



शोध भूमि

शिक्षा एवं शिक्षण शास्त्र विषय की पूर्व समीक्षित शोध पत्रिका

Implementation of NEP 2020 Guidelines for Developing Critical Thinking in Schools and Colleges

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Abstract

In the 21st-century technological and scientific era, recognizing the need for change in the Indian education system, the government laid the foundation for the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. NEP 2020 emphasizes the development of students as responsible national citizens, alongside their personal growth. This policy brings about a major transformation in the Indian education system, emphasizing the development of higher-order cognitive abilities such as critical thinking, creativity, problem-solving, and analytical reasoning. NEP 2020 envisions a shift from rote learning to an inquiry-based, experiential, and multidisciplinary learning model that encourages school students to think independently and apply knowledge by connecting it to real-life situations. Furthermore, it suggests practical strategies for integrating the vision of NEP 2020 into classroom practices. NEP 2020 emphasizes the adoption of a multidisciplinary approach for college students, enabling them to not only seamlessly assimilate subjects from an integrated perspective but also develop critical and experience-based thinking. This policy stresses the development of research potential among college-level students, which naturally fosters logical thinking and practical experiences. In conclusion, this policy, keeping in mind the needs of the present era, motivates and nurtures students in schools and colleges to prepare them for the complexities of the 21st century and promotes critical thinking to achieve the broader goal of holistic and transformative education envisioned by NEP 2020.

Keywords: NEP 2020, Critical Thinking, Experiential Learning, Education Reform, Higher-Order Skill, Teachers' Role.

INTRODUCTION:

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 aims to make Indian education 21st-century-friendly by modernizing the learning process and providing an inclusive and comprehensive approach. It aims to shape a system that empowers students to navigate changing technology, globalization, and the job market, and prepares them to face the challenges of the 21st century. The policy recommends a more integrated, student-centered approach to learning. It focuses on holistic development and critical thinking, eliminating the old practices of rote learning and assessing students through tests. The primary goal of the NEP 2020 is to create an education system that nurtures the intellectual, emotional, social, and physical well-being of school students. (Naresh, 2021) The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 aims to transform Indian education, emphasizing 21st-century multidisciplinary learning, enabling students to understand the interconnection of subjects, and encouraging them to explore disciplines beyond traditional boundaries. This approach helps foster a deeper understanding of subjects among college students, making their learning more relevant and empowering them to identify real-world challenges and opportunities. Indeed, a primary objective of the NEP 2020 is to foster critical thinking among school and college students. (Inam, 2024) To this end, the policy emphasizes encouraging curiosity in students, where they actively participate in problem-solving, seek solutions, and focus on experiential learning. This policy promotes active learning and encourages the free expression of ideas, enabling students to critically evaluate situations and make informed decisions. (Sooraj, 2020)

This policy provides Flexibility for college students with multiple entry and exit points, ensuring that students do not feel pressured in their learning and can acquire education in a logical manner, along with skills. It focuses on holistic assessment, emphasizing academic performance that also measures aspects such as creativity, problem-solving, and the practical application of knowledge. This policy prioritizes Life skills, mental health and well-being alongside academic skills, recognizing the importance of emotional intelligence and value development in a student's overall growth. It advocates for equipping schools and colleges to provide a supportive environment where students can thrive emotionally and psychologically. Furthermore, physical education and sports are integrated into the curriculum, promoting a balanced and healthy lifestyle. This policy emphasizes teacher training programs that help in teaching strategies that foster critical thinking of college and school-level students. Educators are encouraged to adopt blended teaching, project-based work for students, and the use of problem-solving methods that promote inquiry, discussion, and analysis, moving away from traditional lectures. (Pal, S., & Usha, 2023) NEP 2020 is focusing on the need for teachers to train high-quality content with rich pedagogy and multidisciplinary approach among colleges and universities by 2030. The NEP 2020 is based on three fundamental pillars: Quality of Teacher Education (QTE), Quality in Teaching (Q-in-T), and Quality Assurance (QA) and Quality Assessment to support continuous learning. (Rani, M., & Anita, 2025)

OBJECTIVES:

1. To understand the concept of critical thinking in light of NEP 2020, and how Critical thinking helps people find their way through complicated realities by making decisions that incorporate knowledge.
2. To analyze the NEP 2020 guidelines for developing critical thinking and Creativity among school and college students
3. To understand the teacher's role in developing critical thinking in school and college students.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

1. What is the concept of critical thinking in NEP 2020? How critical thinking helps in developing creativity?
2. What are the suggestive guidelines for developing critical thinking in NEP 2020 among students in schools and colleges?
3. What is the role of teacher in developing critical thinking among school and college students in light of NEP 2020?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The present study is a qualitative study; the main objective of the study is to determine the impact of guidelines of 2020 in developing the Critical thinking among School and College students. The data was collected from the main source of NEP i.e. Government of India, Ministry of Education (education.gov.in.website) and various published research articles, Journals etc.

CONCEPT OF CRITICAL THINKING:

In simple terms, critical thinking is a process of making reasoned judgments by analyzing available facts, evidence, observations, and arguments to arrive at a specific outcome. It involves developing the ability to make logical decisions. In the present time, scholars relate the term critical thinking to John Dewey, who used the term reflective thinking; it totally differs from person to person, according to him. This is totally based on an individual's knowledge or wisdom. Philosopher Richard W. Paul said that critical thinking and problem solving are capabilities that can be achieved through time and training. It is the application of self-derived thinking, mostly self-centered, discipline, monitoring in nature, and the habit of self-correction. (Sharma, 2025) But critical thinking is not a natural process or self-developed; it is developed over time and with many more corrections, an ongoing process. It demands a strong commitment to face different barriers.

In the age of educational technology, students collect information through observations, AI, social media, and lived experience it is necessary to understand that they need to analyze, evaluate, consider alternatives, and reason out, etc., whatever they observe, experience, which, in turn, impacts their actions and decisions in life. NEP 2020 is supporting critical thinking as a life skill in that it changes a student into an empowered human being who can make the right decision as a responsible citizen and solve problems on their own.

NEP 2020 recommends that schools and colleges to introduced various programs to develop interactive sessions among students which not only develop communication skills but also life skills and creativity, besides schools and colleges develop formative assessment in place of summative assessment to foster critical thinking among school and college students.

This policy emphasizes teacher training programs that help in teaching strategies that foster critical thinking of college and school-level students. Educators are encouraged to adopt blended teaching, project-based work for students, and the use of problem-solving methods that promote inquiry, discussion, and analysis, moving away from traditional lectures. NEP 2020 is focusing on the need for teachers to train high - quality content with rich pedagogy, multidisciplinary approach by 2030. (Rani, M., & Anita, 2025)

Schools and colleges are focusing on only results; somewhere in this process, some important learning skills are not quantified, like problem-solving, enquiry-based learning, and critical thinking, which are equally important to holistic development.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 places a strong belief that the development of critical thinking skills is a basic learning skill for all students for overall development. It emphasizes higher-order cognitive abilities in students to enable high-level, logical decision-making and promote innovation among students. The policy emphasizes the need to restructure the curriculum to include opportunities for developing critical thinking skills in students. The policies adopt critical thinking as the core objective to develop critical thinking in the students. Critical thinking stress management quality and emotional balance that enhances sound decision ability and also develops civic sense.

● **Guidelines for developing critical thinking in NEP 2020 in schools and colleges**

The NEP 2020 states, “Assessments of educational approaches in undergraduate education that integrate the humanities and arts with Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) have consistently shown positive learning outcomes, including increased creativity and innovation, critical thinking and higher-order thinking capacities, problem-solving abilities, teamwork, communication skills, more in-depth learning and mastery of curricula across fields, increases in social and moral awareness, etc., besides general engagement and enjoyment of learning”

It is true that Education is the backbone of a country, the quality of education system determines the future of a country which is shaped within the four walls of class room, hence, No country can progress by neglecting its education system. Since its independence, India has made many changes in the field of education with the help of various committees and education commissions. From the first Education Commission established in India, recommendations were made for the National Education Policy (NPE 1986) and the introduction of the New Education Policy of 2020. The Prime Minister of India announced the implementation of this policy on 29 July 2020. Now efforts are being made to bring about educational changes in India as per the National Education Policy 2020.

The vision statement of the National Education Policy (NEP, 2020) are: “This National Education Policy envisions an education system rooted in the Indian ethos that directly contributes to the sustainable transformation of India into an equitable and vibrant knowledge society by providing high-quality education to all, thereby making India education system more flexible, Multidisciplinary that leads to Holistic development in place of global knowledge superpower which was the slogan of National Policy of Education 1986” (NEP 2020, p. 6).

The main objective of reforming curriculum and teaching methods at all stages is to encourage real understanding and correct learning methods and to eliminate the rote learning that still prevails in the education system. The objective of education is to create holistic and well-rounded individuals equipped with key skills, along with cognitive development and character building. To achieve these important goals, critical thinking has been given a prominent place in the curriculum and teaching methods. NCERT will identify various skills and strive for their implementation in the National Curriculum Framework for school education.

The NEP 2020 promotes that Indian students become fair-minded citizens by applying critical thinking, so they will be able to develop the citizenship skills required for leading society. Critical thinking enables students to become transformative leaders as they can change society through their actions and beliefs, leading to a democratic society, which is the main goal of education.

Critical thinking in students enables them to think independently and express their opinions. The ability to reason, analyze, and deliberate makes individuals independent thinkers. NEP 2020 promotes Critical thinking to apply various thinking skills, students become more confident and autonomous problem solvers and thinkers.

NEP GUIDELINE:

- **Learning should be experiential, discussion based, flexible, and enjoyable.**

The NEP 2020 encourages experiential learning to foster critical thinking. Instead of focusing solely on listening to lectures or reading textbooks, learning is encouraged by actively participating in practical activities. Experiential learning is essential for creative

solutions, exploring new ideas, and thinking critically about challenges. It also encourages students to apply their knowledge by engaging in everyday tasks and projects, and encourages collaboration and teamwork, allowing students to work together to develop creative solutions. This approach helps build not only critical thinking skills but also creativity, communication skills, and decision-making skills.

- **The curriculum and pedagogy must be redesigned to promote critical thinking, Creativity, and multidisciplinary learning rather than rote memorization.**

Methods for Developing Critical Thinking in Classrooms

- Brainstorm about everything they will be doing,
- Classify and categorize
- Compare and contrast
- Work in groups
- Finding patterns
- Gap fills in
- Debates

- **Students must have the flexibility to choose subjects across disciplines.**

NEP 2020's multidisciplinary education brings together knowledge and teaching methods from various disciplines. Students are not limited to a specific field of study, but instead gain knowledge of related fields to better understand the subject, enhancing an integrated disciplinary approach. NEP 2020 allows students to choose courses from various fields based on their interests and goals.

- **Classrooms must encourage questioning, discussion, and analysis.**

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasizes developing these higher-order thinking skills in students. It aims to encourage activities that enable students to think more logically and become more problem. Higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) are critical abilities that help people think and understand more deeply and beyond simply memorizing information. These skills include analyzing and evaluating complex ideas, making connections between different pieces of information, solving problems, and thinking creatively. Through these abilities, NEP 2020 prepares students for situations in their lives that require critical thinking and problem-solving.

- **Assessment will be more formative, competency-based, and designed to promote learning and critical thinking.**

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 supports application-based assessment in education. This approach encourages students to engage deeply with content and apply learned knowledge to skills useful outside the classroom, enabling them to provide solutions to real-life challenges. This policy aims to develop an assessment system that fosters the ability to apply learned knowledge to practical life.

- **Foundational literacy and numeracy must be combined with curiosity, discovery, And exploration**

The NEP 2020 encourages the use of technology to foster critical thinking skills in students. It encourages schools to incorporate digital tools such as educational apps, online resources, and interactive platforms into their teaching. By making learning more engaging through technology, enabling students to explore ideas in new ways and learn to solve problems has become a primary need of this era. Technology allows students to better analyze information and hone their critical thinking by working on projects. The NEP 2020 also supports this by improving digital literacy and providing schools with the necessary tools and training to use technology effectively. This way, students acquire crucial skills such as problem-solving and analysis, which are crucial for their future.

- **Guidelines for developing critical thinking in NEP 2020 in colleges**

Critical thinking: NEP 2020 emphasizes that to achieve educational goals; the graduates should be able to demonstrate the capability to:

“Apply analytic thought to a body of knowledge, including the analysis and evaluation of policies, practices, as well as evidence, arguments, claims, beliefs, and the reliability and relevance of evidence.”

College students should be more capable of applying their knowledge they gain during their studies so they can analyze outcomes properly. NEP promotes that students should be capable of knowing and has a critical approach towards policies and practices in their relevant fields. They should be able to collect proper evidence and able to give the right criticisms to their beliefs and claims.

- **Identify relevant assumptions or implications and form coherent arguments.**

At stage of university level, student can understand the implications of whatever they are gaining from the knowledge and apply it in their future perspective by fostering critical thinking. Critical thinking also enables one to recognize the right critical approach right argumentative approach with others.

- **Identify logical flaws and shortcomings in others' arguments.**

Critical approach develops the understanding of others' views and develops the capabilities to understand the flaws of others, so students can develop according to their abilities.

- **Analyze and synthesize data from various sources and draw valid conclusions and Support them with evidence and examples.**

Critical thinking develops research ability in the students, so they can generalize the outcomes they have and propose examples to others. Students are able to relate content according to their experiences and are also able to compare the content with a logical

point of view. It is a necessity of the time that student recognize the worldview so that they will be able to grow their country and as well as focus on their self-development in this technological era.

- **Pedagogical Approach among School and college students to develop critical Thinking in light of NEP 2020.**

This outcome based approach, especially in the context of School and College students emphasizes the need for a significant shift from teacher centered to learner centered pedagogy and from passive to active/participatory pedagogy, which will develop critical thinking in students. (Basith, A., & Sabeena P. S., 2025)

For critical thinking, NEP 2020 emphasizes developing practical skills in students, enabling them to understand the connection between theory and real life skills. This will be an important aspect of the teaching learning process. The policy suggests the following for developing critical thinking:

- Lectures which involve active participation of students through Interactive techniques, where students discuss and share their problems, Discuss concepts and ask questions rather than just be passive listeners.
- Practicum work develops critical thinking among students by bringing them from theory to practical and develops real life skills and foster deeper understanding through guided inquiry.
- Field Based Learning helps in developing Critical thinking among learners by immersing them in real life situation and develops practical skills.
- Use of prescribed textbooks, e-learning resources, and other self-study materials;
- Field Based Learning/Project-based learning
- Open ended project work, some of which may be team-based
- Internships and visits to field sites, industrial or other research facilities, etc.

The Role of Teachers in Developing Critical Thinking in Schools and Colleges

Teachers must be trained to become mentors who facilitate discovery and critical thinking.” In any society, it is the primary responsibility of teachers to provide children with the right knowledge, enabling them to understand social issues as responsible citizens, learn from it, and develop their own thinking and apply it appropriately in real-life situations. The teacher's role in developing logical thinking is that of an intellectual who inspires and encourages students to develop critical thinking, a skill that will prove useful for their future. (Kumar, 2023) Whether students are in school or college, teachers must act as facilitators, fostering open-mindedness and encouraging thought processes. The role of schools and colleges in developing critical thinking can be understood through the following points:

1. Encourage a learning environment conducive to critical thinking in schools, where students' ideas can be encouraged.

2. Encourage a learning system in schools that connects the curriculum to students' real-life and social realities.
3. Enter discussions, debates, and student parliaments, providing students with opportunities to reflect on their own identity, agency, and citizenship skills.
4. Create opportunities for critical thinking for teacher development so that teachers are empowered with teaching skills that encourage critical thinking in students.
5. School leaders should reflect on their own beliefs and values to ensure that the learning process puts the child at the center and, in particular, encourages the voices of marginalized students.

● **Challenges of Teaching Critical Thinking Skills**

In the Indian context, where there is a diverse cultural mix, aiming to develop critical thinking skills in classrooms at all levels becomes a risky task. Thus, several challenges can arise when developing critical thinking. These can be explained as follows:

1. Critical thinking is often presented in a negative light and understanding this needs to be developed.
2. Teaching critical thinking in the classroom requires considerable personal reflection on the part of teachers and students, and teachers often lack the time for this. This poses challenges for teachers in developing critical thinking skills in the classroom.
3. Teachers' adherence to traditional methods discourages logical thinking.
4. There is a lack of teacher training programs focused on developing critical thinking, and teachers are reluctant to engage in training in addition to teaching.
5. Teaching critical thinking skills in higher grades is difficult because it can lead to controversial and sensitive situations that can create conflict and tension in classrooms.

Conclusion:

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 represents a transformative shift within India's educational landscape, redirecting the focus of learning away from rote memorization and towards the nurturing of critical thinking, analytical reasoning, creativity, and problem-solving abilities. By placing higher order cognitive skills at the centre of academic development, the policy aspires to prepare learners who are not only knowledgeable, but also capable of navigating the complex social, technological, and economic challenges of the 21st century. In doing so, NEP 2020 envisions education as a tool for shaping thoughtful, innovative, and ethically responsible citizens.

Furthermore, the policy offers a forward-looking and holistic framework for embedding critical thinking across school and higher education systems. Its effectiveness, however, depends on a deep restructuring of classroom practices, pedagogical strategies, and evaluation methods. NEP 2020 calls for a shift from teacher - centered instruction to learner - centered, experiential, and inquiry-driven approaches that make students active participants in constructing knowledge. In this sense, the policy seeks not merely to reform education, but to redefine the learning experience itself, ensuring that young people develop the intellectual autonomy and adaptability required for lifelong learning.

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