

Challenges and Opportunities for Primary Teachers in Implementing NEP 2020's Vision for Quality Education: E-learning Perspective

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Abstract

The introduction of India's National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) has led to a significant change, emphasising a modern and comprehensive approach to education. A central aspect of this policy is the integration of technology, particularly the advancement of quality e-learning. Within the framework of implementing NEP 2020's vision for quality e-learning, it is essential to acknowledge the challenges and opportunities faced by primary teachers. E-learning has the potential to revolutionise education, providing equal access in a diverse and vast nation like India, where traditional educational resources are often inaccessible in various areas. This paper explores the various dimensions of this transformation, highlighting the important role of e-learning in achieving NEP 2020's objectives while emphasising the role of primary teachers in adapting to this evolving educational landscape.

INTRODUCTION

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 stands as a transformative milestone in India's educational landscape. Designed to reshape the country's educational system, the NEP 2020 envisions a more holistic, flexible, and contemporary

approach to learning. For decades, the country's education system has been characterised by a predominantly traditional and exam-centric approach. This approach, while yielding some successes, has often been criticised for stifling creativity, neglecting practical skills, and perpetuating educational inequalities.

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In response to these challenges, the NEP 2020 was crafted to revitalize and modernize India's education system. It not only recognises the importance of foundational and early childhood education but also acknowledges the significance of higher education and vocational training. It emphasises a shift from an examination-centric approach to a more comprehensive and competency-based learning system, focusing on essential life skills like critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity. Recognising the importance of a strong foundation, the policy seeks to ensure universal access to quality education for all children. It also highlights the importance of mother tongue or regional languages in early education, aiming to make learning more relatable and inclusive. Furthermore, the NEP 2020 places a strong emphasis on the integration of technology and digital resources into the educational process, acknowledging the role of technology in making education more accessible and relevant (MHRD, 2020). In a country as diverse as India, where geographical and socio-economic disparities persist, the use of technology can democratise education and bring quality resources to remote and underserved areas.

E-Learning in NEP 2020

E-learning is the process of getting and using information that is mostly shared and made easier through computer or electronic means (Wentling et al., 2000). E-learning assumes a crucial

role in realising the ambitions outlined in the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 in India. Its significance extends across various dimensions of educational reform set forth by the policy. E-learning's primary contribution lies in democratising education by granting access to quality learning resources to students, irrespective of their geographic location, thus aligning with NEP 2020's commitment to universal access. Furthermore, it fosters personalised learning experiences, accommodating diverse learning needs in a learner-centric approach, a key principle of the policy. The availability of e-learning content in multiple languages supports NEP 2020's emphasis on mother tongue-based education. Additionally, e-learning promotes digital literacy, an essential skill in the technology-driven world, while also offering a collection of quality resources, supporting continuous assessment, and facilitating teacher professional development—all in line with NEP 2020's main goals of inclusivity, modernisation, and excellence in education.

Application of E-Learning in Primary Education in line with NEP 2020

In the context of primary education in India as envisioned by the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, practical applications of e-learning are transformative. E-learning can bridge resource gaps by providing access to interactive digital content, especially in underprivileged regions

with limited access to traditional teaching materials. It allows for the localisation of educational content in multiple languages, addressing NEP 2020's emphasis on mother tongue-based education, and making learning more inclusive and culturally relevant. Furthermore, e-learning facilitates continuous assessment, enabling teachers to track individual progress and provide timely interventions, aligning with NEP 2020's shift towards competency-based evaluation. Additionally, e-learning can serve as a valuable tool for teacher professional development, helping educators stay updated with modern pedagogical techniques and technologies, which is central to NEP 2020's goals of teacher empowerment and pedagogical innovation. These practical applications of e-learning can help bridge educational gaps, enhance the quality of primary education, and bring NEP 2020's transformative vision to fruitfully materialise in India.

Challenges Faced by Primary Teachers in Implementing E-Learning in Schools

Primary school teachers face diverse obstacles in integrating e-learning in schools, such as lack of reliable Internet connection, lack of desired infrastructure, teacher training, engaging curriculum-aligned materials, regional language content, and technical issues which make teaching through e-learning difficult for teachers. Key challenges faced by teachers are stated below:

Firstly, the lack of reliable Internet connection in many regions, especially remote areas, is a major challenge for implementing e-learning. Teachers in these areas face the daunting task of delivering online education in environments with poor or no Internet connectivity. This digital divide not only hinders student learning, but also poses a significant obstacle for educators trying to adopt e-learning approaches.

Secondly, Teachers' technological proficiency is essential for successful e-learning implementation. Many teachers lack the necessary training and expertise to use digital platforms and tools effectively. This can make teachers struggle with the transition to e-learning owing to the technical aspects of delivering online education (Mynbayeva, Sadvakassova, & Akshalova, 2018).

Creating interesting e-learning resources that are specifically designed for the curriculum poses another significant obstacle. Teachers must devote a substantial amount of time and effort to designing digital content that connects with their teaching objectives and maintains students' interest and understanding.

Moreover, the need for e-learning materials in local languages presents an obstacle, often requiring the translation of the materials to accommodate various linguistic diversities. This introduces an additional level of complexity for teachers striving to ensure equal access to educational resources.

Additionally, technical problems and disruptions that occur during online classes can cause frustration for both teachers and learners. The smooth delivery of digital content is frequently hindered by technical issues, creating difficulties in sustaining an optimal learning environment.

Transitioning to e-learning requires a shift in teaching methods, which can be met with resistance and apprehension by teachers accustomed to traditional classroom settings. Adapting to new pedagogical approaches while effectively engaging students can be a difficult task.

Designing effective e-learning assessments and ensuring the integrity of examinations in a digital context is also a complex responsibility. Maintaining the credibility and fairness of assessments while utilising digital tools presents a significant challenge for teachers.

Another challenge for teachers is monitoring student participation and motivation in an e-learning environment. This requires innovative strategies, as it is more difficult to keep students engaged and motivated without the physical setting of a classroom.

Online privacy and security are also paramount concerns. Teachers and students must work together to ensure the protection of sensitive data and to foster a secure online learning environment. MoE and NCERT provide cybersecurity resources for teachers and students aiming to

equip them with the knowledge and tools necessary to enhance their understanding of cybersecurity concepts and best practices. It covers topics such as data privacy, recognising and mitigating cyber threats, cyber laws, etc. (CIET, n.d.).

Also, limited budgets can hinder schools' ability to acquire and maintain the necessary digital resources for e-learning. The cost of technology infrastructure, software licenses, and hardware upgrades can strain already tight financial resources (Khundrakpam, Singh & Singh, 2022).

E-learning can reduce personal interactions between teachers and students, which can impact students' emotional well-being and engagement. The lack of face-to-face contact can lead to students feeling isolated and detached.

Additionally, keeping e-learning materials up-to-date and effective requires teachers to invest significant time and effort. Ensuring that digital resources remain updated and relevant is a continuous challenge.

Finally, managing e-learning alongside traditional teaching tasks can be massive work. The proliferation of various digital platforms and tools can further complicate teachers' workloads, making effective time management essential. Overcoming these challenges requires a collaborative effort from educational authorities, governments, stakeholders and policymakers to provide primary

teachers with the necessary support, resources, and training required for successful e-learning implementation. Moreover, addressing the digital divide and ensuring equitable access to e-learning resources is imperative to make this transition more effective and inclusive, ultimately benefitting both teachers and students.

Opportunities for Primary Teachers with E-Learning

The incorporation of e-learning offers various opportunities for primary teachers in India. They can engage in professional development through training programs, enhancing their digital literacy and teaching skills. Teachers can create customised e-learning materials, and share them within the academic community. E-learning fosters collaboration, enabling teachers to exchange ideas and best practices. It allows for personalised instruction, accommodating diverse learning styles, and even offers remote teaching prospects. Teachers can promote digital literacy, and assume leadership roles in implementing technology. E-learning opens avenues for educational research and prepares teachers for future trends in education. Lastly, it offers a global perspective, connecting educators worldwide. In essence, embracing these opportunities not only benefits teachers personally but also contributes to the improvement of primary education as a whole in India.

Role of Primary Teachers in Improving the Quality of E-Learning in Schools

Primary teachers have a crucial role in advancing e-learning within the framework of NEP 2020. Their involvement and dedication are vital in ensuring that e-learning is effective, engaging, and aligned with the goals of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. Teachers can create personalised e-learning content, including videos, quizzes, and interactive lessons, tailored to their students' needs. Proficiency in e-learning platforms and digital tools is essential for primary teachers to assist students in navigating online resources, troubleshooting technical issues, and promoting responsible Internet usage. Using e-learning analytics, teachers can monitor students' progress and adapt their teaching strategies accordingly, adhering to NEP 2020's learner-centric approach. Additionally, they should be actively involved in designing and administering online assessments, offering constructive feedback for students' improvement. Promoting digital literacy, fostering inclusive education by adapting e-learning materials for diverse students' needs, and collaborating with parents to create a supportive e-learning ecosystem are vital roles of primary teachers. Teachers should critically evaluate e-learning resources for accuracy and guide students in finding reliable online information sources. Encouraging collaborative knowledge sharing by

teachers through the exchange of ideas, best practices, resources, and expertise can improve their teaching practice and lead to better outcomes for students. It also helps teachers to build a supportive community of colleagues and to improve their overall teaching effectiveness. By actively taking on these roles and responsibilities, primary educators in India can significantly contribute to uplifting the quality of e-learning and ensuring alignment with NEP 2020's principles, ultimately enhancing primary education in the country. Here are some suggestions for the practices that can be implemented by teachers and schools to ensure quality e-learning.

SUGGESTED BEST PRACTICES

State-led Initiatives

The use of specific best practices by the state government can significantly contribute to the advancement of e-learning in India. These can include developing age-appropriate, interactive e-content that is regularly updated to keep it relevant. The promotion of digital literacy among students is crucial to foster responsible utilisation of technology and facilitate active learning. There is a need of careful curation and development of regionally specific, multilingual e-learning resources to improve accessibility. It is advisable to promote the utilisation of competency-based assessment methods, such as formative assessments and projects,

accompanied by prompt feedback. Combining live and self-paced learning modalities provides students with increased flexibility in their educational pursuits. The provision of gadgets and Internet connectivity is crucial in endeavours aimed at mitigating the digital divide. The essential elements encompassed in educational practice involve the monitoring of academic progress among students who face challenges, ensuring inclusivity within the learning environment, and the provision of accessible resources and support systems for students with disabilities. Additionally, prioritising data privacy and security measures, promoting research and innovation in primary education e-learning, and engaging parents in supporting their children's e-learning are all crucial aspects of state-initiated best practices.

Teacher-led Initiatives

Teachers also have a significant role to play in enhancing e-learning in India through their own best practices. One such approach is to divide lessons into engaging segments with clear instructions, hence facilitating comprehension and retention. They can identify and curate digital resources from national repositories such as DIKSHA, ePathshala, NROER, and NDL e-content portals, as well as contents from Open Educational Resources (OERs) (DSEL, 2020). Additionally, teachers can enhance the learning experience by using diverse modalities

that cater to different learning styles, such as the integration of relatable narratives(stories). Maintaining teacher-student interaction and promoting balanced screen time for young learners is important for effective teaching. The practice of gathering feedback from stakeholders for continuous e-learning improvement within the school is a valuable practice. Additionally, fostering teamwork among teachers and schools, offering comprehensive training for teachers to integrate e-learning tools effectively, and employing data analytics and assessment tools to monitor students' progress and adjust teaching methods are all essential teacher-initiated best practices.

By adopting these practices, primary educators in India can create a more engaging, effective, and inclusive e-learning environment tailored to the specific needs of young students in the digital age, ultimately helping them succeed in their education.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, for the successful realisation of NEP 2020's vision for high-quality e-learning in primary education, several vital recommendations must be considered by those involved. Policymakers

should allocate significant resources to bridge the digital gap, ensuring both urban and rural schools have essential technological infrastructure. Investing in comprehensive teacher training programs is crucial, equipping educators with the needed digital skills and teaching expertise for effective e-learning integration (Bhalla, 2013). Policymakers should also ensure that e-learning resources align with the NEP 2020 curriculum and establish monitoring and support systems to aid progress and provide teacher assistance and professional development. Educational institutions should upgrade infrastructure, create culturally relevant e-learning content, support teachers, and involve parents in the e-learning process. Teacher training programs should emphasise e-learning pedagogy and inclusivity. Technology providers should offer affordable, user-friendly solutions with strong data security. Additionally, communities and civil society should advocate for equitable e-learning access, promote parental awareness, and empower parents to support their children's digital education. Together, these measures can transform challenges into opportunities, fostering a thriving e-learning environment in India's primary education sector.

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