinforces the continuation of foundational learning from the earlier stage, ensuring that all children achieve literacy and numeracy proficiency

by Grade 5. The preparatory stage focuses on developing reading comprehension, writing skills, problem-solving, and basic mathematical operations, using child-centered, experiential methods. Early identification of learning gaps allows teachers to provide remedial support, reducing the risk of future academic failure.

2. Shift to Competency-Based and Activity-Oriented Learning

At the preparatory stage, the focus of education moves beyond mere content delivery to fostering holistic competencies in children. While foundational literacy and numeracy continue to be emphasized, students are gradually introduced to more structured academic concepts in subjects such as mathematics, science, and social studies. However, the teaching methodology is deliberately designed to remain interactive, experiential, and discovery-oriented. Instead of relying solely on traditional rote memorization, learning is made meaningful through experiments, hands-on activities, group projects, and real-life applications of concepts.

For example, in science, children might conduct simple experiments to understand principles of force, motion, or plant growth, rather than just reading about them in a textbook. In mathematics, problem-solving tasks and practical activities, such as measuring objects or organizing data, are used to reinforce understanding. Social studies lessons may involve role-plays, community projects, or storytelling to help children connect classroom knowledge with their environment and society.

This competency-based approach not only emphasizes the acquisition of knowledge but also cultivates essential 21st-century skills. Children develop critical thinking as they analyze problems and hypothesize solutions, creativity as they explore multiple ways to approach a task, collaboration through teamwork and shared learning experiences, and analytical skills by observing patterns and drawing conclusions from experiments. By prioritizing active participation and inquiry over passive memorization, the preparatory stage establishes a strong foundation for lifelong learning, ensuring that children are not only knowledgeable but also capable of applying their learning meaningfully in real-life situations.

The preparatory stage introduces more structured academic concepts while maintaining interactive, hands-on, and discovery-based learning. Subjects like mathematics, science, and social studies are taught using experiments, group activities, projects, and real-life applications. This approach encourages critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and analytical skills, moving away from rote memorization and passive learning.

3. Holistic Development

The National education policy-2020 places significant emphasis on the holistic development of children, recognizing that true education extends far beyond academic achievement alone. At the preparatory stage, education is designed to nurture all dimensions of a child's growth cognitive, emotional, social and physical ensuring that learning is balanced and comprehensive. Cognitive development focuses on enhancing critical thinking, reasoning, problem-solving and conceptual understanding through activities that engage curiosity and analytical skills.

Emotional development is addressed through activities that cultivate self-awareness, empathy, and emotional intelligence. Children are encouraged to express their feelings, reflect on experiences, and develop resilience, which equips them to handle challenges both inside and outside the classroom. Social development is fostered through collaborative learning, group projects, role-plays, and team-based activities that teach cooperation, communication, respect for diversity, and the value of shared responsibilities.

Physical development is an equally important aspect at this stage. Regular participation in play, sports, outdoor activities, and creative arts such as music, dance, and drama helps children develop coordination, motor skills, endurance, and a healthy lifestyle. Creative expression through art, storytelling, and performance not only nurtures imagination but also reinforces cognitive and emotional growth.

By integrating these multidimensional activities, the preparatory stage under national education policy-2020 aims to develop well-rounded personalities. Children are not only academically prepared for higher stages of learning but are also equipped with the

social, emotional, and physical competencies necessary to thrive in a dynamic and interconnected world. This holistic approach ensures that education contributes to shaping individuals who are knowledgeable, emotionally balanced, socially responsible, and physically active, laying the foundation for lifelong learning and personal growth.

4. Introduction to Multilingual Learning

The national education policy-2020 strongly emphasizes the importance of multilingual learning, particularly at the foundational and preparatory stages. One of its core principles is that children should begin their education in their mother tongue or regional language, which serves as the primary medium of instruction. Research indicates that learning in a familiar language significantly enhances comprehension, cognitive development, and conceptual understanding. It enables children to grasp complex ideas more easily and fosters confidence and engagement in the learning process.

Alongside the mother tongue, the policy encourages the gradual introduction of a second language, typically English, in a carefully balanced and age-appropriate manner. This bilingual approach ensures that while children strengthen their foundational literacy and communication skills in their first language, they simultaneously develop proficiency in a second language. Activities such as storytelling, reading exercises, simple conversations, and interactive games in both languages facilitate a smooth and natural transition, preventing cognitive overload and language confusion.

Multilingual learning at this stage is designed not only to build language skills but also to enhance overall communication abilities, cultural awareness, and adaptability. It equips children to navigate increasingly diverse linguistic and social contexts, preparing them for higher stages of education where multilingual competency becomes essential. By integrating mother tongue instruction with a gradual introduction of additional languages, the preparatory stage under national education policy-2020 ensures that children achieve literacy, comprehension, and expressive abilities in a holistic and inclusive manner, laying the groundwork for lifelong learning and effective participation in a multilingual society.

5. Emphasis on Holistic Assessment

The national education policy-2020 marks a significant shift in the way student learning is evaluated, particularly at the foundational and preparatory stages. Moving away from traditional, exam-centric approaches, the policy emphasizes holistic and competency-based assessments that focus on understanding, skill development and the practical application of knowledge rather than rote memorization. This approach ensures that assessment becomes a tool for learning rather than merely a measure of performance.

Teachers at the preparatory stage are trained to employ a variety of assessment methods that capture a child's overall growth. Formative assessments such as class observations, project work, group activities, and hands-on experiments help educators gauge comprehension, problem-solving abilities, creativity, and collaboration skills. Portfolios documenting a child's work over time provide a comprehensive view of progress, highlighting improvements in academic, social, and emotional domains. Interactive assessments, including role-plays, storytelling, and peer evaluations, further allow children to demonstrate learning in real-life and practical contexts.

By incorporating these diverse assessment strategies, national education policy-2020 aims to reduce undue academic pressure and exam-related stress. Children are encouraged to learn at their own pace, explore their strengths, and engage in meaningful learning experiences rather than focusing solely on grades. This fosters a joyful, continuous, and reflective learning environment, where assessment becomes an integral part of the teaching-learning process. Ultimately, the emphasis on holistic assessment ensures that children develop not only academically but also socially, emotionally, and creatively, laying a strong foundation for lifelong learning and well-rounded personal development.

6. Integration of Technology

The national education policy-2020 recognizes the transformative role of technology in modern education and emphasizes its integration even at the preparatory stage. The policy encourages the use of digital tools, educational software, interactive content, and online resources as complementary aids to traditional classroom teaching. The

aim is not to replace human interaction or foundational pedagogy but to enhance the teaching-learning process, making it more engaging, flexible, and effective.

Technology facilitates personalized learning, allowing teachers to cater to the unique pace, interests, and learning needs of each child. For instance, adaptive learning platforms can identify areas where a student struggles and provide targeted exercises, ensuring that no child is left behind. Digital tools also help in visualizing abstract concepts for example; animations in science can demonstrate the water cycle or plant growth in ways that are more intuitive than static textbook diagrams. Interactive simulations, virtual experiments, and gamified learning activities further encourage curiosity, exploration, and experimentation among young learners.

In addition, technology enables children to engage with multimedia content, such as educational videos, audio stories, interactive charts, and digital art, which enrich learning and foster creativity. Collaborative tools like virtual whiteboards, online projects, and shared documents also promote teamwork, communication, and digital literacy from an early stage. By integrating these technological resources thoughtfully, the preparatory stage under national education policy-2020 ensures that children are not only able to grasp complex concepts more effectively but also develop essential 21st-century skills, including critical thinking, problem-solving, digital competency, and self-directed learning.

7. Teacher Training and Capacity Building

The national education policy-2020 places a strong emphasis on the professional development and capacity building of teachers, recognizing that skilled and well-prepared educators are central to the successful implementation of its vision, particularly at the preparatory stage. The policy underscores that teachers must be equipped not only with subject knowledge but also with pedagogical skills that support activity-based, child-centered, and competency-driven learning.

To this end, national education policy-2020 advocates comprehensive training programs that focus on multiple dimensions of teaching. Educators are trained in innovative and interactive pedagogical techniques that encourage exploration, critical

thinking, creativity, and collaborative learning. This includes strategies for conducting hands-on experiments in science, project-based learning in mathematics, and experiential activities in social studies. Teachers are also provided with insights from child psychology, helping them understand developmental stages, learning styles, emotional needs, and social dynamics of young learners. This knowledge enables teachers to create supportive and inclusive classrooms where every child's potential can flourish.

Furthermore, teachers receive specialized guidance on competency-based instruction and assessment, learning how to design activities, projects, and formative evaluations that measure understanding and skills rather than rote memorization. Training in the use of educational technology, digital tools, and multimedia resources ensures that teachers can effectively integrate modern teaching aids into their lessons, making learning more engaging and personalized.

By building teacher capacity in these areas, national education policy-2020 ensures that classrooms are transformed into vibrant, student-centered environments that foster curiosity, innovation, and holistic development. Well-trained teachers become facilitators of learning rather than mere transmitters of knowledge, thereby enabling children at the preparatory stage to thrive academically, socially, emotionally, and creatively.

8. Inclusive and Equitable Education

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9. Curricular Flexibility and Experiential Learning

The national education policy-2020 emphasizes curricular flexibility as a key feature of the preparatory stage, allowing education to move beyond rigid, one-size-fits-all structures. This flexibility enables children to explore a variety of subjects and areas of interest alongside the core curriculum, fostering curiosity, creativity, and a love for learning. By integrating interdisciplinary approaches, students are encouraged to make connections across subjects, such as linking science concepts with mathematics, language skills, or social studies, which enhances both understanding and application of knowledge.

Experiential learning is a cornerstone of this approach. The policy advocates hands-on projects, field trips, laboratory activities, and real-life experiences that bring classroom concepts to life. For instance, students may participate in community projects to understand social issues, conduct science experiments to observe natural phenomena, or

engage in art and craft activities that reinforce creativity and problem-solving. These practical experiences not only make learning more engaging and meaningful but also develop critical life skills such as observation, inquiry, decision-making, and collaboration.

By incorporating flexibility and experiential learning, national education policy-2020 ensures that children at the preparatory stage are not confined to passive absorption of facts but are actively involved in the construction of knowledge. This approach fosters deeper comprehension, encourages self-directed learning, and nurtures well-rounded individuals who are capable of applying their learning in diverse contexts. Ultimately, curricular flexibility and experiential activities equip young learners with the skills, confidence, and motivation necessary to thrive in higher stages of education and in real-world situations.

National Education Policy-2020 has significantly reshaped the preparatory stage by emphasizing child-centered, activity-based, and competency-driven education. By reinforcing foundational literacy and numeracy, promoting holistic development, and integrating technology and innovative assessment methods, the policy aims to create a well-rounded, motivated, and capable learner ready for higher stages of education. However, its impact depends on effective teacher training, adequate infrastructure, parental involvement, and resource availability, making proper implementation crucial for achieving the policy's objectives.

The implementation of the national education policy-2020 from the teachers' perspective reflects both optimism and concern regarding its practical application in schools. Teachers largely appreciate the policy's emphasis on holistic, flexible, and multidisciplinary education, recognizing it as a progressive step toward nurturing creativity, critical thinking, and experiential learning among students. They view national education policy-2020 as an opportunity to move beyond rote learning and to focus more on competency-based and child-centered pedagogy. The policy's introduction of the 5+3+3+4 structure and its focus on foundational literacy and numeracy are seen as vital reforms for strengthening the early years of education.

However, from an implementation standpoint, many teachers have expressed challenges related to training, resources, and infrastructure. The successful execution of national education policy-2020 demands continuous professional development and upskilling of teachers to align with new pedagogical methods uses of technology and assessment reforms. In several cases, teachers feel that while the policy vision is strong, the ground-level support and systematic planning are still inadequate. Teachers in rural and under-resourced areas particularly face issues such as lack of digital facilities, large class sizes, and insufficient teaching-learning materials, which hinder effective implementation.

Furthermore, teachers believe that for national education policy-2020 to achieve its goals there must be collaborative involvement of educators, school leaders, parents, and local authorities. They emphasize that teachers should not merely be policy implementers but active contributors in decision-making and curriculum development processes. Many educators also highlight the need for reducing administrative workload and ensuring adequate time for creative and reflective teaching practices.

In conclusion, teachers view national education policy-2020 as a transformative framework capable of revolutionizing the Indian education system. Yet, its successful realization depends on strong institutional support, continuous teacher empowerment, and an inclusive approach that addresses the diverse challenges faced at the grassroots level. With proper training, infrastructure, and motivation, teachers can become the key drivers in translating the visionary objectives of national education policy-2020 into meaningful classroom realities.

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