

Chapter 1:

Introduction

1.1 Background and Context

School education in India has often been seen as overloaded with too much content. Students are expected to learn many topics, mostly through memorization, which leaves little room for understanding or thinking deeply. To change this, the Government of India introduced the National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020). One of the main suggestions in NEP 2020 is to reduce the school syllabus. The goal is to help students learn better by focusing on important concepts, and to give time for activities that develop critical thinking and creativity.

At present, this syllabus reduction is only in the planning stage. The new textbooks based on NEP 2020 have not yet reached many schools. So, for teachers, it remains an idea, not something they are actually using. But some experience already exists. During the COVID-19 pandemic, a rationalized syllabus was introduced, where some chapters and topics were removed to reduce pressure on students and teachers. Many teachers found that this gave them more time to help students understand topics better and include activities that support critical thinking.

NEP 2020 also talks about the problem of private coaching and tuitions. It says that students should be able to learn everything they need in school itself. This will make education fairer, cheaper, and better for all, especially for students who cannot afford extra classes. Reducing the syllabus is a step in that direction, making schools more effective and inclusive for every child.

1.2 Rationale of the Study

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasizes a significant shift from rote-based learning to conceptual understanding, critical thinking, and holistic development. One of its key proposals is the reduction of school curricula to core essentials, with the objective of decluttering content and allowing deeper engagement with subjects. This curricular reform aims not only to improve students' learning outcomes but also to reduce academic stress and dependency on private coaching. Although the implementation of reduced syllabus is still in progress and full-scale textbooks based on NEP 2020 are yet to be introduced in many schools, teachers have previously encountered partial syllabus reduction during the COVID-19 pandemic. That experience revealed certain positive outcomes, such as more time for interactive teaching, greater focus on understanding, and opportunities for critical thinking activities.

Given that teachers are the key agents in delivering the curriculum, their perceptions regarding the reduced syllabus are vital. Understanding their expectations, perceived challenges, and insights will help assess the practical feasibility of NEP reforms at the

classroom level. Additionally, teachers' opinions on how syllabus reduction may influence student learning, critical thinking development, and competitive exam preparedness offer essential guidance for future policy execution and curriculum planning. Also, NEP 2020 wants to reduce the need for private coaching by improving the quality of school education. If the syllabus is reduced and made more meaningful, students may no longer need extra tuition. This will help make education more equal and affordable for everyone.

This study is thus relevant and timely, aiming to explore the perspectives of teachers in central government schools—who may be among the first to adopt NEP-aligned practices—on the potential impacts and challenges of syllabus reduction under NEP 2020.

1.3 Concept Clarification and International Comparison

To understand syllabus reduction better, it helps to see how it is done in other countries. In this study, syllabus reduction means cutting down on too much or repeated content in school subjects. This gives more time for students to understand the main ideas and for teachers to do creative and meaningful teaching.

In Finland, the syllabus is already short and focused. Teachers are free to teach in ways that help students understand deeply. They use less memorization and more discussion and practical work. This helps students think better and learn with interest.

China also started syllabus reduction through its “double reduction” policy. This policy cuts down school homework and controls private tuition. The aim is to reduce pressure on students and give them a balanced life. China has already started using new textbooks and rules to support this change.

In India, the experience of using a reduced syllabus during the COVID-19 period gave many teachers a chance to try new teaching methods. It showed that with fewer topics, there is more time to include activities that help students think and understand. Based on this, NEP 2020 now plans a long-term syllabus reduction that supports clear learning goals and skill development.

Another important point is that NEP 2020 speaks against private tuition. It says that school education should be enough for students, so they don't have to depend on coaching centers. This will help make learning more equal, accessible, affordable, and accountable for all. Reducing the syllabus is part of this goal.

By looking at other countries like Finland and China, and by understanding our own situation, we can see how important this change is. Teachers' views will help us know whether syllabus reduction can really work in Indian schools and what support they need to make it happen.

1.4 Statement of the Problem

A Study of Teachers' Perspective on Syllabus Reduction under NEP 2020

1.5 Objectives of the Study

1. To explore teachers' perceptions of syllabus reduction under NEP 2020.
2. To examine the perceived impact of syllabus reduction on classroom teaching, student learning, and critical thinking development.
3. To investigate teachers' views on how syllabus reduction may influence students' preparation for competitive examinations.

1.6 Research Questions

1. What are teachers' perceptions of the syllabus reduction proposed under NEP 2020?
2. To what extent do teachers believe syllabus reduction encourages critical thinking and deeper learning among students?
3. How do teachers view the role of syllabus reduction in promoting self-directed learning among students?
4. How has the reduced syllabus influenced teaching methods and classroom activities, especially those aimed at enhancing student understanding?
5. What are teachers' perceptions of the impact of syllabus reduction on students' academic pressure and stress levels?
6. To what extent do teachers believe that the reduced syllabus helps or hinders students' preparation for competitive examinations?
7. What are the key challenges faced by teachers in implementing the reduced syllabus effectively?

1.7 Definition of Key Terms

1. National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 : The National Education Policy 2020 is India's comprehensive framework for transforming the education system, introduced by the Ministry of Education. It aims to provide universal access to quality education, promoting national development through holistic, flexible, and multidisciplinary approaches. The policy is built on five foundational pillars: Access, Equity, Quality, Affordability, and Accountability. It emphasizes reducing rote learning, encouraging critical thinking, and aligning education with the 21st-century needs of learners.
2. Syllabus Reduction : Syllabus reduction refers to the deliberate process of simplifying the curriculum by removing or condensing certain topics. This approach aims to decrease the academic burden on students, allowing more time for in-depth understanding, creativity, and the development of essential skills.
3. Rationalized Syllabus : The rationalized syllabus is a streamlined version of the curriculum implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic. It involved omitting specific chapters or topics to ease the learning process for students and teachers during disrupted academic schedules.

4. **Critical Thinking** : Critical thinking is the ability to analyze information objectively, evaluate different perspectives, and make reasoned judgments. In education, it involves encouraging students to question assumptions, solve problems, and apply knowledge in various contexts.
5. **Self-Directed Learning** : Self-directed learning is a process where students take the initiative in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating goals, identifying resources, and evaluating their learning outcomes. It fosters independence and responsibility in the learning process.
6. **Academic Pressure** : Academic pressure refers to the stress and anxiety students experience due to high expectations, heavy workloads, and the pursuit of academic excellence. It can impact mental health and overall well-being.
7. **Private Coaching/Tuition** : Private coaching or tuition involves supplementary educational instruction provided outside the formal school system. Students often seek such services to enhance their understanding of subjects and to prepare for competitive examinations like NEET, JEE, or UPSC.
8. **Competitive Examinations** : Competitive examinations are standardized tests conducted to assess candidates for admission to educational institutions or for employment opportunities. This includes NEET, JEE and UPSC only.

1.8 Delimitations of the Study

1. The study is limited to central government schools located in Bhopal. Teachers from private institutions, and state board schools have not been included.
2. Data has been collected only from Kendriya Vidyalaya (KV), Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya (NVS), and Eklatva Model Residential Schools (EMRS). Teachers from other types of schools, such as private, aided, or state-run schools, are not part of this study.
3. The study focuses only on teachers. Perspectives of students, parents, principals, or policymakers are not covered.
4. The study specifically focuses on syllabus reduction under NEP 2020. Other components of NEP 2020, such as language policy, assessment reforms, or teacher education, are outside the scope.
5. The study is conducted at a time when the reduced syllabus is not fully implemented in all schools. Therefore, teacher responses are based on their understanding, previous experience (e.g., during the rationalised syllabus period), or expectations.
6. Data was collected through a structured questionnaire using Google Forms. Other qualitative tools like interviews or classroom observations were not used.