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**NEP 2020 and English Language Teaching: Problems in Implementation and Prospects**

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**Abstract**

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 marks a significant shift in India's education system, emphasizing multilingualism, skill-based learning, and inclusive education. While the policy promotes mother tongue-based instruction at the foundational stage, it also acknowledges the role of English as a global language necessary for higher education and employment. However, implementing English Language Teaching (ELT) within the NEP 2020 framework presents several challenges. The primary issue is the disparity in English proficiency across different socio-economic and regional backgrounds, particularly in rural and government schools where infrastructure and trained educators are lacking. The emphasis on regional languages at the primary level may create difficulties in transitioning to English-based instruction later, impacting students' academic and professional prospects. Additionally, teachers require extensive training in innovative pedagogical methods, such as communicative language teaching and technology-driven instruction, which remain underdeveloped in many institutions. Despite these challenges, NEP 2020 presents opportunities for improving ELT through the integration of digital learning, competency-based assessment, and a flexible curriculum. If effectively implemented, these measures can enhance English proficiency while maintaining linguistic diversity, thus preparing students for a globalized workforce. This article explores the problems in implementing ELT under NEP 2020 and highlights its potential to reshape English education in India.

**Keywords:** NEP 2020, English Language Teaching, multilingual education, language policy, digital learning, teacher training, educational reform.

**Introduction**

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is a transformative framework aimed at overhauling India's education system to make it more holistic, multidisciplinary, and skill-oriented (Ministry of Education, 2020). It seeks to enhance access, equity, and quality in education while fostering critical thinking, creativity, and technological integration. One of its key features is the emphasis on multilingual education, which promotes regional languages at the foundational stage while ensuring students acquire proficiency in English

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and other global languages at later stages. NEP 2020 also introduces a 5+3+3+4 curricular structure, replacing the traditional 10+2 model, thereby aligning with global best practices (Nandan & Krishnan, 2021).

### **Importance of English in India's Educational and Professional Development**

English has long been a crucial language in India's education system, governance, and economic sectors. As a postcolonial nation, India adopted English as a link language to bridge linguistic diversity and facilitate national integration (Kumar, 2022). Today, English proficiency is associated with better career prospects, higher education opportunities, and global mobility. It remains the primary medium of instruction in higher education institutions, particularly in fields such as science, technology, business, and law (Awasthi, 2020). Additionally, fluency in English enhances employability in multinational corporations, IT industries, and global markets, reinforcing its status as a valuable skill (Sharma & Gupta, 2021).

However, despite its significance, English education in India remains unevenly distributed. Students from rural and economically weaker backgrounds often lack access to quality English instruction, creating a disparity in language proficiency and employment opportunities (Patel, 2023). NEP 2020 attempts to address this issue by promoting multilingualism while also ensuring that students gain fluency in English as a secondary or third language.

### **The Role of NEP 2020 in Shaping English Language Teaching (ELT)**

NEP 2020 adopts a balanced approach to language education, emphasizing the use of the mother tongue or regional language as the medium of instruction up to Grade 5 (preferably till Grade 8) while also recognizing the importance of English for higher education and global communication (Ministry of Education, 2020). The policy encourages the three-language formula, which allows states to offer English as one of the three languages in school curricula, ensuring that students acquire English proficiency without undermining their native languages (Rao, 2021).

The policy also focuses on improving English Language Teaching (ELT) through teacher training programs, technology-enabled learning, and competency-based education. NEP 2020 promotes the use of digital platforms such as DIKSHA and SWAYAM, which provide online English language courses and interactive resources to enhance language learning (Mishra & Verma, 2022). Furthermore, the policy supports a skill-based approach to ELT, encouraging students to develop communication skills, critical thinking, and creativity, rather than relying solely on rote memorization (Rani, 2022).

While NEP 2020 presents a progressive vision for ELT, its implementation challenges include regional disparities, lack of trained educators, and inadequate digital infrastructure. These issues need to be addressed to ensure that English education becomes accessible, inclusive, and effective across India.

### **Problems in Implementing English Language Teaching under NEP 2020**

One of the major challenges in implementing English Language Teaching (ELT) under the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is regional disparities in English education across India. The gap between urban and rural students in terms of English proficiency remains significant due to differences in school infrastructure, access to quality teachers, and exposure to the language (Patel, 2023). In urban areas, private schools often emphasize English from an early stage, providing students with immersive environments, while government schools in rural regions struggle with limited resources and inconsistent language instruction (Sharma & Gupta, 2021). Additionally, state-wise variations in implementing the three-language formula create inconsistencies in English education, with some states prioritizing regional languages over English in early education, making the transition to higher studies and employment more challenging (Rao, 2021).

The lack of trained English language teachers further complicates the implementation of ELT under NEP 2020. Many government and rural schools face a shortage of qualified English teachers, leading to substandard language instruction (Awasthi, 2020). A large proportion of educators in these schools are more comfortable teaching in their native language and lack the pedagogical training required for effective English instruction (Rani, 2022). Additionally, NEP 2020 promotes a communicative and technology-driven ELT approach, but many teachers lack training in modern teaching methodologies, digital learning tools, and student-centered learning techniques (Mishra & Verma, 2022). Without adequate teacher training, the goal of competency-based English education remains difficult to achieve.

Another challenge is the transition from mother tongue-based education to English as a medium of instruction in later grades. NEP 2020 encourages regional language instruction until at least Grade 5 (preferably till Grade 8) to strengthen foundational learning (Ministry of Education, 2020). However, when students shift from learning in their mother tongue to English in higher grades, they often struggle with comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and confidence in communication (Kumar, 2022). This abrupt transition can lead to cognitive overload and poor academic performance, especially for students from rural backgrounds who have minimal exposure to English outside the classroom (Patel, 2023). Without a gradual, well-structured approach to bilingual education, many students find it difficult to compete with their peers in English-dominant environments, leading to educational inequality.

The lack of infrastructure and learning resources in many schools further hinders the effective implementation of ELT. Many government schools lack adequate English learning materials, libraries, and technology-driven resources, limiting students' ability to practice and develop language skills (Nandan & Krishnan, 2021). While NEP 2020 promotes the integration of digital learning through platforms like DIKSHA and SWAYAM, many

schools, particularly in rural and economically disadvantaged areas, lack access to computers, stable internet connectivity, and well-equipped language labs (Mishra & Verma, 2022). This digital divide exacerbates educational disparities, preventing a large section of students from benefiting from modern ELT methodologies. To bridge this gap, there is a need for investment in school infrastructure, teacher training, and curriculum reforms that ensure accessibility to quality English education across all regions.

### **Prospects and Opportunities for ELT under NEP 2020**

One of the most promising aspects of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is the integration of digital learning into English Language Teaching (ELT). The rapid growth of technology has paved the way for AI-based learning tools, virtual classrooms, and interactive language applications, which can significantly enhance English proficiency among students (Mishra & Verma, 2022). Platforms like Google Read Along, Duolingo, and ELSA Speak offer personalized learning experiences, helping students improve pronunciation, vocabulary, and comprehension skills at their own pace (Sharma & Gupta, 2021). Additionally, the Indian government has launched initiatives such as DIKSHA (Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing) and SWAYAM (Study Webs of Active Learning for Young Aspiring Minds) to provide free and accessible digital content for English learning (Ministry of Education, 2020). These platforms not only bridge the urban-rural divide in ELT but also allow students from marginalized backgrounds to access quality English education, ultimately enhancing language proficiency at a national level (Nandan & Krishnan, 2021).

NEP 2020 also promotes a skill-based and communicative approach to English learning, shifting the focus from rote memorization to real-life applications of the language. Traditional methods of English instruction in India have largely relied on grammar-heavy curricula and passive learning techniques, which often fail to develop students' speaking and writing abilities (Patel, 2023). The new policy emphasizes competency-based assessments, encouraging practical communication skills, problem-solving, and critical thinking (Kumar, 2022). This shift is crucial in making ELT more engaging, interactive, and contextually relevant, ensuring that students not only grasp theoretical concepts but also develop fluency and confidence in real-world situations (Rao, 2021). Moreover, the integration of storytelling, role-play, and project-based learning aligns with international best practices in language teaching, making English education in India more experiential and learner-centered (Awasthi, 2020).

A key area of focus under NEP 2020 is teacher training and capacity building, recognizing that effective ELT depends on well-trained educators. Currently, many teachers, especially in government schools, lack exposure to modern teaching methodologies and digital tools required for effective English instruction (Rani, 2022). To address this, NEP 2020 advocates for continuous professional development programs, workshops, and online

certification courses that equip teachers with innovative pedagogical strategies and technology-enhanced teaching methods (Sharma & Gupta, 2021). Additionally, the policy encourages bilingual and multilingual teaching strategies, acknowledging that code-switching between regional languages and English can aid in better comprehension and language retention (Rao, 2021). By empowering educators with advanced teaching tools and methodologies, NEP 2020 aims to enhance the quality of English language instruction across all levels of education (Mishra & Verma, 2022).

Finally, aligning ELT with international education standards is crucial for ensuring that Indian students are globally competitive and future-ready. English proficiency plays a significant role in higher education, professional success, and global mobility, making it essential for India to benchmark its language education policies against international frameworks like the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (Patel, 2023). NEP 2020 promotes collaborations with foreign universities, exchange programs, and cross-cultural learning experiences to enhance global exposure (Kumar, 2022). Furthermore, strengthening English communication skills will enable students to access better career opportunities in multinational corporations, research institutions, and international organizations (Nandan & Krishnan, 2021). By fostering a strong foundation in English language skills, NEP 2020 ensures that Indian students can compete effectively in a globalized world while maintaining a multilingual identity.

### **Conclusion**

The implementation of English Language Teaching (ELT) under NEP 2020 presents both challenges and opportunities. While the policy emphasizes the use of the mother tongue or regional languages as the medium of instruction until at least Grade 5 (Ministry of Education, 2020), it also acknowledges the importance of English for higher education and global opportunities. However, disparities in English proficiency between urban and rural students, a shortage of trained English teachers, and infrastructural limitations hinder effective implementation.

On the positive side, NEP 2020 promotes skill-based and communicative approaches to ELT, shifting away from rote memorization toward competency-based learning. The integration of digital learning platforms such as DIKSHA and SWAYAM offers new avenues for English education, especially in remote areas. Additionally, investment in teacher training and multilingual strategies can bridge the gap between regional languages and English, ensuring a smoother transition for students. A balanced approach is necessary for effective ELT implementation. While strengthening mother tongue instruction, policymakers must also ensure access to quality English education. Measures such as expanding teacher training programs, improving digital infrastructure, and fostering bilingual education can help create an inclusive and effective language learning environment.

By addressing these challenges proactively, India can equip students with the linguistic skills needed to thrive in an increasingly globalized world.

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